

International GCSE

English Language (Specification B) (4EB0)

Teacher's guide

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Introduction

The Edexcel International General Certificate of Secondary Education (International GCSE) in English Language (Specification B) is designed for schools and colleges. It is part of a suite of International GCSE qualifications offered by Edexcel.

About this guide

This guide is for teachers who are delivering or planning to deliver the Edexcel International GCSE in English Language (Specification B) qualification; it should be read in conjunction with the following publications:

- the International GCSE English Language (Specification B) (4EB0) specification
- the International GCSE English Language (Specification B) (4EB0) sample assessment materials (SAMs) (which includes the mark schemes).

The guide supports you in delivering the course content and explains how to raise the achievement of your students. The guide:

- expands on the information about course requirements in the specification
- explains assessment procedures
- suggests teaching approaches
- gives examples of course planning.

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Why choose this qualification?

The Edexcel International GCSE in English Language (Specification B) qualification enables students to:

- read a range of material from a variety of sources, including literary material, non-literary material and media
- read for a variety of purposes with understanding and enjoyment
- use written English for a variety of purposes such as narration, argument, giving instruction and information, imaginative writing, making reports and demonstrating understanding of content, paying due attention to the appropriateness and quality of written expression
- develop the ability to construct and convey meaning in written language, matching style to audience and purpose.

Key features and benefits of the qualification

- It's based on the legacy Edexcel GCE O Level in English Language (7161).
- It's for all students for whom English is their language of education and/or employment.
- Intended for speakers of English as a first language and speakers of English as an additional language.
- Single assessment: 100% examination.
- Assessment opportunity in both January and June examination series.
- Provides progression to AS and Advanced GCE in English Language, or equivalent qualifications.

Visit www.edexcel.com for more information about this International GCSE and related resources.

Support from Edexcel

We are dedicated to giving you exceptional customer service. Details of our main support services are given below. They will all help you to keep up to date with International GCSE 2009.

Website

Our website www.edexcel.com is where you will find the resources and information you need to successfully deliver International GCSE qualifications. To stay ahead of all the latest developments visit the microsite and sign up for our email alerts.

Ask Edexcel

Ask Edexcel is our free, comprehensive online enquiry service. Use Ask Edexcel to get the answer to your queries about the administration of all Edexcel qualifications. To ask a question please go to www.edexcel.com/ask and fill out the online form.

Ask the Expert

This free service puts teachers in direct contact with over 200 senior examiners, moderators and external verifiers who will respond to subject-specific queries about International GCSE 2009 and other Edexcel qualifications.

You can contact our experts via email or by completing our online form. Go to www.edexcel.com/asktheexpert for contact details.

Regional offices

If you have any queries about the International GCSE 2009 qualifications, or if you are interested in offering other Edexcel qualifications your Regional Development Manager can help you. Go to www.edexcel.com/international for details of our regional offices.

Training

A programme of professional development and training courses, covering various aspects of the specification and examination is available. Go to www.edexcel.com for details.

Section A: Qualification content

Introduction

- The International GCSE in English Language (Specification B) (4EB0) is based on the legacy Edexcel GCE O Level in English Language (7161) – incorporating its successful elements whilst remaining familiar to O Level centres.
- The International GCSE in English Language (Specification B) (4EB0) has rationalised the number of Assessment Objectives (AOs) from five to three – ensuring that they are clear and focused.
- The International GCSE in English Language (Specification B) (4EB0) is assessed by one three-hour written examination paper (Paper 1), following the format of the legacy Edexcel GCE O Level in English Language (7161) paper.
- Paper 1: This is taken by all students, and makes up 100% of the qualification. The paper is divided into **three** sections (sections A, B and C). There are no pre-release or set texts for this qualification – unseen source material will be provided in the examination.
- Source material: Examples of possible texts used in the examination paper are: fiction, for example short stories, novel extracts; biography/autobiography/speeches; newspaper/magazine articles; travel writing; diaries/letters; advertisements/leaflets/brochures and web pages.
- Section A: This section is designed to assess students' understanding of and response to stimulus material. Marks are given in this section primarily for the content and understanding shown.
- Section B: This section is designed to assess students' ability to write according to specific guidelines in response to the given material. Students may be asked to inform or instruct, to advise or persuade or to express their attitudes; they will also be asked to use a recognised form of writing, such as a letter, a report or a newspaper article. The answers in this section will be assessed for relevant information, for appropriateness of style and approach and for quality and accuracy of expression.
- Section C: Students will be asked to produce one piece of extended writing; this may be narrative, descriptive, personal, argumentative or discursive. There will be opportunities for students to respond imaginatively and personally to topics and themes related to the stimulus material.

Information for Edexcel centres

This qualification is essentially unchanged from the legacy Edexcel GCE O Level in English Language (7161). This is to ensure maximum continuity for those centres which are familiar with using the O Level, and to attract those who may feel that a qualification based on the O Level approach is the most appropriate to their circumstances (for example, because it permits wide reading without specifying particular passages or poems on which to comment). The changes made are minimal, as shown in the following table.

The table below sets out the relationship between the legacy O Level qualification (7161) to this qualification.

Topic	This qualification	Legacy O Level (7161) qualification
Assessment Objectives (AO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading objectives Writing objectives 	Three One: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New AO1 now includes both reading and understanding of texts of various kinds (from old AO1) and selecting and ordering information (old AO2) Two: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New AO2, which now includes both adapting forms and types of writing for specific purposes and audiences (old AO3) and using appropriate styles (old AO5) New AO3, write clearly, using a range of vocabulary and sentence structures, with accurate spelling, paragraphing, grammar and punctuation. (old AO4) 	Five Two (AOs 1 and 2) Three (AOs 3, 4 and 5)
Section headings	No names given, simply Sections A, B and C	Each Section named
Word limits	Section B: No word limits stated Section C: Word limit: approximately 400 words	Section B: Word limits were stated (230-word maximum) Section C: unchanged
Grade range	A* to G	A to E

Information for centres starting the Edexcel International GCSE for the first time

- For those who are new to this specification, there are notes with detailed guidance and suggestions for course planning, together with examples of students' work at key grades. These are all included in this guide, together with comments on the levels achieved.
- This guide includes many practical examples so that new centres can easily understand what is needed.

Section B: Assessment

Assessment overview

The table below gives an overview of the assessment for this course.

We recommend that you make this information available to students so that they are fully prepared and know exactly what to expect in each assessment.

Paper	Percentage	Marks	Time	Availability
Paper 1 Paper code: 4EB0/01	100%	100	One three-hour paper	January and June examination series First assesement in June 2011

Assessment Objectives and weightings

	% in Internati onal GCSE
AO1: Read and understand a variety of texts, selecting and ordering information, ideas and opinions from the texts provided	40%
AO2: Adapt forms and types of writing for specific purposes and audiences using appropriate styles	45%
AO3: Write clearly, using a range of vocabulary and sentence structures, with accurate spelling, paragraphing, grammar and punctuation	15%
Total	100%

Assessment summary

Paper	Description	Knowledge and skills
<p>Paper 1</p> <p>Paper code: 4EB0/01</p>	<p>The paper consists of three sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section A (30%) assessed for reading Section B (35%) assessed for reading and writing Section C (35%) assessed for writing <p>100 marks available for the whole paper.</p> <p>One three-hour paper.</p> <p>Source material will be provided in an extracts booklet distributed with the examination paper. Students should spend approximately 15 minutes reading this before starting to answer questions.</p> <p>At the end of the examination, students are advised to spend approximately 5 minutes checking their work.</p> <p>Section A (Reading) (AO1)</p> <p>This section is designed to assess students' understanding of and response to stimulus material. Short questions on two passages. All questions should be answered.</p> <p>30 marks (AO1) – about 40 minutes</p> <p>Section B (Reading and Writing) (AOs 1, 2 and 3)</p> <p>This section is designed to assess students' ability to write according to specific guidelines in response to the given material. They are asked to select relevant information from the stimulus material and to present it for other readers and for other purposes. There is no choice of question.</p> <p>35 marks (AO1 10 marks, AO2 20 marks, AO3 5 marks) – about 1 hour</p> <p>Section C (Writing) (AOs 2 and 3)</p> <p>Students will be asked to produce one piece of extended writing; this may be narrative, descriptive, personal, argumentative or discursive. Three questions will be set and students must answer one.</p> <p>35 marks (AO2 25 marks, AO3 10 marks) – about 1 hour</p>	<p>All of the Assessment Objectives (AOs) are covered in this assessment.</p> <p>Details and weightings are given in the Assessment Objectives and weightings table on the previous page. The percentages are not intended to provide a precise statement of the number of marks allocated to each Assessment Objective.</p> <p>Section A</p> <p>Students must be able to select information and present it in short paragraphs or in sets of statements. Clarity and careful expression are expected in the answers.</p> <p>Section B</p> <p>Students may be asked to inform or instruct, to advise or persuade or to express their attitudes; they will also be asked to use a recognised form of writing, such as a letter, a report or a newspaper article.</p> <p>Section C</p> <p>There will be opportunities for students to respond imaginatively and personally to topics and themes related to the stimulus material.</p>

Examination questions

Introduction

The following section is intended to give not only a clear indication of what the examination paper will look like, but also to offer practical help for students on the demands of the questions. Since the form of the examination has essentially not changed from that which has been set for the legacy O Level specification which this replaces, teachers and students will be able to find relevant material by studying past papers and examiners' reports.

Exemplar examination questions can be seen in the sample assessment materials for the examination (Paper 1).

Section A questions

This is a section in which the questions are designed to assess reading comprehension (AO1: the ability to read with understanding and select information in an appropriate way from the passages). Questions will be asked on passages which will be linked by their theme or subject matter. There will be two of these passages to read. The questions will test understanding of the written English word in a number of different ways. Students are advised to spend about 40 minutes on this section.

An example of Section A questions, drawn from the sample assessment materials, with example student answers and examiner comments, is given below.

On this paper, Section A was based on two prose extracts, both dealing with a linked theme – that of travellers in distress (one on land, one on sea). Questions 1–4 were based on Text One, a newspaper report about a man who got into difficulties in a remote area of Western Australia. Questions 5–9 were based on Text Two, an extract from a novel in which Pi, a 16-year-old boy, is the only human survivor from a shipwreck. Question 10 is based on both texts.

Text One questions

Question 1

Explain how Howard became stranded.

(2 marks)

Student answer

Howard became lost while on a trip to a nature reserve, where he became stuck in the sand. It was an extremely remote area, so there was little chance of his being found.

Examiner's comments

This answer easily qualifies for the 2 marks, which are given essentially for making two basic points from the text (selecting appropriately). Most students will score the points easily enough, since the question is deliberately a straightforward one to build confidence and to help students get going. It is worth noting that the above answer is, strictly speaking, fuller than is required. This may not matter too much (better safe than sorry!) but it is important to remember that students in examinations should watch their time carefully, and can easily spend too long on a question worth only 2 points, where the principle 'a mark for a point' is often worth thinking about.

Question 2

Describe what Howard did to attract the attention of passing aircraft.

(2 marks)

Student answer

He scrawled a (huge) SOS message in the sand and drew an emergency signal.

Examiner's comments

This is another straightforward test of comprehension, and again two simple relevant points are sufficient for the full 2 marks.

Question 3

How did Howard manage to survive in the difficult conditions?

(4 marks)

Student answer

Howard sleeps during the day, keeping in the shade. He works at night, when it is cooler. He is aware of crocodiles and has good bush survival skills. He also realises the importance of saving water rations.

Examiner's comments

This is a good, clear answer, more than justifying the 4 marks which should be achieved by a student aiming for grade C or above. Again, this shows the ability to understand the content and select the relevant comments.

Question 4

We learn about the sort of person Howard was from what his mother says about him in the final paragraph.

Identify two aspects of his personality which are brought out in this paragraph.

You should support your views with one detail for each aspect of his personality.

(4 marks)

Student answer

He is very thoughtful because he took the trouble to email his mother from a remote village. He is also very adventurous and brave because he decided to continue his travels despite the recent events.

Examiner's comments

The form of the question makes it clear that **TWO** aspects are required, together with development of these two points. The above answer makes it clear which aspects of Howard's personality are noticed (comprehension) and also supports each with an example (selection of information). It would therefore attract full marks.

Text Two questions

Question 5

In paragraph one, what does Pi mean when he says, ‘I awoke to the reality of an unusual companion?’

(1 mark)

Student answer

When he woke up he realised there was a tiger in the lifeboat with him.

Examiner’s comments

The key here is to get the point of Pi’s reference to his unusual discovery. The student does this with the reference to the tiger, and therefore gains this mark.

Question 6

Using paragraph two, give **three** reasons why Pi stays on the lifeboat.

(3 marks)

Student answer

His body refuses to move, either through fear or weakness. He could never manage to swim the huge distance to land. He has some real fears, such as fear of dying, fear of sharks and fear of the cold.

Examiner’s comments

There are a number of points that can be made and, to score the full marks, three clear points should be made. The above answer in fact goes slightly beyond what is required, so would definitely warrant full marks.

Question 7

In paragraph five, what voice is referred to and what effect does it have on Pi?

(2 marks)

Student answer

The voice is that of his inner self. It is this voice that gives Pi the determination to continue to fight for his survival and not to give up.

Examiner’s comments

Here, not all students will perhaps realise that it is an internal voice – there is, of course, no one else around. This voice can be described in different ways – some may well use the term ‘conscience’. The second mark is for a clear (brief) explanation of how this voice affects him.

Question 8

In paragraph six, Pi reflects on the different ways people react when faced with possible death. State three of these different ways.

(3 marks)

Student answer

Some people give up immediately. Others fight against it for a short time but then give in. Others act like Pi does and are determined not to give in and to keep struggling on to the end.

Examiner's comments

There are various ways in which these points may be expressed, but the key point is to make relevant selections from the stated paragraph, as the above response does, and therefore justifies full marks.

Question 9

At the end of this extract, Pi decides to build a raft. Explain in your own words why Pi makes this decision.

(3 marks)

Student answer

His strong character is such that he will always have a go. He is someone who will carry on, no matter how bad things become. The reason for this is that he really does not wish to die, and would do anything to find a way which might allow him to survive.

Examiner's comments

The wording of the question makes it clear that a reasoned answer is needed, one which considers the evidence from the text. The above response is not particularly detailed, but it does cover the key points as set out in the mark scheme and hence deserves full marks.

Text One and Text Two question

Question 10

Which text, do you think, would be more helpful to you in preparing a talk for your class about someone who behaved heroically?

You may choose either of the texts but you must explain your choice carefully, including reasons why the other text has less appeal for you.

(6 marks)

Mark scheme answer

The mark scheme states:

Accept EITHER choice.

For chosen text: (4 marks)

TWO marks for choice stated with clear personal response shown

TWO marks for clear reference to the text with examples given from the text to support either the heroism of Howard or Pi.

For the other text: (2 marks)

ONE mark for a clear personal response for the reason why the other text was not chosen.

ONE mark for an example to illustrate reason.

Examiner's comments

This is not a simple 'right or wrong' question, and the above mark scheme shows what is required: personal response, reference to the text, and reasons on two sides of a case.

Additional Section A questions

Below are further examples of Section A questions, based on two passages which are given. These were originally issued as guidance for O Level, and a reason to include them here is to provide further exemplification and to show how closely the new examination is modelled on the legacy O Level paper. The principles and advice offered previously will still be applicable and relevant.

Sample passage and questions for practise/discussion during the course

In an examination students would be advised to spend approximately 40 minutes answering all questions in this section.

First, read Passage One. This is an extract from a novel by John Dickinson.

Passage One

The streets of East London were dismal and grey on this particular night in late November. Streetlights – tinged with city grime – glowed ominously in the dusk, as office-workers, secretaries and sundry Londoners trudged slowly towards bus stops and train stations after another unfulfilling day.

Neon lights flashed their messages out into the murky darkness causing distorted shadows to lurch along the walls of the tawdry streets. There was no snow yet – although Christmas was approaching – no glowing fires in the hearts of those men who snaked home along the pavement staring at their weary feet, the bright decorations unseen above.

But something caught the eye. A shadow – bleak as death – in the doorway of an unlit shop was the only thing that was still in this heaving, shifting, breathing street. A single torch-beam stabbed out from the recess, then was gone. It flicked on again, this time for longer, catching dust, bits of litter and a pigeon's wing in its sight. Darkness again. Then for a third time the light appeared. This time, it found what it was looking for. If anyone had cared to look up from their troubles, they would have seen a face, a very white, pallid face in the line of the torch's fire.

The eyes in the face were large and a very pale blue. They were eyes that might have seen a man drowning or burned to death in front of them, eyes which saw everything from the past and nothing from the present. They were eyes which – even in this crowded street in a major capital city at the busiest time of the day – were terrified of seeing that nightmare sight again.

The moon moved behind a cloud. A distant clock tolled six. All was still in the doorway. But the light of the torch continued to follow the face – white as a ghost – in the London night.

Now answer the following questions.

Question 1

In your own words, explain why the streets of London are so crowded.

(1 mark)

Student answer

The streets are so busy because it is the end of the working day and everyone is going home.

Examiner's comments

This scored the mark as it describes exactly why the streets were so busy. The student does not copy words from the passage, and has clearly understood the first paragraph which is where we pick up the information that is needed.

Question 2

Where is the man with the torch waiting?

(1 mark)

Student answer

He is waiting in the doorway of an unlit shop.

Examiner's comments

Another mark for a correct answer. The question does not ask for 'own words' so it is fine that the student has picked out the exact wording from paragraph 3.

Question 3

Look again at paragraph 4. In your own words, say what impressions you get of the man in the street and what has happened to him from the description of his eyes.

(3 marks)

Student answer

I get the impression that he has witnessed something truly awful like a fatal accident or even a murder. He is completely absorbed by whatever has happened before and therefore does not notice what is happening now. He is really scared that history will repeat itself.

Examiner's comments

An excellent full marks is gained here because the student manages to sum up all the points made by the writer in the fourth paragraph, without directly copying from it. All the main points have been clearly understood.

Question 4

Name three sources of light mentioned in the passage.

(3 marks)

Student answer

Three sources of light are the neon lights, the bright decorations and the beam from the torch.

Examiner's comments

Full marks are awarded again because, clearly, all three of the answers are correct. The moon – although it disappears in the final paragraph – could have been included as an alternative to any of the points made here.

Question 5

Pick out two quotations from the passage which give you a feeling of danger or suspense. In each case, say why the language is so successful. Do not select extracts from paragraph 4.

(6 marks)

Student answer

Grade A example

'A shadow – bleak as death – in the doorway of an unlit shop was the only thing that was still in this heaving, shifting, breathing street.' The simile 'bleak as death' makes the 'shadow' – a sinister word in itself – very ominous. I get the sense that the man has murder in mind! The fact that the shop is 'unlit' heightens this sense of danger and suspense as if anything could happen. The heavy sounding verbs 'heaving, shifting, breathing' to describe the slow movements of the commuters returning home make them sound like a creature in its death throes! The long vowel sounds make you read the line slowly, almost as if you, too, are one of the commuters. The movement serves as a contrast to the frightening stillness of the man with the torch.

'The moon moved behind a cloud.' This short sentence is full of suspense. I feel as if something evil beyond belief is about to happen. The alliterative 'm's lull the reader into a false sense of security, like the calm before the storm. It is full of foreboding – all light seems to be extinguished and it is as if the moon cannot bear to see the dreadful thing which is about to happen.

Examiner's comments

This is a high quality answer which gained all of the 6 marks available. The quotations are both excellent ones and the commentaries – which cover more than enough ground – evaluate the language confidently. The student responds to the effects of such things as imagery, sentence length and the sounds of the words, as well as showing personal response to the implications of the passage and the moods that the writer creates.

Now read Passage Two, which is an extract from a book by Justin Mayhew giving advice about writing a best seller.

Passage Two

Now, I've never met you before but I think I can guess two things about you. One: you would like to be rich and two: you like telling stories. If I am wrong, then close this book straightaway and go and make yourself a cup of coffee or take your dog for a walk because this book is not for you. Still with me? Right. Then let's get started.

It is a fact that every publisher in the country receives over 100 books a week from would-be authors. No more than one of these books will be given anything more than the briefest of glances. Up to 75% will be thrown straight in the bin. About once a year, one budding writer will be told that there is a possibility that their book will make it on to the shelves.

Even then, however, there are disasters waiting to happen. Some books are finally rejected up to two years after being provisionally accepted; others are published but are rejected by the general public. They are reduced in price, put into the sales and then finally scrapped. Still with me, dear reader? Not put off? Determined not to make any mistakes? Then perhaps there is hope for you. Perhaps you will be one of the few whose dreams will come true.

Firstly, let me share with you, my friend, some of the biggest and most basic blunders that writers make when submitting their manuscripts for publication. You will be shocked, perhaps, to hear that most stories are sent in on grubby, dog-eared bits of paper and are written – sometimes with a pen which leaks and blots – in almost illegible handwriting. Often the spelling and grammar are so bad that even my five-year-old son can spot the errors. A good proportion of these have no covering letter or are sent in with rather rude suggestions that if this wonderful story is not published, then those responsible will meet with calamity and shame: they will miss out on the chance of a world-wide money-making best seller or be ignoring the chance of Hollywood fame. Sometimes it's even suggested that some dreadful curse will fall on anyone stupid enough to reject such a masterpiece. On one memorable occasion, I was told: 'If you don't publish my story, I will arrange to have you shot.' Meant to be humorous perhaps, but it didn't wash with me.

Even if a story has been meticulously typed, and the accompanying letter is politeness itself, the author often hasn't done their homework. There is no point in sending a thriller to a publisher interested only in romance, or a collection of football stories to 'Farmers' Weekly'! Also, if a book about a man who brought about the downfall of the biggest bank in the world has just hit the top of the best-sellers' list and is in the process of being made into a popular television series, it's madness to assume that your book about much the same thing will do as well. Don't copy someone else's ideas – it never works!

I'll return to the many pitfalls you might face later in the chapter, but now let's concentrate on what you can do correctly. Type your book on good quality paper; check it for accuracy; write a courteous letter to the person you want to read it (it helps if you've bothered to find out their name!); send it to an appropriate publisher and make sure it's all your own work.

But I have, of course, begun at the conclusion of the process. Even if you've followed all the above advice, why should I want to read your story? Why should I be interested in your characters and what happens to them? Why should I care about all their relationships and their tiny little lives? Well read on, my little Dickens, and find out.

Let's begin at the beginning.

Now answer the following questions.

Question 6

What two assumptions does the writer make about the person who is reading his book?

(2 marks)

Student answer

The writer assumes that the reader would like to be rich and likes writing stories.

Examiner's comments

The student gets full marks for picking out the relevant information from the first paragraph. It does not matter that the wording is taken directly from the passage because it was not a requirement of the question for 'own words' to be used.

Question 7

In your own words, describe four mistakes that authors make when sending their stories to a publisher.

(4 marks)

Student answer

Four mistakes are that: they send stories to publishers on scruffy paper; that they don't check the accuracy of what they have written; that they insult or threaten the person who will read it in a bid to get it published and that they don't check up on the sort of books in which a particular publisher is likely to be interested.

Examiner's comments

Full marks were awarded to the student for picking out the relevant points from the passage and expressing them in words other than those of the original writer.

Question 8

Look again at paragraph 4. Which two words from this paragraph are very similar in meaning to the word 'mistakes'?

(2 marks)

Student answer

The two words are 'errors' and 'blunders'.

Examiner's comments

Full marks were given here for the two synonyms for 'mistakes' given in the fourth paragraph.

Now look at both the passages again.

Question 9

These two passages are written for two different purposes in very different ways. Briefly explain why you think each was written, and then go on to discuss the language and style of each, drawing attention to any important differences you have noticed between them.

You should use your own words as far as possible, but you may include brief quotations to support your answer. Remember to comment on both passages.

(8 marks)

Student answer

Passage One is written to excite, thrill and entertain someone who enjoys stories, whereas Passage Two is written to give advice to those of us who want to get a book published. The first one is aimed at readers, the second at writers.

Passage One is full of contrast between light and darkness, but it is the darkness which is most noticeable. Words like 'dismal', 'murky' 'grey' and 'tawdry' hint at the dull lives of those returning from work as well as giving a clear sense of the inhospitable November night. But you know something exciting is going to happen. The torch sounds almost like a gun because it catches the man's face 'in the line of [its] fire'. The murder theme is continued because the man's eyes appear to have seen someone 'drowning or burned to death in front of them' and because 'A distant clock tolled six...' as if it is a funeral bell. The language hints at premonitions of future deaths throughout, encouraging the reader to eagerly continue with the novel.

Passage Two has none of this visual detail or poetic imagery. The first two paragraphs are full of facts, figures and percentages, all designed to put the reader off thoughtlessly sending in a book they have written to the first publisher they can think of. It is written in a blunt, almost patronising tone and is in the first person. The writer's style is very colloquial as if he is talking directly to the reader, unlike the first passage which is written in the third person. The short questions like 'Still with me?' and 'Not put off?' make you feel as if he is talking to you alone. Far from the mystical language of the first passage, the writing here is almost brutal: 'Up to 75% [of the books] will be thrown in the bin' and 'finally scrapped'. However, the writer hints of hope to come – 'Let's begin at the beginning.' sounds almost biblical!

I hope that if the writer of the second passage received John Dickinson's book that he would like it, even if it were written on dog-eared paper!

Examiner's comments

This informed, personal response to the question was awarded maximum marks. It is relevant and specific, showing a good understanding of how language and style work, in each case, to create specific effects. The purpose, tone and overall effect of each are remarked on in a most interesting, lively manner. Notice how comments on aspects such as imagery, sentence lengths and types, word groups etc. are all very closely focused on the passage and linked to the writers' intentions. The structure of the answer is clear and straightforward.

Section B questions

This section will test the ability to write, according to clear guidelines, in response to material that will appear on the examination paper. In this section, students are asked to draw on their reading of the two texts on which they replied in Section A to write a sustained response to a question on a related topic.

There will be no choice of questions in Section B. Students will be asked to respond to relevant information from the Section A texts and to present it for other readers and for a specific purpose. They will be asked to use a recognised form of writing, such as a letter, a report or a newspaper article and the style should determine the length of the answer. Answers will be marked for the relevance of the information, appropriateness of style and approach, and for the quality and accuracy of expression.

The following example is taken from the sample assessment material and mark scheme.

Question 11

You have been asked to write an article entitled ‘Be Prepared’ for your school or college magazine. The article should give advice to someone setting out alone to visit an isolated or remote area of sea or land, where the climate is hot and dry.

You must focus on what you should do to aid survival:

- before the trip
- during the trip
- if you become stranded.

Think carefully about the purpose of your article and the audience for whom it is intended.

(35 marks)

Answer

The mark scheme for this question gives some pointers to the kind of approach which students are expected to adopt and is shown on the next page.

Question 11 mark scheme

A suitable register for a school/college magazine should be adopted.

Students should address all areas. The following points indicate some points that students may make, but there are other possibilities.

Before the trip

- Take adequate supplies (of food and water).
- Tell someone when to expect you back.
- Acquire knowledge of how to survive in hostile environments.

During the trip

- Always know your whereabouts/avoid getting lost.
- Keep out of danger/be careful to avoid dangerous situations.
- If at all possible, keep in touch with someone.
- Act swiftly in case of emergency/pressing danger.

If stranded

- If stranded, attract attention with SOS signal.
- Maintain the signal/renew it when erased.
- Conserve energy by working at night/not exerting yourself in the day.
- Do not be deterred by the threat of death/be determined to survive.
- Do not be put off by anything/risk of injury/unlikelihood of success.
- Use your initiative to help reach safety (eg Pi builds raft)/don't panic.
- Ensure signal is easily visible from the air.
- Sleep/stay in shelter during the day (to avoid high temperatures).
- Keep warm when the temperature drops.
- Listen to your inner voice/what your heart tells you to do.
- Use objects available to help you (eg oar for prow, line 38).

Examiner's comments

An answer to this question worthy of a grade A will be likely to cover many of the points in the mark scheme. However, it is also a feature of such answers that they often come up with original or unusual points of their own. Hence, the above should be treated as a guide only.

Additional Section B questions

Below is a further example of a Section B question, originally issued as guidance for O Level. Again, the example, which is included for practise purposes, shows how strong the continuity is between the legacy specification (7161) and the International GCSE (4EB0), as this task is still highly appropriate.

Read the passage below and then answer the question which follows.

The ‘Sea View School’ is situated in a delightfully rural area of England in the little town of Crestleton on the picturesque South Coast. It is surrounded by magnificent hills where beautiful trees, a variety of sweet-smelling flowers, a huge range of brightly-coloured birds and rare butterflies abound. Look out of the front window of what was previously an ancient castle, and you will be enchanted by the emerald greens and azure blues of the waves crashing onto the shore.

As befits our surroundings, we are a school dedicated to The Arts. We are keen that our pupils learn to express themselves in the media of painting, poetry and music. This is how we create a hunger for knowledge in our pupils. This is how their souls and imagination grow. This is how they develop into adults who will understand and appreciate the world in which it is possible to live.

In many ways, we are an unconventional school. Pupils do not have to attend lessons. They attend if – and only if – they find the lessons inspiring. If they would prefer to walk in the hills, swim in the sea or even just stay in bed and sleep, then that is up to them. School meals are nutritious and mainly vegetarian. We use only local produce to ensure that our community is healthy in body as well as mind. Unlike many schools in this country, pupils do not have to wear a uniform. In addition, the school is governed by pupils as well as staff. Everyone has their say, and all are equal.

We do not insist that our pupils take public examinations although many of them choose to: 50% of our intake obtained pass grades at GCE in two or more Arts subjects last year. More important for us, however, is to develop a love for learning which has led past pupils into different areas of life: several have returned to their family farms or businesses; others have become poets, artists or musicians and some have got married with no particular career in mind. All, however, have greatly appreciated their time here.

As you may know, we do not charge our pupils fees. A wealthy gentleman – Mr Peter Terry – who loved the place, left the school an amount of money in his will which will ensure that any child will be able to enjoy what the ‘Sea View School’ has to offer for years to come. All we ask is an inquisitive mind and a desire to be creative. He was not an academic, but benefited from all that the school had to offer.

For further details about the school, including details about admissions, please contact Mrs Button, the school secretary, at the enclosed address.

Question

Imagine that someone you know well is very unhappy at his or her school. You are convinced that the ‘Sea View School’ would be perfect for your friend. Write him or her a letter in which you recommend the ‘Sea View School’, including as many important facts from the passage as you can.

In your answer you should refer to the above passage, which is the opening page of the ‘Sea View School’ prospectus.

Student answer

Grade A

(Address)

(Date)

Dear Patrick,

I'm sorry to hear that you are unhappy at school, but have a wonderful suggestion for you if you want to continue your education.

The 'Sea View School' is in the small town of Crestleton on the English South coast. It's in the middle of countryside which I know you love! Imagine the lovely hills, strong scent of flowers, colourful birds and unusual butterflies flying around!

The school used to be an old castle and it has fantastically colourful views of the sea in front of it.

I know you hate Science! Unbelievably, here is a school that just has creative lessons like art and music. You'll actually want to learn, your inner-self will grow and you'll grow up to value nature. You are never even told off!

This is no normal school, Patrick! You don't have to go to lessons or do exams unless you find them stimulating. You can walk, swim or just sleep instead! You can even wear your own clothes. Most importantly, you have a say in how the school is run. Can you imagine being as important as the teachers?

Finally, your parents won't have to pay because an old man left money to the school so it's free!

Patrick, do you want to fulfil your potential? Then apply to 'Sea View School'! I enclose the details of the secretary, Mrs Button. Best of luck!

Your friend,

(signature)

Examiner's comments

This student has produced an excellent final answer, having included all the key points from the passage, is keenly aware of purpose and audience, and has used a highly appropriate style and tone. The expression and accuracy are very good, and the student has made every effort to use own words where appropriate. A clear grade A was given for this piece of work.

Section C questions

Section C gives students the opportunity to show to examiners how interesting, personal and creative they can be. They should consider carefully how they can make the strongest impression through their skills in selecting content, writing with varied vocabulary and fluency and giving an individual perspective.

Students will be given a choice from three titles in this section. Essays might be narrative, descriptive, personal, argumentative or discursive. There will be opportunities to respond personally and imaginatively to themes and topics from the material included with Sections A and B, although it is not appropriate to copy from the printed texts or take a central idea from them.

The following example is taken from the specimen paper.

Question 12

Write approximately 400 words on one of the following:

- (a) 'I do all my work on the computer, but I couldn't live without my mobile.' Explain which forms of communication you find most valuable.
- (b) Write a story (true or imaginary) entitled 'The Challenge'.
Do not re-tell the events from Text One or Text Two.
- (c) Describe two places you know well, one which is quiet and one which is noisy.

Answer

The mark scheme gives the following points.

- (a) The most common choices are likely to be: direct face-to-face conversation with a friend or family member; mobile (or other) telephone; messaging on computers, such as MSN or forms of communication such as Facebook; text messaging (on phones); written communications (notes, cards, letters).
- (b) They may well select some 'disaster' situation (natural or caused by humans), or talk of non-literal survival (getting over a crisis, 'surviving' an ordeal, getting through an examination). Examiners should be open to a wide range of interpretations.
- (c) There should be two contrasting pictures or descriptions. Although students are free to choose any locations they wish, for their 'quiet place' they may well select peaceful rural or wooded locations, or quiet rooms/times in a house, or a quiet building such as a church or deserted house; for a noisy location, obvious choices include markets, town centres, sporting occasions, music concerts, discos/dances.

Examiner's comments

- (a) As no audience is specified, the examiner is to be assumed to be the audience. Therefore any methods of communication which are justified would be rewarded.
- (b) No indicative content can be specified, since students may choose to interpret the title as they wish. One obvious possibility is that they might draw on the kind of situation that is portrayed in the texts they have received but they should not retell exactly what happens in the two texts studied in the examination. Students should be rewarded for such qualities as a sense of drama, vivid description, excitement or suspense.
- (c) Students should be rewarded for their powers to evoke a place, using effective vocabulary (for example from the senses or descriptions of natural scenes).

Additional Section C questions

The following list gives a number of essay titles of the kind used in the examination. They may be useful as practise titles in preparing for the examination.

- 1a) A Family Occasion.
- 1b) Underwater World.
- 1c) Do you agree that it's better to be a man than a woman in today's society?

- 2a) The Fake.
- 2b) Before the Event.
- 2c) 'Money doesn't buy happiness.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?

- 3a) The Outsider.
- 3b) A Broken Appointment.
- 3c) To what extent are you happy with your life? What do you like about it and what would you change?

- 4a) An Incredible Journey.
- 4b) The Hiding Place.
- 4c) Write an essay in which you describe your ideal school.

- 5a) Pride Comes Before a Fall.
- 5b) There's a First Time for Everything.
- 5c) To what extent do you like living in the place and the country that you do?

- 6a) Write a story in which someone thought to be a hero turns out to be a villain.
- 6b) The Mountain.
- 6c) Explore the idea that, on the whole, we get more and more unhappy as we get older.

- 7a) 'Every cloud has a silver lining'.
- 7b) The Rivals.
- 7c) 'Too much television is bad for you.' Discuss.

- 8a) Write a story which shows that honesty doesn't always pay.
- 8b) The Race.
- 8c) Do you think that human beings are essentially good or essentially evil? Write an essay in which you explore and explain your ideas on this subject.

- 9a) Write a story in which the underdog eventually comes out on top.
- 9b) Trapped!
- 9c) 'Human beings are their own worst enemies.' Do you agree?
- 10a) The Genius.
- 10b) A Natural Disaster.
- 10c) 'If I Ruled the World!' What would you like to change about the world if you had real power?

Example Section C answers

Here are three 'model essays' by students, along with detailed comments from what the examiner had to say about them. All would have achieved a very good grade A.

Question

Write a story in which someone thought to be a hero turns out to be a villain.

Student answer

Grade A

Good Dr. Brown

Doctor William Brown looked like everything a doctor should be. He had arrived from England in the previous Spring, dressed in a crisp white shirt, an expensive grey woollen suit and one of those pure silk ties which seemed to represent all the fiery reds and oranges of a new sunrise. For many hours a week, he sat behind his huge, mahogany desk and saw, at one time or another, all the inhabitants of the little village of Antinoga. All that is except Paduka. He thought the patterns on the doctor's tie looked like poisonous water snakes.

The English doctor had come at the right time too, for in the Summer of that year, a dreadful disease hit this hard-working, farming community. It swept through the village like a plague. Small children who, the previous August, had been squealing with laughter and chasing each other about in the sunshine were sick and listless. They didn't want to play with their friends. They didn't even want to eat. It was even worse for the elders of the village – they coughed, their eyes drooped shut, and eventually several of them died. Even the oldest men in the village could never remember such a thing happening before.

Everyone had the same story to tell – it had started with some minor illness which good Doctor Brown had treated. They had gone home, warmed by his words and made well again by his medicine. But then it had happened – the headaches, the blurred vision, the constant vomiting. And Dr. William Brown was so kind to them. He put his arms around the women, he even kissed their cheeks: 'It will be all right,' he murmured into their hair, 'Everything will be for the best.' Paduka was very quiet. He sat cross-legged outside the surgery and stared at the doctor as he arrived at his surgery, and when he left for home each evening.

So good was Doctor Brown, so dedicated to his cause that he gave the women very special medicine so that the patients didn't suffer as much as they might have done. 'It may seem expensive,' he told each wife as he saw them, 'but, believe me, without it, your loved ones will die screaming and in agony.' The wives stared into his deep blue eyes, which seemed to have an almost hypnotic power and nodded. They wished they could find a way to thank him.

Then one day, when the whole village returned from the funeral of one of the most popular citizens of the village, they found that Dr. William Brown had gone. There was a note on his front door written on crisp white notepaper: 'I must leave you now. My work here is done.' The women knelt on the ground and sobbed: 'What will become of us? Oh, how can we go on without the medicine?' Paduka nodded slowly, then sadly walked away.

Strangely enough, however, only weeks after the doctor had departed, the disease too had gone. Imagine the horror on the face of one of those women when, whilst visiting her sister in a neighbouring town she read the headline in the paper: 'Dr. Death Does it Again!' The police were on to a villain who had taken money from patients in a village to the North of Antinoga. He had given them 'special medicine' alright – infected water which he'd taken from a nearby river!

The man reading the same paper on a flight to Los Angeles chuckled to himself and smoothed his sunset red tie. With newly-blonded hair and an American accent, no-one would ever recognise him. He folded the paper in half and put it on the table in front of him next to the caviar and glass of champagne. 'Have you finished with this, Sir?' said an air hostess. 'Oh yes,' crooned Dr. Death, 'I certainly have.'

Examiner's comments

- The story is relevant and is controlled and fluent throughout. The irony (where a person, situation or thing appears to be the complete opposite of what it actually is) – suggested by the title – is picked up on and developed very well. 'Good Dr Brown' is anything but good!
- The student is a confident story teller who writes with real energy, involving the reader from start to finish.
- The writing is accurately written in terms of spelling, punctuation and paragraphing. Sentence lengths are varied, and this adds to the shifting moods of the story.
- A rich vocabulary is used, with adjectives and verbs being used to particularly good effect. The story has flashes of colour and some strong imagery.
- Close details suggest the characters – of Dr Brown and Paduka in particular – very effectively. We can sense something false and sinister about the doctor from the start, and realise that Paduka has 'seen through' him. The student uses such things as direct speech; physical description of appearance, clothes and behaviour; imagery and contrast to do this.
- The setting and atmosphere of the farming village of Antinoga, in spring, are clearly described. Other touches – such as the doctor's mahogany desk – add to the mood of the story.
- The structure is very strong, with the story beginning with the arrival of Dr Brown and ending with his departure. Other elements of the story bring it 'full circle', such as the descriptions of the patterns on the doctor's tie and the mention of water/the river. The little descriptions of Paduka also help to bring the whole thing together.
- The opening paragraph is successful, as we are given a strong description of the new arrival in the village straightaway. Each of the middle paragraphs moves the story on to new ground with strong leading sentences. Of course, the evil of Dr Brown is revealed at the end of the story – although we suspect that something is wrong from the start – so the whole thing comes to a very satisfying conclusion.
- The student is aware of the reader throughout, even going so far as to ask us to 'Imagine...' at one stage. The overall style is clear and straightforward – the story reads like a myth or moral tale. An excellent response!

Question

The Mountain.

Student answer

Grade A*

It is black, pitch black. I don't mean like it is in your street when you are walking home. There are no welcome windows of warmth, no streetlamps, not even a twinkle of stars. Tonight is real night. It is so dark that you cannot see one of the highest mountains in the world. It might be breathing, like a great prehistoric beast, but you don't know it's there. You can see nothing. You too, like everything around you, are invisible.

Stay close to me, stay close, and soon you will see a ray of light. At first it will seem like the gleam of remembered light from your imagination, but soon it will thicken and spread. It will be joined by glimmers of pink and pale gold. Look now! Do you see? The top of the mountain is appearing. Its slate grey slopes and crags are covered in snow. An eagle is circling, thin as a pencil-sketch, over its summit.

Focus in closer, and closer still, until you see that little camp of people towards the top. The red, green and blue tents are small as handkerchiefs pulled from a magician's sleeve. They are lit up by the sun as it edges further over the horizon. Look at the yellow segment, the orange semi-circle and finally the full-blown glass ball of light as it rises higher and higher in the sky.

And there's a little cartoon figure looking up to that majestic summit. Today he is climbing the final few metres of its terrifying northern face. He will be famous. He will make his name in history. The sun reflects from the ice and almost blinds him. All he can do is concentrate on his breathing. His chest is tight. He can hear nothing but the sludgy thud of his heart.

Draw back now, dear reader, because it's getting cold, very cold. Retreat from the slope and over the foothills. Move quickly. Time has raced on and darkness is returning. Leave the man to make his final few steps, to look at the vast expanse of the Himalayas beneath him. There's no need to look as he secures the little flag of his country in the snow. Soon it will be black, pitch black. And the tents, the man, his flag and the mountain itself will be quite gone. Night, with its infinite power, will have swallowed them up.

Examiner's comments

- This is an exceptionally powerful and sophisticated essay. The student is an excellent writer who has created a real masterpiece of descriptive writing here.
- The combination of long and short sentences helps to create moods and rhythms within the piece which really heighten the atmosphere. It is very accurately written in terms of spelling, punctuation, grammar, syntax and paragraphing. A variety of grammatical structures is used.
- This essay's main strength lies in its wealth of powerful imagery. The student uses colour, similes, metaphors, personification and even the sounds of the words – through such things as alliteration and assonance – to create a sense of awe, fear, beauty, power and immensity. The varied vocabulary is rich and evocative.
- The contrasts, such as: light/darkness; tiny people/huge mountain; human pride/the indifference of nature; bright reds, yellows, oranges/blackness are very atmospheric and powerful.

Question

Explore the idea that, on the whole, we get more and more unhappy as we get older.

Student answer

Grade A

'Congratulations, Mrs. Kaminski! You have a beautiful baby girl!' Those words echoed round the ward in the Krakow hospital where Julia was born. Oh, you should have seen her parents! They were so full of joy. Nothing would be too good for their daughter – she would have everything she wanted. She would be as happy as a princess.

This happiness did not seem to be shared by the baby herself. She screamed. She yelled. She looked like a shrunken prune. Who could be happy in such a state? Julia wasn't unhappy all the time, of course, because most of the time she was asleep! She woke up to be fed, was sick and then went back to sleep again. It must have been quite fun waiting until her parents were nodding off before screaming the house down, I suppose, but Julia herself kept no precious memories of this.

Five years later, Julia looked the picture of happiness. She ran round and round in the park, squealing with delight as she played horses or trains or happy families with her little friends. She wore a pretty pink dress and had her fair hair in pigtails tied with bright blue ribbons. But, oh, the terrible screams when she fell and grazed her knee! What terrible tantrums when Mika stole her favourite doll and cruelly twisted its arms off. Was this little angel really any happier at five than she had been as a little baby? I don't think so!

The years roll by and our heroine is now sixteen. No running and playing for her anymore! She trudges unhappily to school, with what seems like double her weight in books on her back. She sits through boring lessons. She spends all her evenings doing homework and being interrogated by her once-doting parents. 'Why have you left all this work to the last minute? Why did you stay out so late last night? Who was that boy on the 'phone?' This is not the little princess that her mother gave birth to; this is some monster from another planet!

Yet she is beginning to feel real happiness. She is starting to do things – even at school – that her mother and father never had the opportunity to do. Although she hates to admit it, there are some lessons that she loves. In her Science class, she learns about planets such as Mars and Jupiter that are millions of miles away. She discovers all about countries in other continents, such as Chile and China. She learns how to paint, not childish pictures of houses with chimney-pots and a wiggly path leading up to a red front door, but real pictures which express her emotions and wild imagination. Then, there is this boy she really likes and her heart misses a beat when she talks to him.

So what does the future hold for our heroine? Will she feel the desperation of the hungry baby or the hurt of the little girl whose toy has been broken? Will she still endure the anger of her parents or anything as bad as the horrors of homework? Call me naïve if you like or tell me I'm living in a fool's paradise, but I don't think she will. I think that Julia will, one day, paint beautiful pictures of the stars and planets. She will travel to far-off places and meet wonderful people. She will get married to a man whom she loves very much and they will have a beautiful baby together. They will be so full of joy!

Do we get more and more unhappy as we get older? Most definitely not, although we have to understand pain and go through difficult times in order to find our true selves which is the key to genuine happiness. And if you don't believe me, look at Julia, then look at the name on the front of this examination paper. That's right, our happy heroine, with all her wonderful dreams for the future is none other than me!

Examiner's comments

- The student's energetic, sometimes humorous and sometimes poignant voice engages the reader throughout. She approaches the question relevantly and originally, opting to address the statement by looking at the different stages in her own life.
- The student's spelling, punctuation, grammar and paragraphing are all very accurate. She uses a good variety of sentence lengths and structures, with effective use of questions and exclamations.
- She uses close detail, a varied vocabulary and strong imagery – such as similes – to create the mood associated with each stage in her 'character's' life. I liked the use of verbs in particular.
- The characters of Julia and her mother are well drawn. They come across as being both individual and as representative of all of us. Indeed, the reader smiles with familiarity at much of what she says. Direct speech; descriptions of movement/appearance/behaviour; humour; repetition; contrasts; direct first person comment by the writer, etc are all used to make the characterisation stronger. The series of cameos (little pictures) of someone growing up is very effective.
- The piece of writing is very well structured. The student begins with direct speech/an exclamation which plunges the reader straight into the story. The middle paragraphs each explore a different stage in Julia's life, or shift perspective from one point of view to another. The ending acts as an excellent conclusion to the essay, and returns to the actual wording of the question. The student gives a very clear response to the title, and goes on to suggest what her definition of happiness is. The final two sentences both lighten the mood and give the reader 'proof' that what the writer has been saying is true.
- The changes in tense from past, to present, to future are deliberate, powerful and very well controlled.
- This was an excellent piece of entertainment, with personal writing which explored the title fully and with conviction.

Using the mark scheme

The mark scheme gives the responses we expect from students. Indicative answers are given but during the standardisation of examiners process the mark scheme is updated and expanded to cover unexpected, correct student responses.

Section C: Planning and teaching

Teaching ideas

When teaching students to respond to and write about texts of different kinds, there are many questions and ideas which can be used to encourage their response. A variety of resources and approaches can bring greater awareness and confidence, and the following sections focus on some practical suggestions. These can help students with every aspect of the course and examination technique, by giving them tools with which to analyse text and organise their thoughts.

Reading and comprehension

Students need practise at reading a variety of sources: books (fiction and non-fiction), newspapers, magazines, website pages and other texts such as leaflets. In the next section, there is a long list of all the types of writing used in the examination, which could form a chart on which to jot down the titles of texts as these are read.

The sample assessment materials clearly show the number of passages, the types of question and the expected responses.

The following information is intended to be used with students to help them with their preparation. It could be given out in order to make students more confident in their approach to the questions.

General advice for students

- *Read all the instructions at the top of the section before you begin.* Other vital information will be given too. You might be asked: ‘First, read Passage One’, for example. You might also be told a little about the content of the extract, who has written it, what its purpose is and from which genre it comes. Be sure to read this, as it can help you to focus on *exactly* what you have to do and in what *order*.
- *Notice other instructions from the examiner as you work your way through the paper.* It might be worth highlighting these in some way so that you don’t overlook them. For example, as you proceed, you might be asked to: ‘Now read Passage Two’ and given specific information about that. You might also be asked to compare passages or asked to look at one particular section of a passage only. Be aware of all the ways in which the examiner is trying to help you.
- *Read each passage through at least once before putting pen to paper.* Do this carefully, pausing at the end of each paragraph to think about what has been said. If you’re not sure, read it again. The leading sentence in each paragraph – which is usually the first or second one – will, as you know from your own writing, tell you what new subject or area is about to be discussed or described. Remember that this section is testing your reading skills *only*, so don’t rush through the passage or try to begin answering the questions before you have as clear an idea as possible as to what it is about.
- *Notice how many marks are being given for each question before you start.* You can do this very quickly by glancing down the right-hand side of the examination paper where the maximum number of marks being awarded for each of your answers will appear in brackets. Obviously, if a question is worth only two marks, you are wasting valuable time by giving an answer which is half a side long; if a question carries seven or eight marks, however, then don’t write two sentences. Be aware of such things as whether the final question could bring you the greatest rewards so that you leave yourself enough time to tackle it.

- *Work through the questions, one at a time, in a logical manner.* You don't have to answer the questions in the order in which they appear on the examination paper but – as there is often a clear sequence to them – it usually helps if you *do* start with question one, then proceed through the remaining questions.
- *Read each question very carefully before you answer it.* You might be asked to select an extract which is no more than *ten* words long, list *three* reasons why something is or isn't the case, or refer to *four* or *five* lines only in your answer. Follow these instructions precisely or you could lose marks needlessly. If you are asked to pick out *four* facts from the passage, you will never gain more marks by giving *six*.
- *Remember that all the information you require will stem from what is written on the examination paper itself.* No question will require a very general response so, as you prepare each answer, pinpoint precisely which parts of the passage or passages are directly relevant to it. With your centre's permission, this could be done with a pen or pencil. (Never be tempted to look for the information required to answer several different questions at the same time – this will rarely speed you up but will, instead, mean that you are more likely to become muddled and make a mistake.)
- *Try to answer all the questions.* You will never lose marks for a wrong answer, so it is best to have a go at each one even if you are having difficulty in understanding it.
- *Spend a few minutes checking through your answers at the end.* As with all examination papers, this is good advice although rather hard to do. If you have time, it is very well worth it, however. Try to re-read the questions through as you go. Often we see mistakes when we return to a piece of writing which we didn't notice at the time. You might have missed out words like 'not' which mean that you have said the opposite of what you meant to say, written that you preferred Passage Two to Passage One when it was the other way round or even forgotten a question that you meant to come back to at the end. This checking – be it at the end of the section or the end of the whole paper – might help you to pick up a few vital extra marks.

Types of question

Introduce students to how questions will be phrased, giving them practice through such instructions as:

- *select specific information from the passage(s).* These questions will begin with words like 'What ... Where ... Why ... When ... How ...' or ask for things like 'List ... Name ... Select ... Give two reasons why ...'. These questions are very direct so make sure that your answers to them are concise and unambiguous. Remember that all the information will be on the examination paper, so don't use your own examples or rely on your general knowledge. Locate the information in the passage(s) and write down your answer, clearly and precisely, in your answer booklet.
- *answer a question 'in your own words'.* This means that – once you have selected the relevant information – you will need to express it in a *different* way from the way in which it is written on the examination paper. You won't gain *any* marks if you simply copy key words and phrases from the passage in answer to this sort of question, so take some time to think how you can say the same thing but in a different way.
- *give a specific number of points in your answer.* If you are asked to give a certain number of points – for example four – in response to a question, the examiner *will mark the first four things that you have to say and no more*. It is very important, therefore, not to waffle or write down ten points *randomly* in the hope that some are right.

- *say what is **suggested** by certain quotations or descriptions.* In this type of question, you might be asked to explain what certain words and phrases suggest or imply to you about relationships, a place, a sight or a historic event, or discuss how they help to create certain moods, feelings or tones. It helps to quote individual words or phrases to illustrate your points.
- *comment on the language and style of a piece of writing.* The main point here is always to consider what *effects* the words are creating. Please note, therefore, that there is little point in saying that the passage you are commenting on ‘contains lots of similes’ or ‘has lots of alliteration in it’ if you don’t go on to discuss what feelings or moods are suggested by what you have observed, and give specific examples.

At the end of this section, you will find some questions that you could ask yourself when thinking about the *style* of a piece of writing. Be aware that it is *not* a tick-list which you should run through every time you read anything. Only a few – or even none – of these features might be present in a given story, letter, article or website. It is important to note at this point that you should never say what *isn’t* present in a piece of writing, such as ‘There are no adjectives or comparisons in this extract’ unless, of course, you are going on to say that this, in itself, has a particular effect on the reader.

Commenting on language

These may be useful prompts to offer to students in thinking about how they write on points of language.

- Is the passage an extract from a diary, the opening of a story, a letter, part of a debate ...? What is its purpose, what is it about and to whom is it addressed? Is there an overall mood to it or lots of changes of mood? Establishing these things about a piece of writing will enable you to put comments on style in their proper context.
- Does it contain lots of facts, figures, dates and statistics? Is there, perhaps, a map or a chart to help you understand its contents? Are there short, sharp, simple sentences throughout which help to make the data and factual information more accessible – or even shocking – to the reader?
- Does it appeal to the senses? Are there particular colours, sounds or even smells, touches and tastes described which help to create a sense of beauty, danger, emptiness or fear? What are they? How do they work?
- Is there any direct or indirect speech in the passage? Is the language colloquial or formal, humorous or serious, simple or complex? What does this imply about the characters or speakers?
- Can you comment on any of the comparisons? (It might be useful to remember that a comparison which contains the word ‘like’ or ‘as’ is called a simile, and one that doesn’t is called a metaphor.)
- Do the sounds of the words help to heighten the effect of the language? If you read the line: ‘The *lazy lapping* of water against *lemon-coloured* sand’, you might feel that the gentle repetition of the lilting ‘l’ sounds helps to create a peaceful mood. If you read that, ‘The *madman*, dressed in black, *hacked* at the back door of the house in which the little boy sat all alone’, you might feel that the harsh, attacking a’s sound violent and emphasise the vulnerability of the little boy. Out of interest, the repetition of a consonant is called alliteration, and the repetition of a vowel sound is called assonance.
- Are there any contrasts in the passage, such as between light and dark, black and white or descriptions of silence followed by loud noises. What specific effects do these have on you as the reader?

- Do you notice anything interesting about the types of sentences? Are they simple ‘subject – verb – object’ type sentences, or rather long, complex and descriptive? Are there lots of questions and exclamations, commands or stark statements? Does the length, pace or rhythm of the sentences contribute to the overall mood in any significant way?
- Is the passage written in the first or the third person? Is it in the past or present tense? Do these things help it to appear more subjective or objective, and for what reasons? Where does the author stand in relation to what he or she is writing and to the reader?
- Are there any groups of words which help to create a particular mood or feeling? Perhaps a number of words and phrases suggest new life, such as: ‘a new dawn’; ‘daybreak’; ‘her eyes like newly-opened buds’, or imply death such as ‘coffin’; ‘the last dregs of day’ and ‘the curtains like black shrouds’. Perhaps there are colourful adjectives such as ‘crimson’, ‘flint-blue’, ‘emerald’ and ‘violet’ or strong verbs such as ‘thrust’, ‘shoved’, ‘staggered’ and ‘fell’. Having noticed these groups, you need to comment on how they help to suggest a particular mood or feeling.
- Is there anything about the structure – or perhaps the layout – on which you want to comment? If there are sub-headings or striking titles, what effect do they create? Is the length of any particular paragraph of significance?
- If it is appropriate to comment on the photographs or pictures, focus on the *detail* of them saying how they strengthen the sense of mood created by the language.
- A few final things to be aware of are: *personification* – ‘The sun *looked benevolently* down from the sky ...’ where inanimate objects are given human characteristics; *onomatopoeia* – ‘The thunder *rumbled* and *crashed* through the darkness ...’ – where the sounds of the words themselves help to create the very thing that is being described, and any *puns* or ‘*plays on words*’ which might – in particular – be used in headings and sub-headings. What specific effects do these techniques help to create in the passage that you are reading?

Remember that every piece of writing will have its own particular features for you to notice and comment on. A number of the above points, for example, may be useful only if the passage you are writing about is quite literary, so approach each passage you write about as something new and fresh.

You should comment on the most **distinctive** features of a passage **only** because – even if 8 marks are being awarded for a question on style – you will usually be left with about 10–15 minutes in which to prepare and write your answer.

Writing skills

Following the above suggestions should have beneficial effects on students’ writing, by making them focused and specific in their response. There are also a number of key features of successful writing, whether generated by a text or not, which students can be introduced to as aids to developing their skills.

- **Making sure of the right register and style.** Many writing tasks require the writer to think about the audience (the person being written to) and the **purpose** – whether it is to offer advice, pass on information, create an imaginative description or story, or persuade someone of your point of view. The writing required in the examination will give you a clear indication of what kind of writing you are being asked to do.

- **Effective presentation.** Many students are impatient with presentation, because they either do not think it matters or are not prepared to take the trouble to make their work neat and orderly. Pages of text with large numbers of messy crossings out will be seen by examiners as showing an untidy mind. Moreover, your writing has to be read by people who do not know you and may well not have limitless patience to try to decipher small or messy writing. Hence it is worth sticking to what might be seen as ‘old-fashioned’ advice, so that you get into the habit of producing writing that is:
 - neat, regular and clear
 - spelt accurately
 - correctly punctuated
 - set out in clear paragraphs
 - laid out and presented well.

There are many practical advantages in developing clear, tidy handwriting:

- examiners will form a positive impression of your work
- they will not be slowed down or confused, as they will if the writing is hard to read and not written in proper sentences
- how you write, as well as what you write, will be taken into account when your work is marked
- good writing is useful for applications to jobs or college courses – it is common for employers, for example, to insist, even in these days of computers everywhere, on having an application written by hand
- many jobs really do need people who can write clearly, accurately and precisely.

Planning an answer

Some relevant points are made above which students should find helpful. There is much centres can do to ensure that their students arrive in an examination in the best possible state of mind to succeed. Some key points are:

- **Answer the question** – the oldest but still the best advice. A careful plan of how to do this can involve such steps as the following:
 - reading questions carefully and recognising the key words
 - deciding what are the main points to be made, and what the question is really looking for
 - selecting material that is relevant and supports your points
 - giving your answer a clear structure: introduction, main section(s) and conclusion
 - choosing your examples or quotations.
- **Focus on key words.** Essay questions often include one or more key words in the title.
- **Planning the use of time** – practise essays written to a time limit similar to that in the examination; writing ‘five-minute’ essay plans can be a good way of ensuring that main points are identified and set down quickly.

Vocabulary enrichment

Students should be encouraged to think about the fact that English is a language with a huge range of words and ways of saying things. Variety in expression and the use of precise or subtle vocabulary are always effective ways to show the reader that the writer has thought about how to express ideas, and is keen to choose a word which conveys precisely the right shade of meaning. There are various ways in which students can be encouraged to develop and enrich their use of vocabulary, such as:

- noting down interesting new words and phrases encountered when reading
- thinking about synonyms and antonyms, and deciding which of the available choices works best in a particular situation
- working on generating idiomatic phrases which make the reader feel that the writing is confident and expressive
- working on adding colour and texture to their writing, for example through varied adjectives or adverbs, or seeking alternatives for 'went' and 'said', for example
- thinking about how imagery can enhance meaning, through providing new or graphic ways to bring home a point or comparison
- choosing words that are the right words for a particular purpose and audience, in the most appropriate register. For example, in writing a formal speech it is important not to use expressions that are too colloquial.

Resources

Cripps E and Footman C — *GCE English Language: A study and revision course for O Level* (Cambridge University Press (CUP), 2002) ISBN 0521009898

Please note that while this resource is correct at the time of publication, it may be updated or withdrawn from circulation at any time.

Glossary

Below are some brief definitions of a number of words used in this guide.

adjective	a word which describes a noun
adverb	a word which qualifies a verb (or sometimes an adjective)
advertisement	a persuasive text, often designed to sell something or to inform and/or change public attitudes and behaviour
alliteration	the repetition of initial consonant sounds in words which are close to each other
anecdote	a short amusing or interesting story that is true
antonym	a word which is opposite in meaning to another word
argumentative essay	one which gives reasons for and/or against a given statement or suggestion
assonance	the repetition of vowel sounds in words which are close to each other
atmosphere	the general feeling or mood of a place
audience	the readers or listeners to whom a piece of writing or a speech is addressed
autobiography	the story of a person's life written by himself/herself
biography	the story of a person's life written by somebody else
broadsheet	a 'good quality' newspaper which is formal in style
brochure	a small book or pamphlet giving information about a place or event; a publicity booklet
chronological order	events listed or described in the order or time sequence in which they actually occurred
colloquial	referring to words or styles which are suitable for informal conversations or direct speech; idiomatic
consonants	all letters of the alphabet which are not vowels
cliché	a phrase or expression used so often that it has become too well known and, therefore, lost its original impact
climax	the most exciting or powerful part of a story which usually occurs near the end
compare	to show how two or more passages, styles, ideas, etc are alike
conflict	a fight or struggle; a disagreement between people with different values, ideas or beliefs
conjunction	a word that joins sentences, phrases or words, for example and, but
contrast (noun)	a difference clearly seen when certain words, colours, sounds, ideas, etc. are juxtaposed (placed closely together)
contrast (verb)	to compare passages, styles, ideas, etc so that differences are made clear
crescendo	the gradual increase or build up of suspense, tension or interest in a story or other piece of writing

dialogue	a conversation or discussion in a book or play; an exchange of opinions
diary	a record – often written daily – of events or thoughts in a person’s life; a book designed for this purpose or for keeping engagements
direct speech	the actual words spoken by a person or character which are put inside speech marks (“...”)
directed writing	writing aimed at a particular audience for a particular purpose
dramatic	particularly vivid, exciting, emotionally charged or tense
editorial	a leading article in a newspaper, written by the editor or a top journalist, which gives the paper’s stance or opinion on an important or current issue
exclamation	a spoken or written expression of heightened emotion, indicating such things as: surprise, outrage, humour or a raised voice
extract (noun)	a passage or small section of writing taken from a book, essay, newspaper article, etc
flashback	the change of setting in a story or film to that of an earlier time; a change from a present event to one from the past; a change from a description, say, of a fifty-year-old man to that of the same character as a little boy
fiction	an invented story; a product of the imagination
form	the structure or format of a text which is usually linked to purpose and audience; a piece of writing might take the form of a letter, diary account, newspaper report, etc
formal language	language which ‘follows all the rules’ and is suitable for official, important or polite occasions; language used when writing/speaking to someone of higher status than you, to someone you don’t know personally or to someone you wish to impress
generalisation	an empty or all-purpose statement which lacks precise details
grammar	rules dictating the way that a particular language should be accurately written or spoken
headline	a heading in a newspaper, particularly the largest one at the top of the front page
idiom	a common expression, familiar to all native speakers of a language, whose meaning cannot be guessed at by simply translating the individual words
imagery	the use of metaphorical or vibrant language to create pictures in the minds of readers or listeners
indirect speech	a person’s words reported, with some adjustments, where speech marks are not used
irony	occurs when there is a gap between what appears to be true and what is actually true – it can be poignant, humorous or even tragic; a situation or utterance that has a special significance which is not perceived at the time; an event which has an entirely different outcome from the one that was expected or intended

key points	the important facts, ideas, opinions and thoughts which are central to the theme, message or subject matter of a passage
layout	the way in which text, pictures, headings, sub-headings, etc have been used to organise or format the appearance of a printed page
leading sentence	usually the first or second sentence in a paragraph which gives you some indication as to what that paragraph will be about
leaflet	a printed sheet of paper giving information about a place, event or campaign which is often distributed free of charge
metaphor	a direct comparison which does not include the words 'like' or 'as'
monosyllabic words	words which are short, often basic and which have only one 'beat' or syllable
mood	the feeling or tone conveyed by a piece of writing
non-fiction	any factual writing
noun	a word used to name a thing, place, quality, emotion or person
objective (adjective)	not influenced by personal feelings or opinions; impartial, and seemingly detached from characters, events or arguments
onomatopoeia	where the sense of a word is echoed or suggested by its sounds and rhythms
pamphlet	a small booklet of information; a treatise – usually controversial – on some subject of the day
personify	to represent an idea or emotion in human form, or a thing as having human characteristics
plot	the story-line or sequence of actions in any piece of fiction
preposition	a word used with a noun or pronoun to show place, position, time or means (for example at school, in the kitchen, on Monday, by bus)
pronoun	a word which stands in the place of a noun – such as she, he, they, it – often to avoid unwanted repetition
pun	the (usually) humorous use of one word to suggest another that sounds the same but which has a different meaning
quote (verb)	to repeat or write out exact words from a book or speech and enclose them in quotation marks ('...'). Quotations should be fairly short and can often illustrate a point which you wish to make.
relevant	significant and appropriate
rhetorical question	a question asked only for dramatic effect; one which does not require a genuine response because the answer is obvious, clearly implied by the author or not actually needed
rhyme	a strong similarity in sound in two or more words, for example bear, care, share and fair all rhyme
rhythm	the almost musical cadences and tempos of language which can reflect the quick or slow pace of actions or descriptions

rubric	a set of printed instructions, always appearing at several points on any examination paper, which must be followed closely
the senses	our five natural powers of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch through which we perceive the world, and which we can use to bring experiences to life when we write a story or description
setting	the time, place, surroundings and environment where the action of a story unfolds
simile	an expression – using ‘like’ or ‘as’ – which describes one thing by comparing it with another
slang	very informal writing or speech that includes new and, sometimes, impolite words; language too inexact to use in formal writing except, perhaps, for humour or in direct speech
structure	the organisation and construction of a piece of writing; the framework within which the words and ideas operate
style	the manner in which a text is written; the distinctive features peculiar to a particular author
sub-heading	a minor heading within a text
subjective	influenced by personal emotions and opinions, and lacking impartiality or objectivity; written from a particular person’s point of view
substantiate	to illustrate, prove or ‘back up’ an idea with examples or close detail
summarise	to write a shortened form of a text which still includes all the main points
suspense	a state or feeling of anxious uncertainty whilst waiting to find out what will actually happen in a story; an author’s way of creating excitement by deliberately withholding information for a period of time
synonym	a word with the same meaning as another word
tabloid	a newspaper, popular and often informal in style, which is designed to appeal to a mass audience
text	the actual words of something written or printed; the main body of language in a book, essay, etc as distinct from illustrations or notes
thesaurus	a book containing lists of synonyms and closely-related words; a word-finder
tone	the distinctive character, quality or style of a piece of writing or speech; the feeling or mood created by it
transcript	an exact written or recorded copy of a speech or conversation
verb	a word which signifies an action or state of being
vocabulary	the words of a language; the words known to and used by a particular person
vowel	the letters a, e, i, o and u; occasionally, the letter y is classed as a vowel

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