

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2016

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

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Introduction

The texts were accessible across the full range of abilities and enabled candidates to respond appropriately. Examiners commented on the engagement with the topics that the candidates showed.

Better candidates 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 candidates sometimes struggled to understand the passages. Their writing lacked coherence and the use of idiomatic English.

Most examiners commented that a significant number of candidates do not use own words in the questions that ask for them. It is essential that candidates should try to use their own words in order to be successful in responding to these questions.

There are still a few candidates who copy out all or considerable chunks of the extracts in response to Question 11. This can never be a successful way to respond as the candidate is required to produce their own work and show the ability to adapt the original texts for a different audience and purpose. Similarly responses to Question 12 should be original and not prepared essays or re-worked plots from novels, games or films.

Some responses to Question 11 and 12 lacked paragraphing, not just the weaker ones. Candidates must understand that the lack of effective paragraphing will limit the success of the response. Some examiners commented that this was less of a problem than in previous series.

There was evidence of some good teaching and learning in the responses to this exam and examiners commented that many candidates seemed well prepared on the whole.

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. Questions 1, 3, 5, 6 and 8 generally produced successful responses although examiners did comment that a few candidates lost marks on Question 6, missing the second bullet point on the mark scheme. Occasionally in response to Question 8, candidates wrote about feelings rather than reactions and so lost marks. Some examiners

also commented that candidates offered more points than were required or used own words when these questions were simply retrieval questions. Examiners commented that responses to the short questions requiring candidates to use their own words (Questions 2, 4 & 9) quite often had direct lifting from the texts. This seemed to be a continuing problem with some candidates using quotations from the texts in quotation marks. If candidates do not attempt to use their own words their responses to these questions will not be successful. However some examiners commented positively on candidates' attempts to use their own words. Centres need to work with candidates to develop their vocabulary and ensure that they realise they must attempt to produce responses to these questions using their own words.

Question 7 - 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. A number of candidates used quotation marks for their points suggesting they do not understand the requirement to use own words. Similarly a number of candidates produced paraphrases of their chosen support as their point – often too close to the text to be rewarded. However many candidates were able to identify relevant points and provide support for them. A significant number of candidates misread the opening sentence to mean that the writer was scared by the crowd, the noise and the anticipation and so lost marks. Centres need to work with candidates to ensure they understand that they must attempt to provide points in their own words and not use quotations from the text for their points.

Question 10 provided varied responses with most candidates able to make some sort of choice but only the more able could provide developed ideas and close reference to the texts that the task 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 developed explanation) and a clear reason for not picking the other text with appropriate support they will produce a successful response. Better responses had clearly identified reasons and appropriate support for their choices. There were some candidates who only responded on their chosen text which limited their achievement. Many responses recognised that text one made more general points about a variety of fans, whereas text two was about one boy's experience of one particular match. Many responses also recognised that text one was more 'positive' whereas text two focused on fear, anxiety and defeat and therefore was 'negative'. 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. Some candidates misunderstood the focus of the question and produced a personal response to the content of the extracts. Choices were balanced with no overall favourite. Some examiners commented that candidates seemed better prepared for this question than

in previous series. 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 evidence of some good teaching and learning in the responses to this section.

Examiners commented that planning would help candidates in responding to this question and 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 there were some long plans and re-drafting of the whole responses which 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.

Most candidates understood the requirement of the task and were able to use the appropriate register for a letter to a friend. It was generally felt candidates engaged with this task and some produced lively and convincing responses. The topic of a live sporting event seemed to engage the majority of the candidates especially those from the Indian sub continent who often wrote enthusiastically about cricket matches. The most effective responses referenced ideas from the texts and successfully built on these and linked them to a reference to an upcoming sports event. Candidates chose a range of events but the most common were football matches and cricket matches. Most candidates were able to write a friendly and persuasive letter, which included details about the sporting event of choice, the experiences and feelings likely to be felt. Examiners commented positively on the range of techniques used successfully by candidates. Some candidates had problems sustaining the required register throughout their response and a number of candidates did not adopt the relevant style and register for the letter and produced responses that were more like essays. There were some responses that did not use the ideas from the texts as a focus for their responses but better candidates were able to integrate ideas from the texts with their own points very effectively. Others did not cover the three bullet points in sufficient detail (the third one on people who may be met was most commonly missed). Occasionally candidates lost focus on the task by re-telling in detail sporting events they had attended in the past. Examiners commented that some candidates directly lifted content from the original texts which affected the overall quality of the response but some felt that this was less than in previous series. 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 candidates that

lack of accurate paragraphing will limit their achievement. Centres should work to ensure candidates have a clear idea of how to write appropriately for different audiences and purposes.

Section C (Question 12)

12b 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. Candidates 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.

Question 12a produced some well written responses with ambitious vocabulary and clear and developed arguments. A number of examiners commented positively on the quality of the responses to this task. There was evidence of genuine engagement with the topic of sport in school in some of the responses. Examiners commented that this was an accessible topic for many of the candidates with many commenting on the physical, psychological and sociological benefits of sport. Arguments in favour discussed improving academic results, health, exercise, team building, leadership skills and fun; those against cited lack of space or facilities, lack of ability and bullying. Weaker candidates had problems with both maintaining a clear argument and structuring their responses. 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: The title 'A Lesson Learned' produced some original ideas with a wide range of interpretations of the title. A full range of responses was seen. Many candidates handled this task with enthusiasm and the ability to develop a well-constructed short story was often very impressive. Some examiners commented that some of the ideas were a little far-fetched. Many plots involved various kinds of brutality, suffering, retribution, atrocious road accidents and hospital casualty departments. Despite this, most were strongly moralistic ensuring that the good ended happily and the bad unhappily. A common plot was an experience where the writer had not listened to parental advice. Some candidates were too

ambitious and used either too much information or an over-complicated plot. There was some evidence of prepared essays with the lesson learned added as an afterthought. 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 produced some well written responses that were fully focused on the task of describing a frightening place. Examiners did comment that a significant number of candidates wrote a response that was more narrative than descriptive, losing the focus on the task. These responses tended to be ghost or horror stories or visits to a haunted house. Successful responses described in some detail the chosen frightening place and examiners commented positively on effective writing techniques and wide-ranging and apt vocabulary used to convey fear and fright. One examiner commented on a successful response which effectively described the examination room. Houses, abandoned buildings, forests and caves were commonly identified as frightening. Some interpreted the question more creatively and described their own psyches or the world today as frightening places. Better responses were detailed and lively with fully developed ideas. Weaker candidates tended to produce responses that tended to be pedestrian, narrative and lacked detail. Better responses had full control of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Weaker candidates had poor language controls and weak paragraphing.

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/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, from the appropriate part of the text, in response to the reading questions
- used their own words in response to questions that required them
- wrote clearly with a good sense of form, audience and purpose in an appropriate register in response to Question 11
- selected and adapted relevant information for Question 11
- engaged the reader with creative writing that was clearly expressed, well developed and controlled (Question 12)
- used accurate paragraphing
- 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 form or register in response to Question 11
- were not able to select and adapt relevant information for Question 11
- sometimes copied the original texts (Question 11)
- were not able to develop ideas clearly in response to Section C (Question 12)
- did not use paragraphs
- sometimes used prepared essays or copied plots from films and novels in response to Section C (Question 12)
- did not demonstrate accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Grade Boundaries

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