



Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In English Language (4EB1)
Paper 01R

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Introduction

There were a relatively small number of candidates this series.

The texts about journeys were accessible across the full range of abilities and candidates were able to engage with the topics and tasks and respond appropriately.

Better candidates were able to engage fully with both texts and respond thoughtfully and articulately. Their writing responses were often engaging and effective and were well controlled and accurate. Weaker candidates sometimes struggled to understand the passages and the questions. Their writing was often pedestrian or lacked coherence and had weak language controls.

Section A (Questions 1-7)

This consists of two short retrieval questions and a question on the writer's use of language and structure to create effects on each text and a question requiring candidates to compare the two texts.

Question 1

This is a straightforward retrieval question on Text One which does not require candidates to use their own words.

The majority of candidates correctly identified one of the features the narrator saw. The most popular features were: 'cluster of mud huts', 'a small village' and 'a few traders' stalls'. A few candidates gave long responses often with three or four points to ensure they are correct. This wastes time on a low tariff question.

Candidates must ensure they read the text and the question carefully.

Question 2

This is a straightforward retrieval question on Text One which does not require candidates to use their own words.

Most candidates successfully identified a building, commonly 'the department store', 'the national bank' or 'the white cathedral'. The least common responses were: 'the police station' or 'the police barracks' which were from towards the end of the given extract.

Candidates must ensure they read the question carefully.

Question 3

The question asks the candidate how the narrator describes her journey.

Candidates demonstrated at least some understanding of the text and some awareness of the devices used to present ideas.

Some candidates were able to select examples of language use, make relevant points and provide some appropriate references but they did not always explain how these features helped the writer to achieve her effects. Candidates commented on the use of similes, lists and alliteration.

Sometimes candidates made generic comments such as 'it makes it more interesting', 'it helps the reader to visualise' or 'this makes the reader want to read on' which did not clearly explain how the writer has achieved her effects.

A small number of better candidates were able to engage with the writer's use of language and write confidently about the writer's methods with appropriate evidence. They developed their points and began to explore how the writer described the journey rather than what the writer said.

Less successful candidates produced responses that were almost entirely content based without much focus on the writer's techniques. These tended to focus on 'what' the writer said rather than 'how' the writer described the journey. In some responses many quotations were used but these supported a content-based narrative or summary response rather than focusing on the writer's techniques. There was also much evidence of 'feature spotting' where candidates identify (correctly) particular language features and sometimes give examples but do not explain their effectiveness.

Centres need to remind candidates that this question asks **how** the writer achieves their effects not **what** they say.

Question 4

This is a straightforward retrieval question on Text Two which does not require candidates to use their own words.

Most candidates answered this correctly. Popular points identified were: 'it is more relaxing than driving' and 'no route planning, no refuelling, no toll roads'. The latter was either used as individual points or given as the full phrase – either was acceptable. It was noted that some candidates used their own words to respond to this question – this is acceptable but it is not a requirement of the task.

Candidates need to make sure they have read the question carefully.

Question 5

This is a straightforward retrieval question on Text Two which does not require candidates to use their own words.

The majority of candidates answered this correctly. Common correct responses included 'the health benefits', 'the most active and adventurous way to road trip' and 'allowing you to go off the beaten track'. There were not many incorrect responses but 'travelling much lighter' was given by some candidates. This was not given as a reason to encourage cycling by the writer but as a disadvantage. It was noted that some candidates used their own words to respond to this question – this is acceptable but it is not a requirement of the task.

Candidates need to make sure they have read the question carefully.

Question 6

The question asks the candidate how the writer presents his ideas to travellers.

Candidates' responses had similar qualities to the responses to Question 3.

Most candidates were able to identify and explain what the writer was saying and sometimes the language used to express this although there was often a tendency to describe what the chosen examples said rather than how the language was used for effect. As with Question 3, there was a tendency to provide summaries of the content supported by quotations. Most candidates were able to comment on the use of sub-headings and direct address.

Better candidates were able to explore the writer's use of language and structure using a variety of examples. They made valid points about the use of positive language, the effect of the use of direct address and the friendly and colloquial tone.

Less successful candidates produced responses that were content based without much focus on the writer's techniques. Some candidates wrote a summary of the text but did not offer any comments on language or structure. Some candidates simply re-stated their chosen quotations. Sometimes candidates made generic comments such as 'it makes it more interesting', 'it helps the reader to visualise' or 'this makes the reader want to read on' which do not clearly explain how the writer has achieved his effects. There was also evidence of 'feature spotting' where candidates identify (correctly) particular language features but do not explain them.

As with Question 3, centres need to remind candidates that this question asks **how** the writer achieves their effects not **what** they say.

Question 7

This question requires candidates to compare how the writers present their ideas and perspectives about journeys.

Most candidates were able to identify and discuss some basic comparisons and all the candidates made reference to both texts. Some candidates wrote about each text separately with a comparative section at the end which did not allow them to fully develop the comparisons. More successful responses made points of comparison throughout linking the texts.

Better candidates developed a balanced approach in comparing the texts. They developed a wider range of comparisons and explored the writers' ideas and perspectives. They were able to analyse similarities and differences and compare the language as well as the content.

There were a number of candidates who offered valid comparisons but did not provide any kind of support or references to the texts. Some candidates used bullet points to identify relevant points but sometimes did not compare the points identified. These are not successful ways to respond to this question.

Weaker candidates often compared the content. Weaker candidates sometimes wrote about one text and then added some undeveloped points about the other text at the end. The least successful candidates wrote very little.

Centres will need to continue to work with candidates to make sure they have a clear understanding of valid ways of responding to texts in Section A. This should include how to analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve their effects and how to write comparative responses.

Section B (Question 8)

There was some evidence of good teaching and learning in the responses to this section. There was some evidence of planning which was pleasing. The most useful plans were relatively short but allowed candidates to focus and organise their ideas effectively. Plans should be in the answer booklet rather than on an additional sheet.

It was generally felt candidates engaged with this task and some produced lively and convincing responses. The most successful responses had a strong sense of audience and purpose and included personal touches and rhetorical language to engage the audience. On occasions candidates used the bullet points as a way of ensuring that they had covered all of the relevant material.

AO1

Cars, trains, buses, bicycles, helicopters, planes, jeeps, rickshaws and cruise liners were the main types of transport discussed and positive and negative aspects included the cost, comfort, the scenery, the freedom from having to drive or that you have to plan or book, there may be accidents and some forms of transport are slow. The things that might be experienced were contact with other cultures, seeing the countryside/the scenery and getting fit.

Most candidates referred to the three bullet points and managed to cover a reasonable number of points. They were able to cover all three points securely, using the extracts to good effect although a few candidates did not address the second bullet point (negative points about using different types of transport) as fully. Sometimes the candidate was planning to join their friend on the journey which gave them, they felt, much more right to make decisions on the best type of transport.

Better candidates used a systematic approach and fully developed the ideas from the texts or developed their own ideas based on their experiences. They offered a good number of relevant points and made well-focused comments about different types of transport and what might be experienced on the journey.

Weaker candidates directly lifted much material from the source texts or offered undeveloped ideas.

AO4

Most candidates understood the requirement of the task and were able to use the appropriate register for a letter to a friend and there was some clear evidence of an understanding of the purpose, audience and format. The letters often started with a brief catch up and general pleasantries and then most managed to write a letter giving advice, suggestions and warnings about travel. They sounded like a letter to a friend and the writer was able to engage with their audience.

Better candidates used a range of rhetorical techniques confidently, demonstrating a secure sense of purpose and the intended audience. These responses were lively and engaging. The tone was apt and often sympathetic and supportive.

Weaker candidates had problems sustaining the required register throughout their response. They sometimes lost sight of the purpose of the letter and took too long to get to the point. Other weak responses were rather short with undeveloped ideas. Their writing lacked clarity.

AO5

Most candidates were able to write with clarity, organise their ideas and spell a range of vocabulary correctly. They were able to use basic punctuation accurately.

Better candidates had full control of sentence structures and used them for effect. They were able to use a wide range of vocabulary and punctuation. Paragraphing was generally handled well.

Weaker candidates had problems with grammar, despite good spelling and punctuation. They did not use paragraphs which did not help with the organisation of their ideas.

Common errors were: missing out definite and indefinite articles; incorrect subject/verb agreement; comma splicing; weak sentence construction; lack of capital letters, especially for 'I' and sometimes at the start of sentences.

Centres should continue to work to ensure candidates have a clear idea of how to adapt ideas from texts and how to write appropriately for different audiences and purposes. They should also be able to write with accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Section C (Questions 9, 10 and 11)

Question 10 was the most popular question.

There was evidence of some good preparation and teaching in this section. There was evidence of planning which is to be encouraged. However the use of very long plans or draft essays is to be discouraged as they are not a good use of time. Candidates should be encouraged to plan their response in the answer booklet rather than on separate additional sheets.

Examiners commented on how much they enjoyed reading the responses in this section.

Question 9

AO4

On the whole it was felt that candidates who chose this option responded positively. There was evidence that they had been prepared for this type of question.

There were examples where candidates argued for and against but more often candidates agreed with the statement 'Be adventurous'. They discussed ideas such as the opportunity should be seized and anything which pushed you out of your comfort zone and helped you to grow as an individual was something to be applauded; you were only young once and should not waste your youth being cautious. Some did urge caution and explored the fact that being adventurous can be dangerous and that they understood why others would value safety first.

Better candidates produced well organised responses with a range of well-developed ideas. They used a range of techniques successfully to add interest and variety to their writing. The tone was often energetic and enthusiastic.

Weaker candidates offered points that were quite predictable and found it difficult to sustain an argument, often leading to repetition. Weaker candidates often presented muddled ideas or were very brief.

Centres need to ensure that candidates who choose this option are well prepared in argumentative, discursive and rhetorical techniques and are able to develop their ideas effectively.

Question 10

AO4

There were some positive comments on the quality of some of the responses to the title 'The Crossroads'. There were some well-written narratives with engaging plots.

The majority of the candidates focused on a literal, physical crossroads, sometimes leading to opportunities but others involved losing their way, sometimes with very unpleasant endings. Some stories were full of pace and conflict and they were often fast moving.

Some narratives were rather long-winded and convoluted where candidates had developed over-ambitious plots. Sometimes narratives had too much direct speech and this impeded the development of the plot. Some candidates seemed to have inserted the crossroads into the narrative as an afterthought creating a tenuous link to the given title.

Most candidates were able to write a narrative with some sense of plot and development of ideas.

Better candidates planned their ideas well, focused on developing characters as well as plot, selecting details to create pace and sometimes tension.

Weaker candidates lacked development of ideas or the ability to maintain a narrative. They struggled at times with clarity, with muddled storylines and weak endings.

Centres need to ensure candidates have a secure understanding of narrative techniques and the ability to develop a coherent and cohesive personal response.

Question 11

A04

Candidates produced some well written responses that were fully focused on the task of describing a memorable object.

Some of these responses were inevitably narrative based but not to the detriment of conveying the importance of the object itself.

Most candidates were able to describe their chosen object effectively. There was an attempt to describe colour, the texture, the size and the shape of the item. Objects such as a camera, items of clothing, a snow globe, a tennis racquet, a necklace and a scarf were chosen as memorable.

Better candidates described their chosen object in detail. They used effective imagery and successfully described the object and why it was memorable. These responses were enthusiastic and fully focused. Successful writing is often based on real experience and sometimes candidates focused on small objects, often gifts, which provoked memories of people who were special to them or happier times.

Weaker candidates tended to produce responses that were pedestrian, used a limited range of vocabulary and lacked detail. Some responses were too narrative losing the descriptive focus of the task.

Centres need to ensure candidates are aware of the techniques they can use in descriptive writing and also ensure candidates develop a varied vocabulary which they can use appropriately.

A05 Comments across Questions 9, 10 and 11

Spelling and punctuation were generally sound in many responses although there was not a very wide range or evidence of ambition in vocabulary and punctuation choices.

Better responses had full control of a wide range of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Weaker candidates had poor language controls and weak paragraphing. Some examiners commented on a lack of punctuation and many spelling errors.

There was evidence of reasonably accurate spelling and punctuation but examiners commented on candidates who had problems with grammar and

expression. Some of this was unidiomatic English but there were also problems with tenses and sentence structure. These problems limited the effectiveness of the communication.

Common errors were: problems with homophones; missing out definite and indefinite articles; not maintaining the correct verb tense; incorrect subject/verb agreement; comma splicing; lack of capital letters, especially for 'I' and sometimes at the start of sentences.

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.

Summary

Most successful candidates:

- read the texts with insight and engagement
- were able to explore language and structure and show how these are used by writers to achieve effects in response to Questions 3 and 6
- were able to select a wide range of comparisons and explore the writers' ideas and perspectives in response to Question 7
- were able to select and adapt relevant information for Question 8
- wrote clearly with a good sense of audience and purpose in an appropriate register in response to Question 8
- engaged the reader with creative writing that was clearly expressed, well developed and controlled (Questions 9, 10 and 11)
- used ambitious vocabulary
- wrote with accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Least successful candidates:

- did not engage fully with the texts
- were not able to identify language and structure or made little comment on how these are used by writers to achieve effects in response to Questions 3 and 6
- offered very limited comparisons or did not use references to support comparative points in response to Question 7
- sometimes narrated or copied the texts in response to Questions 3, 6 and 7
- did not write in an appropriate register in response to Question 8
- were not able to select and adapt relevant information for Question 8
- were not able to sustain and develop ideas clearly in response to Section C (Questions 9, 10 and 11)
- did not demonstrate accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.