

Examiners' Report January 2009

O Level

O Level English Language (7161)

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General

The two passages were accessible to the vast majority of candidates and provided stimulus for some engaged and engaging writing in answers to questions 8, 9 and 10.

In answering questions 1 to 7, candidates must always keep in mind that the marks awarded for a particular question almost always determine how many points should be presented by the candidates in their answers. For example, 3 distinct points are needed when the maximum number of marks available is 3. Often, candidates who were fully aware of this helpfully numbered or otherwise indicated the separate points they were presenting.

Candidates should also be reminded to read the rubric for each question very carefully. A significant number of candidates failed to read, or ignored, the instruction to write in their **own words**.

Section A

Q1

Most candidates were successful in picking out two relevant points here.

Q2

This was a question requiring the candidates to use their own words and much depended on candidates being able to provide synonymous adjectives to replace those in the passage, eg "suffocated" to replace "stifled".

Q3

There was plenty to go at, here, to answer the question and most candidates scored highly.

Q4

There were a number of possible correct answers and, again, many candidates gained maximum marks.

Q5

This proved to be a useful discriminator between levels of understanding. Most were able to point out that Raghu accused the others of cheating. Far fewer were able to make the inference that he tried to stop the children moving from the veranda and so prevent the game from taking place at all.

Q6

A number of candidates made the erroneous inference that the head teacher was concerned about inappropriate touching between boys and girls. However, the vast majority missed the point that non-violent play involving contact (often between girls) had to be banned along with rougher games so that neither boys nor girls felt unfairly discriminated against.

Q7

This question discriminated between those candidates who did not grasp subtleties or who missed inferences and those who did. It was again necessary to find appropriate synonyms for adjectives and a significant number of candidates penalised themselves by making no attempt to use their own words.

Q8

In the view of most examiners, this question was answered better than similar questions in the past. Although a small minority of students are still writing too much in answer to a question that carries only 8 marks, it was evident that it was possible to gain maximum marks with a concise and comparatively lean answer. Candidates must remember to express a clear preference and must make **specific** references to language and style, preferably supported by brief quotations.

It was encouraging to see a substantial number of candidates commenting on presentational devices.

Section C

Q9

This is always a very challenging question and it is useful advice to candidates that they should be concerned less with layout and word-count and more with content and style. The focus should be firmly on purpose, audience and appropriate tone.

In this case, successful candidates needed to directly address an audience of parents and give **advice**. Although there were two sides to the argument, the task clearly required some conclusions that would be helpful to the potential readers.

Section C

Q10(a)

Considering that this required a discursive approach, it was encouraging to note that this was the second most popular choice. The topic obviously struck a note with many candidates. As always, successful answers were those that resisted the temptation to be narrowly anecdotal but to be well-planned and to take a wider view.

Q10(b)

This question required the demonstration of genuine descriptive skills. Some candidates who set out to describe a holiday or those that attempted to describe an area of the globe such as the Sahara Desert inevitably did less well than those who were able to provide a vivid description of a specific scene.

10(c)

This was the most popular choice of the three. The most successful had, in the words of one examiner "a strong emotional charge".

English Language, 7161 Grade Boundaries

Paper No	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E
01	100	68	59	50	45	39

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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January 2009

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