

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

International GCSE English Language,
Specification B

(4EB0) Paper 1

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Introduction

The texts were accessible across the full range of abilities and enabled students to respond appropriately. Examiners commented on the engagement with the topic of volunteering that the students showed. As the exam is untiered, the full range of ability was seen in the responses.

Better students were able to engage fully with both texts and respond with sensitivity and fluency. In their writing they produced lively and confident responses which were well controlled and accurate. Weaker students sometimes struggled to understand the passages. Their writing lacked coherence and the use of idiomatic English.

There are still students who copy out all or considerable chunks of the passages in response to Q11. This can never be a successful way to respond as the student is required to produce their own work. Similarly responses to Q12 should be original and not prepared essays or regurgitated film plots.

Some responses to Q11 and Q12 lacked paragraphing, not just the weaker ones. Students must understand that the lack of effective paragraphing will limit the success of the response. Some examiners commented that there was little evidence of proof reading in the responses to Q11 and Q12 and that proof reading might have improved these responses. There was some evidence that students were not leaving enough time for the longer questions (Section B and C). This resulted in brief and/or unfinished responses which limits students overall achievement.

There was good evidence of teaching and learning in the responses to this exam.

Section A (Questions 1-10)

Q1-Q9 are short answer questions which require students to locate and retrieve relevant information. Some questions required students to use their own words. Q10 is longer requiring students to give a personal response and justify it with references to the text.

There were some very good answers to Qs 1-9 but many students continued to have difficulty with the requirement for own words in Qs 3, 5 and 9, thus limiting their performance. Examiners commented that responses to these questions often had direct lifting from the passage although this was less evident in responses to Q9. Centres need to work with students to develop their vocabulary and ensure that they realise they must attempt to produce responses to these questions using their own words.

Qs 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7 generally produced successful responses as these are basic retrieval questions; however, examiners noted students attempting to use their own words in these responses. Examiners also noted that students are giving too many points in response to some of these questions. Students should note the mark allocation for questions as a guide to how much information they need to find.

Q8 produced a variety of responses with most students able to provide positive points but not all were successful in offering valid support for them. Some students simply copied parts of the passage which although relevant meant that they had not clearly identified the point the writer made. Some students struggled to identify points and then find appropriate support. Centres need to ensure that students do not respond to the first part of this question by copying the passage but by making the point in their own words and then supporting it with reference to the passage.

For Q10, there were clear responses to the task showing that students had been well prepared for this question and had a secure understanding of what is required. Many students recognised that one extract was an advertisement, whilst the other was a first person account of someone's experiences and feelings. Most students were able to make some sort of choice but only the more able were able to provide developed ideas and close reference to the texts that the task required. There were some students who only responded on their chosen text or gave a very brief response for the text not chosen which limited their achievement. Some students did not provide support for the reason for the text not chosen. Examiners commented that many responses were content based rather than analysing the impact of the texts or how persuasive they were. Some students summarised the texts and so missed the focus of the question. Some weaker students made their choice based on their like or dislike for the activities offered e.g. because they liked working in groups or because they

wanted to work with children. There are still some students who provide rather weak reasons for their choices e.g. 'It is too difficult'; 'I don't understand it'; 'It has too many long words'. These problems suggest that some students have not been prepared for this task and unfortunately these problems limited students' achievement. Centres need to continue to work with students to make sure they have a clear understanding of valid ways of responding to texts.

Section B (Q11)

There was 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 students to focus and organise their ideas effectively. Unfortunately long plans 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.

There were some lively and very effective responses. Most students understood the requirement of the task however not all were able to use the appropriate register for a speech. More successful responses were striking in both their focus on the texts and their ability to write a convincing speech. Some students had thought the material through very carefully and adopted a convincing persona to enliven their presentation. There were quite a few witty speeches and some with imagined dialogue with an audience. Many were sound with the majority deciding that an introductory 'hello everyone' and a final 'thanks for listening', together with direct address, served the purpose of producing a speech.

Some students had problems sustaining the required register for a speech throughout their response. There were some responses that did not use the ideas from the texts as a focus for their responses but better students were able to integrate ideas from the texts with their own points very effectively. Others did not cover the three bullet points (the most commonly missed was the second one on the ways volunteering can help). There was enough relevant material in the two texts for students to use to address all three bullet points. Centres should remind students that they must try to cover all three bullet points otherwise their achievement for AO1 will be limited. The bullet points provided guidance for content and structure which was helpful for some students. Examiners commented that some students directly lifted content from the original texts which affected the overall quality of the 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. Centres need to remind students that lack of accurate paragraphing will limit their achievement.

Section C (Q12)

Q12(b) was the most popular.

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. Students 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.

Q12(a) produced some well written responses with ambitious vocabulary and clear and developed arguments. Examiners commented that it was good to read some passionate responses in support of teenagers. Stronger responses took issue with the title and were able to argue cogently about the merits of young people. There were strongly felt responses both for and against the topic.

Some examiners commented that, although there were clear ideas, some responses lacked organisation and structure limiting the response. Some of the responses seem to have been rather limited suggesting students had not chosen well. Similarly, it was observed that some students had difficulty delivering a sustained argument. 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 students who choose this option are well prepared in argumentative, discursive and rhetorical techniques and are able to develop their ideas effectively.

Q12(b) produced some original ideas with a wide range of interpretations of the title. Some of these were rather tenuous. Gambling, winning the lottery, academic success and being given opportunities to play for top sports' teams were all popular together with a number of death bed scenes offering advice to take a chance. Some examiners commented on how lively and interesting the responses were. The best responses created atmosphere and tension, often with a surprising ending. These responses used 'Chance' as a theme that permeated the narrative and were able to create tension and use effective description and dialogue with good technical accuracy. Some students did not entirely focus their response on 'Chance' mentioning it only in the last paragraph. Some were very hard to follow with complicated plot lines that were poorly controlled in terms of grammatical structuring and tenses. Occasionally it was felt that weaker students did not understand the title. There was some evidence of prepared essays although less than in previous series, which was pleasing.

Weaker responses had poor language controls and limited and underdeveloped ideas, often with weak paragraphing. Centres need to ensure students have a

secure understanding of narrative techniques and the ability to develop a coherent personal response.

Q12(c) produced some well written responses that were fully focused on the task effectively describing the student's chosen possession. The popular choices were mobile phones, other technology or jewellery but there was a surprisingly wide selection. Better responses were detailed and related their chosen possession to personal significance. Some students were able to create a convincing picture of their chosen possession with good vocabulary choices and evidence of crafting. Weaker students tended to list features in responses that tended to be pedestrian and lacked detail. There were some students who misunderstood the title as 'profession' or 'passion' and there was some evidence of inappropriate choice e.g. grandparents, children, my brain. Better responses had full control of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Weaker students had poor language controls and weak paragraphing. Centres need to ensure students are aware of the techniques they can use in descriptive writing and also ensure students develop a varied vocabulary.

Quality of Written Communication (QWC)

This is assessed in Q11 and Q12.

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

There was evidence of good spelling and reasonably accurate punctuation but most examiners commented on students who had problems with grammar/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 students to express themselves clearly and access the higher mark bands.

Summary

Most successful students:

- 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
- Wrote clearly with a good sense of audience and purpose in an appropriate register in response to Q11
- Engaged the reader with creative writing that was well structured and developed (Q12)
- Used ambitious vocabulary
- Wrote with accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar

Least successful students:

- Did not engage fully with the texts
- Did not 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
- Did not write in an appropriate register in response to Q11
- Were not able to select and adapt relevant information for Q11
- Sometimes copied the original texts
- Were not able to sustain and develop ideas in response to Section C (Q12)
- Sometimes used prepared essays
- Did not demonstrate accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar

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