

Mark Scheme with Examiners' Report GCE O Level English Language (7161)

June 2005

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Mark Scheme with Examiners' Report

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE 7161, MARK SCHEME

Section A: COMPREHENSION (30 marks)

Mark questions 1 to 8 according to the following mark scheme and put the mark for each answer in the right-hand margin.

Passage One

1. What are the **three** main educational subjects offered by the National Space Centre?
One mark for each of the following. Mark first three only.
(If quote from start of paragraph, fun = first attempt.)
Science, maths, technology 3 marks

2. The article describes other skills developed during a visit to the National Space Centre. Give **three** of them, in not more than two words each.

Mark first three only and first two words only in each attempt.

Working **together**
Communication (skills)
Problem **solving**
Decision **making**

3 marks

3. The article claims that the National Space Centre is very special. Quote **two** phrases to support that claim.
Allow from 'the NSC...(line 7)'
Allow line 23, whole sentence.
"unlike any attraction you've visited (in the UK)"
"unique (outside North America)" 2 marks

4. Look again at lines 16 to 22. How could a visit to the National Space Centre help you to decide whether you would like to become an astronaut?
Use your own words as far as possible.

Must start with 1st or 2nd person, or use 'one'.

The candidate may refer to the following ideas:

General way of life.
Clothes.
Can I respond quickly enough?
Can I cope with the pressure?
Can I cope with the diet?
Can I cope with the sanitary conditions?
Can I cope with the washing facilities?

Do not credit:

'mission uniforms'
'complete immersion in the mission'
'reaction times'
'stress levels'
'what do they eat?'
'go to the toilet'
'shower'

5 marks

Passage Two

5. The passage states that there are several possible ways of experiencing travel faster than the speed of sound. Give three of these.

Mark first three only, NB NOT Concorde

Fighter pilot/ plane

Astronaut / NASA training/ Space Shuttle

Space tourist / extreme wealth

Advanced qualifications (PhDs)

Mission: Space or Disney space ride

3 marks

6. How do the organisers try to put the potential travellers off the experience of Mission: Space?

Look for effort to re-phrase key words/ ideas. Mark whole answer.

Frightening tone of warnings/ repeated/ frequent

Electronic voice

Mention of travel sickness

Mention of claustrophobia

Suggestion of abandoning trip

Do not credit:

'sinister'

'announcements'

'motion'

'nervous of enclosed spaces'

4 marks

7. The writer describes the sensation of being in space as "having more impact through being on several physical and mental levels." Give (a) one brief quotation which describes a physical sensation and (b) one brief quotation which describes a mental experience.

Mark first attempt for each; if just listed, mark the first as (a) and the second as (b).

Up to 7 words (or 8 for final one on list)

- (a) Head-splitting
Eye-watering
Cheek-sucking
(Involuntary) grunts, gasps and growls
(Most) stomachs are left firmly behind
Weightlessness
Whoozy
I would be sick
Stomach-churning

- (b) Terrified and thrilled (in equal measure)
Fooling the mind
Nerve shredder
Makes you realise what the astronauts go through

2 marks

8. Now consider both passages.

Each passage is about a 'space attraction'. Which passage do you think presents its attraction in a way more likely to persuade members of the public to visit it?

Remember to refer to details of style and content from both passages to explain your choice. You may use brief quotations to support your answer, but try to use your own words as far as possible.

A wide range of possible and valid reasons, which could include:

For NSC

- Direct approach / aimed at audience
- Feelings
- Short paragraphs
- Uniqueness of experience
- Rhetoric
- Direct questions
- Emotive language, eg 'wowed', 'challenges', 'fun'

Against NSC

- Too educational
- Aimed at teachers
- Lacking fun element
- Lacking fear
- Sales pitch
- Language not exciting
- Lists
- Brackets
- The challenges themselves
- The ending

For Mission: Space

- Appeals to all ages
- No direct educational input
- Fear
- Physical sensations
- Very vivid descriptions and quotations
- Tension
- Tone, eg 'you don't even have to be a grown-up'.
- Short paragraphs (mainly)
- Direct voice
- Direct style
- Variety of pace and constructions

Against Mission: Space

- Mention of travel sickness
- Mention of claustrophobia
- Stress/pressure
- Responsibilities
- Some impersonal accounts
- Over-friendly, colloquial style
- Too much detail
- Over-use of compound adjectives
- Over-dramatic

8 marks

Tick appropriate comments.

Check whether both passages have been considered.

Is there some comment on style/language?

- 8 - 6 Clear choice with supporting reasons, showing good understanding and some analysis. Reference to style/ language features, with some examples. Reasons for not choosing other venue.
- 5 - 3 Refers to both texts, showing understanding. Some justification of choice, including some indication of style.
- 2 - 1 Few relevant observations. May refer to only one text. Limited understanding of passages.

Section B: SUMMARY (35 marks)

9. Refer to Passages One and Two.

You and a friend are having a discussion about which space attraction to visit. (You should assume that travel to the site of the attraction is not an issue).

Using ideas and information from both passages, write the text of your discussion.

You will need to include, for each speaker:

- Points in favour of the preferred attraction.
- Points against the other attraction.

Word limit: count to 230 in body of discussion and cross out from end of that sentence. Ignore names if laid out as dialogue, or headings if clear.

Content

Tick any points deserving credit. Maximum number of points is 15.

For NSC:

1. New/ unique
2. Educational
3. Exciting/Challenging/Life or death decisions
4. Credible activities/
5. May help career choices
6. Different roles/ skills/ group tasks

Against NSC:

7. Educational = boring/ long/ role play not my 'scene'/ 'testing' skills not my idea of a day out/ not my idea of fun
8. Simulated, not a real experience
9. Not interested in living conditions of astronauts / not a career aim

For Mission: Space

10. Disney connection/ fun/ entertaining (positive not just factual)
11. New (NB allowable for each attraction)
12. Scary/ enjoy terror
13. Realistic
14. Physical involvement
15. Roles/ Responsibilities
16. Crisis +/- or relief

Against Mission: Space

17. Disney = tacky, in bad taste/ short
18. Warnings, eg mention of sickness/ claustrophobia
19. Fear on the flight itself
20. Physical reactions
21. Artificial crisis / a 'game'/ outcome pre-determined

Tone/ purpose/ sense of argument/ persuasion/ excitement

Please indicate with a T where you feel the candidate has achieved these elements, and add a mark (0 to 5) after the mark content.

4 or 5 should only be awarded where there is a clear balance between the attractions, within the word limit. This sub-total should be added to a mark of up to 15 for Expression and Accuracy as in the table below, and total transferred to the margin.

**Section B: Mark Grid for assessing style, audience, expression and accuracy.
Maximum 9 if reported speech. Maximum 6 if only one speaker.**

Mark range	Candidates should be able to:
15 - 13	Write in a form appropriate to a discussion Use an appropriate register for purpose Use the standard grammatical forms and idioms of English (allow colloquialisms) Show confident use of a range of sentence structures Show considerable skill in organising ideas/countering arguments Write very accurately with regard to spelling and punctuation Express ideas with lucidity and precision Describe vividly using own words and phrases Show control in sustaining theme and tone with clarity of expression
12-10	Write a conversation Show sense of purpose in tone and argument Write clear Standard English Write with a variety of sentence structures Demonstrate skill in organising material/handling argument Use mostly accurate spelling and punctuation Use apt and varied vocabulary, showing a clear attempt to use own words and phrases Show ability to sustain theme and tone
9-7	Show some sense of purpose and format/two speakers Write Standard English reasonably clearly Use some skill in organising material/balancing points Write with some variety of sentence structures Use mainly accurate spelling and punctuation Write with appropriate wording and mostly own words and phrases
6-4	Show a limited awareness of purpose and audience Write understandable English Use at least two types of sentence structure Show some organisation of ideas/sense of dialogue Show some accuracy in spelling and punctuation Write with appropriate vocabulary, but some may be copied from passage
3-1	Write at a level of basic coherence in English Write simple sentences Show a basic understanding of the conventions of spelling and punctuation Demonstrate only minimal original expression Demonstrate little understanding of task/two sides of argument

Section C: ESSAY (35 marks)

10. Choose one of the following titles on which to write in an interesting way. You may wish to adapt ideas from the passages, but copying will be penalised. **Write between 350 and 400 words.**
- (a) "I was scared stiff..." Write about an experience which really frightened you.
 - (b) My ideal career. What would you really like to be, and why?
 - (c) "We need to explore space to find solutions to our problems."
"Re-allocating our resources on Earth will solve our problems."
How do you think we should use our resources to overcome such problems as overcrowding, disease or food shortages?
- 35 marks**

Section C: Mark Grid

Mark range	Candidates should be able to:
35 - 30	Write a lively, relevant and engaging essay, clearly constructed, fluently and accurately presented.
29 - 24	Communicate with some originality ideas related to the topic Write confidently in a form appropriate for selected title Use some rhetorical devices in an appropriate way Offer a wide variety of sentence structures Use some sophisticated grammatical structures Punctuate with accuracy Use a range of vocabulary, spelt with considerable accuracy Use Standard English with accuracy
23 - 18	Communicate relevant ideas clearly and successfully Write in a form appropriate for topic chosen Show successful organisation in writing Show control of paragraphing and punctuation which enhances meaning Use some variety of sentence structure Spell some complex words correctly Use a wide vocabulary, mainly accurately spelt
17 - 12	Communicate ideas with success Structure ideas with some clarity Show control in a generally organised and accurate piece of writing Use correct punctuation and paragraphing to enhance meaning Try to use some variety of sentence structure and links Spell mainly accurately
11 - 6	Communicate ideas linked to title with some success Show some use of paragraphs Show some accuracy and control of agreement, punctuation and sentence construction Employ a limited range of sentence forms Spell with some accuracy

5 - 0

Communicate ideas with limited success
Show limited control in organising written language
Write simple sentences
Show limited accuracy in punctuation, sentence construction and agreement
Spell some commonly used words accurately

Please underline errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar and general expression.
Identify strengths and weaknesses after each script, eg

relevant +
varied expression
personal voice

repetitive -
over-long introduction
sentence boundaries

ENGLISH LANGUAGE 7161, CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

General comments

Most candidates were engaged by the two passages on space attractions and were able to recognise the different aspects of each one. A significant minority, however, seemed confused by the idea of theme parks or visitor attractions and wrote as if they actually had the opportunity to travel into space.

Section A - Comprehension

As always, close reading of the passages and questions is essential to achieve good marks in this section. This is particularly relevant when line references are given or words are highlighted in the questions.

Question 1

Most candidates made a confident start to the paper by identifying precisely the three main educational subjects, but 'space science' was invalid. Some noticed 'three' in bold and picked other groups of three from the text, offering the highlighted items from line 7 or the skills required in question 2.

Question 2

As in question 1, most candidates correctly identified the three skills, but some ignored the two-word instruction, notably exceeding it when explaining problem solving. Other candidates, again, gave other lists of three from the passage.

Question 3

Most gave interesting features of the National Space Centre, including 'new attraction' and 'It's more than a whole lot of fun', but the requirement was for phrases referring to its 'very special' nature - its uniqueness and difference, in lines 8 and 23. The question also required phrases, so some over-long quotations were invalid.

Question 4

Some students made a real effort to re-phrase the key elements by thoughtful wording. Five marks were available from a possible seven aspects, one of which was the general way of life of astronauts, which most scored. It was also important to use first or second person or 'one', as the question asked how 'you' could decide whether to become an astronaut.

Successful glosses which were noted, apart from the suggestions in the mark scheme, included:

'how quickly you react'; 'how I'd respond to tension'; 'go to the loo' or 'evacuate their bowels' or 'take a leak'; 'bath', 'bathe' or 'wash'; 'the sort of meals they have' or 'what they have for dinner'.

The phrases which were most commonly copied, and therefore could not score, were 'reaction times' and 'stress levels', appearing more difficult for those with less wide vocabularies.

Question 5

Most candidates scored two or three marks here. The reference to the Disney ride needed to identify the space aspect to score. Giving Concorde as an answer was the most common error, showing a lack of understanding of line three, that Concorde no longer flies.

Question 6

Although many tackled this question appropriately, fewer scored the maximum marks here. This was either because they did not read the question carefully enough, or did not understand 'put potential travellers off'. They therefore wrote about fear during the trip. The other problem was not being able to re-phrase, or not appreciating the importance of own words to show understanding.

Alternative phrases included: 'claustrophobic' (any spelling accepted!), 'frightened of being in a tiny capsule/small cabin'; 'should re-think whether the ride was suitable', 'should heed the warnings and go home'; 'cautioned several times'. The idea of 'sickness' needed to be linked to travelling, a journey or movement to score. Colloquial phrases, as in question 4, were acceptable.

Question 7

Most candidates managed to identify and quote a physical sensation, but more had difficulties with the mental one. Some gave another physical one, or confused the two. Some lost marks because they paraphrased rather than quoted, or wrote at great length without identifying the relevant words.

Question 8

Good candidates showed evidence of preparation for this type of question, with thoughtful, analytical responses. They gave appropriate evidence for stylistic points, showing clear understanding of the aspects of language use they chose to comment on. Some used appropriate terms but did not substantiate by any reference to the passages. Fewer than in previous sessions gave a list of terms which could have applied to any passage at random. Those who put their points in columns tended to waste time by negating each positive point without gaining further marks - such as commenting on the blue highlights in one which were absent from the other. It is not always necessary or helpful to contrast passages in such detail. Giving reasons for not choosing the other passage can be done in more effective ways.

Examples from stronger candidates, who thought the first passage was more persuasive for potential visitors, included comments on the unfinished and alliterative final sentence with its implicit invitation to be included in a fun and educative experience; the large proportion of questions, rhetorical and other, which involved the reader; the emotive/colloquial language, such as 'Be wowed', 'more than a whole lot of fun'; short paragraphs and limited detail creating a sense of mystery; verbs opening sentences, such as 'Looking for...?' 'Welcome to...', 'Have a go at...', which involve the reader; the overall tone of excitement and mystery.

Reasons for not choosing the second passage included a sense of being patronised by simpler language and being referred to as 'Joe Public'; negative reactions to the Walt Disney connection: 'a money-making scam' (quotation from candidate); 'adjective overkill'; too much emphasis on sensations rather than education: the many hyphenated words were too emphatic, giving the sense that 'the actual attraction couldn't possibly live up to the hype' (quotation from candidate).

Weaker candidates who chose Passage One referred to its 'easier language', comparative brevity, highlighted text and picture made it more accessible; audience of teachers and pupils would help with projects. Few of these candidates supported points with quotations. The second passage, as indicated above, was often commented on by its opposite features rather than specific reasons for not choosing it, for instance it was long or difficult, didn't have blue writing, boring title and aimed at thrill-seekers rather than helping education.

Strong candidates who chose Passage Two wrote with insight and appreciation of aspects such as its appeal to the senses; emotively-charged language, with examples; inclusion of direct speech/visitors' comments; beautiful and evocative language, such as 'velvety blackness with twinkling stars'; and the structure leading to a climax.

Reasons for not choosing Passage One included the focus on education and teachers, rather than the general public; the butt of the joke in the heading being pupils; the relatively simple phrasing; the web-page format which was like an advertisement; with one student commenting on 'the impoverished language, uncensored by anyone with a genuine feel for the beauty of the English Language'.

Few weaker candidates seemed to choose Passage Two, most limiting themselves to paraphrasing its contents or by remarking that by visiting Mission: Space 'you could actually go to space without having to learn about it first.'

A problem that was noted by many examiners was that some candidates had the wrong focus, comparing the attractions rather than the passages, so their answers were confined to content, thus limiting their marks.

Section B - Summary and Directed Writing

Question 9

There were some persuasive arguments in response to this question, with good candidates achieving an authentic, friendly tone, often showing humour and a real sense of credible dialogue. Some spent too long on the preamble, greetings and farewells, which, although adding to the tone, reduced the space for content points. Many 'friends' gave way too easily, or they agreed on the venue from the start, again limiting the range of content and leading to some repetition and reducing the argument/persuasion potential.

Others chose to give two opposing speeches which limited the sense of dialogue. Weaker candidates often ignored one of the venues completely, or had one speaker giving one side only. Some used reported speech or repeated points from Question 8, so reducing scores for content, tone, and expression and accuracy. The weakest wrote about real or imagined journeys into space, ignoring the summary and directed writing purpose of the question.

There was less wholesale lifting, probably because the task required selection and re-arrangement from both passages, but those who did lift more than the occasional phrase often showed a lack of skills in tone and purpose and were also penalised under expression.

Most seemed to keep within the word limit - slightly higher than usual because of the format required - but, as always, examiners counted every summary and optimistic word counts were soon identified.

Candidates should be encouraged to avoid repetition of content points, as each can only score once.

Section C - Essay

Question 10

Choices (a) and (b) proved equally popular.

(a) 'I was scared stiff...' produced a wide variety of stories, ranging through ghosts, attacks by animals, robbers or rebels and natural disasters. Some very moving accounts of the tsunami were written with effective feelings and descriptive powers. There were some memorable encounters with 'salivating snakes', 'trees clotted with locusts' and 'tribes like the Tbjunivan Man who ate human flesh'! One compelling account was of nervousness throughout a solo violin performance in a school concert. Others interpreted the title in a more contemplative way, writing about abuse, culture clashes within families, realisation of mortality or being discovered in a lie. The strongest wrote with conviction, so their well-crafted and shaped accounts were credible and often moving; the weakest re-hashed unconvincing horror stories or tried to adapt prepared essays, often disconcertingly similar to others in their centre, or ended rather disappointingly with 'it was all a dream' or 'I never found out what the weird noises were'.

- (b) Career ambitions inspired the whole range of candidates to write with personal interest and engagement. Youthful enthusiasms were evident, with many wanting to 'help the poor' or 'change the world'. The chosen careers were often professions - medicine, education, the law, and engineering - but also sport, notably football, basketball or cricket, and a wide range which reflected cultural and regional differences as well as world-wide aspirations. These included music of all kinds, acting, fashion design, architecture, marine biology, transport, interpreting, women's rights activities and politics and business of all kinds, often following a family tradition, but sometimes in spite of family antagonism.
- Many saw the need to travel to acquire necessary education, skills and experience, but most, in spite of an acknowledgement of increased earning potential abroad, wrote of returning home to re-pay family and community. Reasons for choices varied from the altruistic to the selfish, often reflecting ambitions linked to their reasons for studying English and other courses.
- Those who spent too long recounting rejected courses, or vacillated between a number of careers, were less successful, as were those who wrote mainly of benefits and disadvantages, without showing understanding or opinions about the realities of the chosen career.
- Some wrote of becoming an astronaut. When this relied too heavily on the passages they were unconvincing and were penalised if lifting was evident. A few, however, wrote with originality and flair, showing convincing detail and emotions.
- (c) Few chose this topic, but they were across the ability range. Able students often drew on knowledge and appropriate vocabulary, from Geography, Economics, Science and other subjects to structure their arguments and substantiate their opinions. There was evidence of cohesion without the structure being too laboured and obvious. Ideas put forward tended to discount space exploration as a solution to the world's problems, feeling that the cost was prohibitive for questionable benefit and would limit research and the ability to focus spending on present and future needs. There were also some strongly felt and expressed political arguments. Weaker candidates tended to write fragmented essays with brief, unconnected paragraphs on a range of problems without a clear link to the space option, or wrote at length about, for example, Aids or religion, again without the framework of the essay title.

Concluding remarks

Candidates wrote with varying degrees of accuracy and skill across all three sections. Some papers were a delight to read, clearly presented, with an awareness of the needs of the exam and the examiner as audience. Even those who appeared to struggle with the passages and tasks usually managed to communicate. As always, technical errors were noted, often with regional variations, but the lack of care with sentence boundaries was a common problem. Some examiners noted a tendency to use over-colloquial phrasing and spelling, such as 'gonna', 'stuff/stuffs', 'wanna' and the usual homophone and lexical confusions, but most scripts were a credit to the hard work of teachers and students. It was disappointing, therefore, to read some scripts from centres where the candidates did not seem to be aware of the requirements of the questions, especially 8 and 9; they could not therefore be rewarded in spite of evident efforts.

It is hoped that the detail in this report, especially regarding those questions, together with the mark scheme and the support material available on the website, will enable more students to tackle future papers with confidence.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE 7161, GRADE BOUNDARIES

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Lowest mark for award of grade	60	50	41	36	29

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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