

# Examiners' Report

January 2013

International GCSE English Language B  
(4EB0)

Paper 1

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## Introduction

Candidates found the two texts accessible and on the whole responded positively to both texts. Text 2 – Barack Obama – was more challenging for some candidates. There were some candidates who did not engage with the texts but the majority responded with some engagement.

## Section A (Questions 1-10)

Questions 1-9 which are short answer questions require candidates to locate and retrieve appropriate information.

Question 10 required candidates to make a personal response to both of the texts and to support their comments with references to the texts.

### Questions 1-9

Many examiners commented that candidates responded quite well to these questions and were able to identify relevant points. For **question 1** a significant number of candidates responded in ways that missed the point that it was uncertain or unclear whether Happy's father was dead. Some responses to **question 5** lost marks because they listed the three meals she cooked as separate points. Occasionally candidates confused Barack Obama, his father and his grandfather in their responses to **question 7**.

**Question 3** and **7** required candidates to use their own words and some examiners commented that it was pleasing to see candidates trying to use their own words in these responses and that better candidates are using synonyms. However, many examiners commented that a significant number of candidates continued to have difficulty with the requirement for own words and are still simply copying from the texts thus limiting their performance.

**Question 9** Candidates found this question more challenging this series with examiners commenting that candidates were often able to provide the support, but were unable to identify the reactions that the question required. This limited candidates' responses as candidates could not gain a mark solely for providing the support without identifying a relevant reaction. Centres should work with candidates to ensure that they have a clear idea of what is required for this question.

## Question 10

Most candidates were able to make some sort of choice, but only the more able provided developed ideas and close reference to the texts that the task required. There were some candidates who only responded on their chosen text which limited their achievement. Some candidates summarised the texts and so missed the focus of the question. Better candidates were able to focus closely on the idea of using their chosen text to explain what it is like to meet someone for the first time. Some candidates dismissed the Obama text because they did not see any connection with meeting someone for the first time.

There were responses that showed that candidates have been well prepared for this question and had a good grasp of what is required. The better responses referred to the writers' techniques and supported the choice they made with good evidence in the form of quotations and developed explanations. However, there were some rather spurious reasons given to support the choice made, for example 'I didn't choose the passage because I didn't like it'; 'I don't like Barack Obama'; 'The sentences are too long'. Centres should continue to work with candidates to make sure that they have a clear understanding of valid ways to respond to written texts. There were some candidates who confused Text 1 and 2 and, while examiners marked these responses positively, it would be helpful if candidates could check carefully to ensure there is no confusion.

## **Section B (Question 11)**

There were some lively, humorous responses and some individual responses. There was some evidence of planning which is to be encouraged. This helped candidates to focus and organise their ideas effectively. A few candidates took too long on the plan or rough draft to the detriment of the final response.

Most candidates were able to use the appropriate register for a letter to a friend. A few candidates did not write strongly with the appropriate register and their responses tended to lack a strong tone. More successful responses were striking in both their focus on the task and their ability to write a convincing letter for a friend. There were some responses that did not use the ideas from the texts as a focus for their responses but some were able to combine the ideas from the texts effectively with their own ideas. A significant number of candidates did not securely cover the 3 bullet points. Stronger responses covered the 3 bullet points, whereas weaker responses tended to address only 2 (either 1st and 2nd or 2nd and 3rd). Some examiners commented that weaker candidates only concentrated on the party and did not make much comment on before and after.

Centres need to ensure that candidates understand that they should attempt all three bullet points and ensure they are able to select appropriate material and ideas from the texts. The bullet points provided guidance for content and structure which was helpful for some candidates. They can also help with rudimentary paragraphing. A number of examiners commented on candidates whose responses consisted mainly of copying from the original texts or who copied considerable chunks of the texts with little attempt at re-working. These responses cannot be rewarded as they do not show understanding.

Many examiners commented that language controls were not always secure, especially grammar and sentence structure, and some responses lacked paragraphing, which limits candidates' achievement.

## Section C (Question 12)

Question 12(b) was the most popular choice and examiners commented on how much they enjoyed reading the responses in this section.

There was some evidence of planning which is to be encouraged. A short plan will help candidates focus on the task, but lengthy plans and draft responses are not a good use of time.

There was evidence of some good preparation and teaching in this section. Pleasingly examiners commented that there seemed to be less evidence of prepared responses, although there were still a few. There were also some examples of prepared paragraphs inserted into candidates' own work and some over-use of clichés and hackneyed phrases. Candidates should be reminded that examiners want a personal response and prepared responses will never be successful.

There were some excellent, well worded and interesting essays with a clear structure and imaginative expression.

**Question 12(a)** was the least popular response with examiners commenting that it seemed to be chosen by either quite able candidates, who produced well written responses with ambitious vocabulary and clear and developed arguments, or by weak candidates whose responses seem to have been rather limited suggesting candidates had not chosen well.

Better responses produced well developed arguments and an individual voice with a good control of spelling, punctuation and grammar. The weaker responses were sometimes based too closely on the texts and tended to have few arguments and weak language controls. Centres need to ensure that if candidates are to choose this type of essay, they are fully prepared in argumentative, discursive and rhetorical techniques and are able to develop their ideas effectively.

Better responses were fully controlled with accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar, however the weaker responses had poor language controls and weak paragraphing.

**Question 12(b)** produced some original ideas with a wide range of interpretations of the title. Some examiners commented on how enjoyable these were to mark.

The most common responses focused on a school/family reunion. One examiner commented on a number of re-worked film plots with little attempt at disguise and another commented that a few candidates did not seem to know what the word 'Reunion' meant. Some responses did not focus on the task and offered a prepared essay or used prepared opening paragraphs. These responses can never be successful as they are not focused on the given task. Comments were also made about rather dubious links to the title with gun battles and plots with unconvincing twists. Centres need to ensure that candidates understand that they must write to

the given title and not simply adapt another essay or idea. Responses that lose focus on the task will not be able to access the full range of marks.

Better responses were able to create anticipation and use effective description and dialogue with good technical accuracy. Weaker responses had poor language controls and limited and underdeveloped ideas.

**Question 12(c)** produced some well written responses that were fully focused on the task effectively describing the candidate's chosen person (most commonly parents/family members). Examiners did comment that other choices of influential people e.g. sporting heroes, Bill Gates, Mother Theresa, were a pleasant change with one examiner saying 'The appearance of David Beckham in one response was a relief and I never thought I'd say that!' Examiners commented that candidates were able to explain their thoughts and feelings and why they had chosen that particular person. Better candidates were often passionate about their chosen person and clearly explained what it was that made them admire the person using varied vocabulary in responses that were clearly structured with evidence of crafting. Weaker responses 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.

Examiners commented on the lack of paragraphing, often in weaker responses but also in responses which were well written. Candidates must understand the need for effective paragraphing. The lack of it will limit the success of the response.

## **Quality of Written Communication**

This is assessed in Questions 11 and 12.

There was evidence of some good spelling and some reasonably accurate punctuation but most examiners commented on candidates who had problems with grammar. Some of this was unidiomatic English but there were also problems with tenses, prepositions and sentence structure. There were problems with the incorrect use of capital letters (for proper nouns but also used randomly across the writing). There were also some problems with punctuation e.g. missing apostrophes, comma splicing and the incorrect use of question marks and exclamation marks. These problems hindered the clarity of 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 levels.

### **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
- 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 candidates:

- 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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