

Examiners' Report January 2008

GCE O Level

GCE O Level English Language (7161)

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Contents

1. 7161/01 English Language	1
2. Statistics	3

7161/01 English Language

General

The three passages proved to be accessible to the majority of candidates.

Comments on individual questions

Q1 and Q2

Most candidates dealt with these successfully, often helpfully numbering the 3 points required for each question. A minority of candidates came unstuck by confusing the crew inside the submarine with the crew inside the rescue craft.

Q3

The question required candidates to point out that the captain wanted to say goodbye to his wife **and** was pessimistic about the Russian rescue attempt. It is encouraging that a majority of candidates deduced that two points were needed to secure the 2 marks.

Q4(a)

This proved to be a question that discriminated significantly between candidates. It is difficult to find synonyms for “lay flat” and “began to wait” but candidates who at least made the attempt were rewarded.

Q4(b) presented fewer problems.

Q5

Candidates who empathised with the captain’s plight and focused on his response to it scored highly. A minority assumed that the letter was written **after** the rescue, which was inappropriate.

Q6

Again, candidates who searched the passage for **two** relevant points were fully rewarded.

Q7

This question discriminated well between candidates who understood the complexities of the fisherman’s feelings (and had the vocabulary to express them) and those whose overall grasp of the passage was limited.

Q8

Much depended, here, on whether candidates understood the meaning of “impertinence”. There were very few candidates who did not understand it.

Q9

It should be emphasised to candidates that questions of this nature clearly require some comment on the expression (language and style) of the passage if high marks

are to be earned. Centres who prepared candidates well in this regard are to be commended.

It is nevertheless the case that a fairly large minority of candidates spend too much time and space on this question, which is worth 6 marks. The answers of some candidates were longer than their answers for Q11, which is worth 35.

Q10

A number of skills were required for this question - not least the ability to rework the two relevant passages from two different perspectives. Candidates who could clearly empathise with two separate individuals going through markedly distinct experiences scored highly.

It should be noted that the word number restrictions were relaxed on this question, as was clearly signalled in the rubric. Candidates were “**advised** to write **approximately** 150 words for each report”.

It is anticipated that word number restrictions will be similarly relaxed in future papers.

Section C

Q11(a)

There were many possible ways of responding to this question. Some candidates chose to narrate an adventure, some to describe their love of the sea and others to argue in a more philosophical vein. All were valid, of course, but it is worth noting that, if a discursive approach is adopted, it should be carefully structured and controlled if it is to gain high marks.

Q11(b)

This was the most popular choice of the three, and routine chase stories abounded. There were, however, some refreshing considered and sensitive accounts of escaping from the complications of family or working life. The simple approach is often very successful, as in this extract which gives the flavour of a deeply engaging narrative (which also demonstrates control of verb tenses and sentences structured for effect):

“... my phone rang and I was told that the appointment had been cancelled.

Instead of being disappointed, to my surprise the news delighted me. I walked to the park opposite the café and found a bench to sit on. Finally, I had escaped. I had run away from the chaos of a busy life and was able to enjoy the blissful pleasure of solitude.”

Q11(c)

This also produced a mixed bag of responses, even though the question clearly invites a discursive approach. The final comment on Q11(a) is also relevant here.

Statistics

7161/01:

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Lowest mark awarded for grade	64	54	44	39	32

Notes

Maximum Mark (Raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme.

Boundary mark: the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

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