

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
in English Language B (4EB0)
Paper 01

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General Comments

The texts were accessible across the full range of abilities and enabled candidates to respond appropriately. Examiners commented positively on the engagement with the topic of music and studying that the candidates showed. It was felt that the topic was particularly accessible for most candidates.

Better candidates engaged fully with both texts and responded with sensitivity and fluency. In response to the writing tasks they produced lively and confident responses which were well controlled and accurate. Weaker candidates sometimes struggled to understand the passages. Their writing lacked coherence and the use of idiomatic English.

There were problems this series with some candidates who copied all or considerable chunks of the passages in response to Question 11. This can never be a successful way to respond as the candidate are required to produce their own work. Similarly, responses to Question 12 should be original and not prepared essays or re-worked plots from novels or films.

Some responses to Question 11 and 12 lacked paragraphing. Candidates must understand that the lack of effective paragraphing will limit the success of the response.

There was some good evidence of teaching and learning in the responses to this exam and examiners noted that many candidates now understand how to respond to Question 10.

Section A (Questions 1-10)

This consists of mainly short answer questions that require candidates to locate and retrieve relevant information. Some questions required candidates to use their own words. Question 10 is longer requiring candidates to give a personal response and justify it with references to the text.

There were some very good answers to questions 1-9 but many candidates continued to have difficulty with the requirement for own words thus limiting their performance.

A few candidates also ignored the line references in some questions. Questions 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7 were generally well done and where candidates lost marks it was because they made unclear points or misinterpreted the questions. Examiners commented that a few candidates used their own words for these short retrieval questions when there is no need.

Examiners commented that responses to questions requiring candidates to use their own words (3, 5 and 8) quite often had direct lifting from the texts. This seemed to be more of a problem than in previous series with some candidates using quotations from the texts in quotation marks. However, some examiners commented positively on candidates' attempts to use their own words, especially the use of synonyms. Some examiners

commented that some candidates became entangled in tortuous phrases composed to avoid lifting from the text.

Question 3:

Many candidates were able to identify the first four points on the mark scheme; however, a significant number had difficulty re-wording them sufficiently. Sometimes this affected the response but examiners commented that many candidates had responded successfully to this question.

Many candidates incorporated key terms such as 'steady state speech', or 'distracting', within their own words. Better candidates found synonyms for key words, such as using 'off-putting' in place of 'distracting'. A number of candidates did not attempt to write in their own words and simply copied the relevant phrases from the text.

Question 5:

Although examiners commented on some lifting in response to this question it was generally observed that many candidates were able to re-work the material sufficiently and find three relevant points. Many candidates successfully used the term 'cheaper' in place of 'come down in price'. There was still some lifting, however, most frequently of 'affordable'.

Question 8:

Many candidates were able to identify more than three positive points about listening to music; however, examiners commented that a number of candidates had problems with the requirement to use their own words. Many responses successfully used the terms 'relax', or 'stress', as synonyms. Weaker responses quoted the terms 'reduction in muscle tension' and 'hyperactivity'.

Centres need to work with candidates to develop their vocabulary and ensure that candidates realise they must attempt to produce responses to these questions using their own words.

Question 9:

Some examiners commented that more candidates responded to this question more successfully than in previous series. Better candidates were able to use their own words to identify the points, showing clear understanding of the text and provide appropriate quotations in support; however, a significant number of candidates did not use their own words for their points, despite the rubric, which meant they could not achieve any marks. Some candidates put quotation marks around their points which suggested they did not understand how to respond to the question. A quotation followed by another quotation does not demonstrate the candidate has an understanding of the text. Similarly, a number of candidates produced paraphrases of their chosen support as their point – often too close to the text to be rewarded. Some candidates used the wrong

section of the text in their responses despite it being clearly stated in the question.

Centres need to ensure that candidates understand how to respond to the first part of this question by making the point in their own words and not a quotation then supporting it with a relevant quotation from the passage.

Question 10:

Examiners commented that the responses to this question have improved over recent series and there were many successful responses to this question. There were clear responses to this task showing that candidates had been well prepared for this question. Candidates now have a secure understanding of what is required. If candidates are able to offer two clear reasons why they have chosen a text and support them with two clear references (quotations or indirect references) and a clear reason for not picking the other text with appropriate support they will produce a successful response.

Most candidates chose Text 2, perhaps because the views it expressed mirrored their own. Better responses had clearly identified reasons and appropriate support for their choices. Successful responses looked specifically at examples of language techniques such as rhetorical questions, speaking directly to the reader and using a variety of sources, thus giving very clear examples from the text to support their comments. There were a few candidates who only responded on their chosen text which limited their achievement.

A number of candidates did not provide support for their reason for not choosing one of the texts. Weaker responses tended to paraphrase the texts, retelling the passages. Some weaker candidates made their choice based on the difficulty of the vocabulary or that they thought one of the texts was boring. These problems suggest that some candidates have not been prepared for this task and unfortunately these problems limited candidates' achievement. Centres need to continue to work with candidates to make sure they have a clear understanding of valid ways of responding to texts.

Section B

Question 11:

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. Unfortunately, long plans and re-drafting wasted time and often affected the final response as it was rushed. Plans should be in the answer booklet rather than on an additional sheet.

It was generally felt candidates engaged with this task. Some candidates produced lively and convincing responses, this was probably because of the subject matter, and there was considerable personal engagement. The majority of candidates used the bullet points to structure their writing. Most candidates understood the requirement of the task and were able to use the appropriate register for a website contribution. Some used various presentation features of an article, such as subheadings and bullet points successfully in their responses. Examiners commented that some candidates used an appropriate register at the beginning and ending of their response but failed to maintain it throughout the response.

More successful responses integrated ideas from both texts and wrote fluent and lively prose with a clear sense of audience and purpose. Weaker responses lifted parts of the original texts and made little attempt to adapt the material. Some candidates had problems sustaining the required register throughout their response. Language controls were not always secure, especially grammar, and some responses lacked paragraphing. The three bullet points provide a rudimentary structure which should help students to use basic paragraphing.

Examiners commented that a number of candidates directly lifted content from the original texts which affected the overall quality of the response. Some responses started out using their own words in an introductory paragraph, only to then increasingly rely on the texts to the point where they stopped using their own words. Centres need to remind candidates that copying from the texts cannot be rewarded. This was more of a problem this series.

Section C

Question 12:

12b was the most popular question answered.

There was evidence of some good preparation and teaching in this section. There was evidence of planning in this section 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, as in previous series, commented on how much they enjoyed reading the responses in this section.

Question 12a:

The topic of qualifications seemed to engage candidates and one examiner commented that candidates of all abilities were able to offer reasonable points on this topic. There were some very good responses to this question which seemed to appeal to mature students particularly. These were well written with ambitious vocabulary and clear and developed arguments. Candidates argued passionately both for and against the topic.

The favourite argument, often well made, was that the Internet (and talent shows) made it possible to achieve without qualifications. Bill Gates, Richard Branson, Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg are obviously known well across the globe and they appeared frequently in responses.

Candidates pointed out that flair, intelligence, quick wit and an eye for the main chance were just as important in some professions as paper qualifications while other candidates were equally emphatic that in such professions as medicine, engineering and aviation, we not only expect, but insist, that they should be as rigorously trained and as well qualified as possible. Some candidates referred to the nature of success and how we measure it, pointing out that currently we use the yardsticks of fame and wealth, which measure only certain kinds of material success.

Weaker candidates did not maintain a clear line of argument or structure the response successfully. Better responses were fully controlled with accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar, however the weaker responses had poor language controls and weak paragraphing. 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 12b:

There was a wide range of interpretations of the title with many candidates choosing an imaginative response but also some successful accounts of real events that the candidate had experienced. Many candidates handled this task with enthusiasm. Examiners commented that many candidates showed

their ability to be imaginative and engaging. There were some brutal and violent pieces and others went into a fantasy world e.g. where everything was suddenly made of sweets and people did strange things or they met a talking dog. Strange weather, strangely empty cities, strange responses from the boss were all popular.

Some examiners commented that some of the ideas were a little far-fetched or overly complicated. Some were a list of strange events with little development of ideas; others had a strong narrative voice and developed ideas effectively and engagingly using a wide range of devices and had a strong vocabulary. There were a number of responses that ended with 'it was all a dream' which suggests that candidates did not know how to end their writing.

Similarly, some candidates produced lists of un-natural, supernatural or bizarre incidents, which, instead of resolving, simply stopped – usually on the sentence 'What a strange day!'

There was some evidence of prepared essays and also the use of films, games and books for plot lines. Better responses were able to create tension and use effective description and dialogue with good technical accuracy. Weaker responses lacked development of ideas or the ability to maintain a narrative together with poor language controls. Centres need to ensure candidates have a secure understanding of narrative techniques and the ability to develop a coherent personal response.

Question 12c:

Some examiners commented that this question produced some of the best responses to Section C. Examiners commented with enthusiasm about the quality of some of the responses. They commented that candidates tapped into a rich vein of experience and a wide range of peaceful places. One examiner commented 'The writing was often authentic, alive, and possessed of the writers' own energy, and really was a pleasure to read.'

The best responses showed precision and clarity generated by the candidates' personal involvement. Popular choices for a peaceful place included beaches, forests, homes and rooms but more unusual choices were the womb, death and heaven.

Sometimes the choice of the place strained the normal definition of peaceful e.g. a busy market or a football match. One candidate wrote about how peaceful s/he found the City of Colombo and another candidate described how peaceful he was finding the exam room whilst completing his IGCSE English B exam, in comparison to the noise of his usual life and home.

Better responses were detailed and lively with fully developed ideas. Weaker candidates tended to lose the focus on the descriptive nature of the task and lapse into narrative or produce responses that tended to be pedestrian and lacked detail. Better responses had full control of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Weaker candidates had poor language controls and weak paragraphing. Centres need to ensure candidates are aware of the techniques they can use in descriptive writing. Centres must also ensure candidates develop a varied vocabulary.

Quality of Written Communication (QWC)

This is assessed in Questions 11 and 12.

Better responses were accurate using a wide range of grammatical constructions, punctuation and vocabulary.

As in previous series, there was evidence of good spelling and reasonably accurate punctuation but most 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. 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
- selected relevant points in response to the reading questions
- used their own words in response to questions that required them in Section A
- used their own words in response to Question 11
- wrote clearly with a good sense of audience and purpose in an appropriate register in response to Question 11
- engaged the reader with creative writing that was clearly expressed, lively, well developed and controlled (Question 12)
- 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 find enough relevant points in response to the reading questions

- did not attempt to use their own words in response to questions that required them in Section A
- did not write in an appropriate register in response to Question 11
- were not able to select and adapt relevant information for Question 11
- sometimes copied from the original texts in response to Question 11
- were not able to sustain and develop ideas clearly in response to Section C (Question 12)
- sometimes used prepared essays or copied plots from films, games and novels in response to Section C (Question 12)
- did not demonstrate accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

