

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2014

Edexcel Certificate in English
Language A (KEA0)
Paper 02

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Overview

The Certificate in English Paper 2 is a paper lasting one hour and thirty minutes. Question 1 is a reading question based on the Edexcel Anthology and in January 2014 candidates had to respond to the extract from the novel *Charlotte Gray*, "The Last Night". Question 2a and 2b are writing questions and both are compulsory. The writing tasks for June 2014 were to write the text of a speech on the benefits of volunteering and to write a letter nominating someone for a special award. This was considered to be a very fair paper, enabling a wide range of candidates of varying abilities to demonstrate their skills in reading and writing. The poem worked well for the majority of candidates and it was felt that candidates had continued to improve their timing on Questions 2a and 2b, with most candidates completing concise but full tasks in the time set.

Reading

Question 1

Many responses within Levels 1 and 2 answered using the text chronologically and did not use the entire text. These candidates also concentrated on the first two bullet points. Overall, the effect of language devices could have been analysed and discussed in greater depth. Stronger responses showed a clear understanding of how the story was meant to work and how the writer had achieved this by analysing language points integrated into explanation of theme and wider context. Weaker answers were typified by a lack of language analysis or by a failure to link comments on language technique to writer's intent, or to explain how these contributed to the theme of fear and suspense. A few candidates focused on sympathy. Some candidates gave opinions or a short narrative with insufficient reference to the text. On the whole, though, the question attracted a full range of responses across the whole mark scheme and generally showed that candidates had engaged well with the text; those unable to analyse language or the writer's techniques in any detail often still managed to express some personal response or empathy for the plight of the characters. Higher level candidates made perceptive comments, identified more complex linguistic features (irony of postcards, juxtaposition, metaphor and motifs), understood the characters as constructs created by Faulkes and appreciated a fuller range of the techniques used to build fear and suspense. Lower and mid-level candidates were able to demonstrate some empathic understanding for the characters' plight. Techniques picked up at the lower levels included rhetorical questions and the personification of the bus, but these were not always fully explored. Often candidates at this level linked techniques to the building of fear and suspense but failed to explain how or why language created this effect. Many used the structure of the question to build their response quite effectively. Weaker candidates tended to re-tell or paraphrase the narrative and did not go on to fully address the question or struggled to explain how fear and suspense were created. Across all abilities, some candidates commented on punctuation used (particularly the ellipses and dashes); however, very few moved beyond a general statement of why they might be used and so gained little credit for their comments. Many candidates also chose to use terms for parts of speech, often revealing a lack of grammatical understanding as verbs were labelled as adjectives and so on. The vast majority of candidates, whilst expressing

empathy for the protagonists, were able to distance themselves from the actual scene and very few lost focus enough to merely generate an opinion on the situation presented in the text. The extract gave all candidates the opportunity to respond effectively and enthusiastically. Common misunderstandings included some candidates thinking that 'Charlotte Grey' was the author, or that the novel was written in 1940, or 'set before the war in 1940'. Some candidates referred to the extract as a poem throughout, which resulted in some confused responses.

Writing

Question 2a

A high proportion of candidates had a secure awareness of audience, purpose and task. They were thus able to include rhetorical devices, attempting to engage the audience. An issue faced by a large proportion of candidates was a lack of variety and security in sentence structures. Another issue was the content of the response, with any candidates focusing on different types of volunteering rather than the benefits of volunteering. Nearly all candidates addressed this question appropriately and producing a speech showing awareness of audience. Rhetorical devices and clear organisation marked out better responses, with development of benefits of volunteering to individual and wider community as well as exploring a range of opportunities. Weaker answers either had less sense of a sense of audience, or tended to list options rather than encouraging participation. This question presented clear rhetorical possibilities with candidates having the opportunity to focus on a familiar audience and provide a short sharp response. Most candidates managed to produce a piece of writing that gave several good reasons for volunteering. Whilst many concentrated on the financial and career incentives presented by volunteering, it was heartening to see the large numbers whose moral compasses pointed solidly at the positive impact on society and the individual made by volunteers. What separated them in terms of marks was their ability to construct a speech, use of rhetorical devices, accuracy of spelling and punctuation, and ability to remain focused on the question. At the highest levels, candidates wrote compelling pieces that were clearly intended for an audience of their peers; they anticipated the response of their audience and seamlessly used language devices such as similes, rhetorical questions and one line paragraphs for effect. Less able candidates often still presented a variety of reasons why young people should volunteer, although they were often let down by weak or non-existent paragraphing, erratic spelling or writing their response in an inappropriate form (e.g. a letter). A small minority of candidates misunderstood the question. These candidates either wrote about why young people should volunteer (as opposed to old people) or confused volunteering with voting. Across the ability spectrum, attention to punctuation was lacking. Candidates with otherwise excellent ideas and structuring often failed to use basic sentence demarcation. Very few candidates attempted complex punctuation in the form of colons, semi-colons, dashes and commas.

Question 2b

Most candidates used the correct structure of a letter. A good number included persuasive devices. The great majority of candidates answered appropriately and were clearly able to tap into ideas and emotions allowing them to demonstrate their skills. This question tended to elicit more interesting responses where even technically weaker attempts were engaging. Both of the writing questions were accessible to all candidates, with no special knowledge or interest required and the topics being relevant to all. The majority of candidates were able to construct a letter, and follow the basic conventions of that particular form of writing. At the highest levels, choices were interesting and creative, drawing on characters from literary texts, celebrities and local heroes - one example being that of Goldilocks for having changed her life around after an initial foray into petty crime. These responses tended to use complex vocabulary and a range of language devices integrated seamlessly into the writing. They anticipated the response of the reader and used appropriately formal language. They also tended to have a clear focus, paragraphing was secure and the candidates used celebrities, a friend or a character. These responses often showed a clear understanding of the task, and showed candidates' ability to construct effective, persuasive and emotive written responses. Less able responses tended to focus on friends and family members, which were limited to two or three simple paragraphs which showed little understanding of persuasive techniques. This is not to say that there were some very good responses on friends and family. Some responses showed a complete lack of understanding of the task, and in some cases candidates disregarded the question and nominated themselves; however, some chose to nominate themselves in a witty way. Weaker responses tended to use inappropriately informal language, did not write in a letter format or failed to link ideas together. Punctuation was an issue in a range of responses across the ability spectrum. Sentence demarcation was sometimes problematic, even in otherwise strong answers, with candidates often using a comma to break up ideas or omitting punctuation altogether.

