

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

The Edexcel Certificate
English Language (KEA0)
Paper 2

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General Overview

KEA0/02 was felt to be a very accessible paper. The layout of the paper did not seem to present any problems to students. Given that there were two writing questions for Section 2, centres could have encouraged their candidates to work on their timing and examination technique for this section; the fact that candidates had to be economical with their time encouraged them to write briskly and purposefully.

Reading

Question 1

This question offered a range of opportunities for all levels of ability.

Some candidates re-told the story; some did this more accurately than others, who confused events and characters in the poem. Clearly these candidates were placed in the lower bands of marking. Other candidates wrote sophisticated analyses of the poem drawing out the way the poet used a variety of techniques, such as references to Macbeth, allusion to the Great War, social, cultural and historical references to child labour, some references to the last supper. A range of responses dealt well with literary devices and techniques, with the better ones moving beyond simply spotting techniques. The best responses evaluated Frost's use of language and literary techniques, using textual evidence appositely to support their arguments. Better answers explained how techniques such as personification, metonym and use of caesura brought out the theme; weaker ones identified, but did not explain. Some words were commonly misused: empathy/sympathy, emotion/emotive/emotional.

Some responses were of very high quality and were accordingly awarded top marks; indeed, they could have got more. It was evident that a range of centres had taught the poem very well and that many students responded very well to aspects of the poem. Many candidates focused on the set theme of sadness and this enabled them to write fluently, relevantly and in a structured way. Most adhered to the bullet points and answered the question; weaker answers clearly struggled, but still retained some structure because they used suggestions from the bullet points, which aided and worked as a scaffold. The really creative responses used sophisticated textual analysis, in addition to empathy with the situation from the poet's viewpoint. Some potentially good candidates got lost in context to the detriment of analysis of the poem. Candidates need to be encouraged to adopt a balanced approach in regard to this.

Writing

Question 2a

The responses to the writing question 2a were varied. Those candidates who achieved higher marks demonstrated control and maturity in their writing, offering a range of ideas. Weaker candidates tended to focus on one aspect, often road safety, internet safety or safe sex. Stronger candidates recognised the context of the writing and adopted a suitable, appropriate tone and register for a talk. Some candidates, however, adopted a hectoring tone which would have alienated a teenage audience. Almost all demonstrated knowledge of the structure and technique of a speech and introduced the subject(s) they were covering. Some weak answers listed their topics then did not cover them, perhaps having run out of time or space. The two tasks enabled candidates to use different writing styles. The allowance of marks, time and space for answers encouraged succinct responses and discouraged some weaker students from writing reams of material not necessarily worth any more marks. The most successful candidates tended to choose two or three of these issues, giving detailed, reasoned advice about each in turn. Another feature of the better responses was a lightness of tone suitable for a talk. Less successful candidates either wrote briefly in a limited way about one issue or simply listed the issues, giving only the briefest, most obvious advice about each one.

Candidates' use of spelling, punctuation and grammar was variable. For example, semi-colons and commas were present, but there was some misuse of capital letters. Most responses contained paragraphing and sequencing devices. Common errors included students using spelling and writing associated with text usage, homophone confusion and the use of apostrophes. Candidates need to be reminded of the importance of using correct sentence punctuation, cohesive devices and appropriate paragraphing.

Question 2b

There was also a variety of responses to the writing question 2b, but, given the time allocation, there were some good essays. The more able candidates adopted a suitable tone and register for a magazine article; it was interesting that a number of candidates slipped into very colloquial expression in an attempt to engage the audience, at times inappropriately so. Other candidates wrote in a formal way, but did not really attempt to write in the style of a magazine article; while these candidates' work was not as focused on the set task as a result, the quality of writing could still be assessed appropriately. The responses were generally serious although humour and irony, when used, was welcome. The marking guidance gave leeway for several approaches.

There was a variety of wish lists ranging from wanting world peace and an end to poverty to candidates who wished for quite mundane things which all the same were very personal to them. Many candidates wrote about their own personal wishes and plans for the future. The more impressive responses dealt with one or two ideas and developed them. This question also offered a range of opportunities for all levels of ability. The higher level responses tended to be more imaginative or sophisticated, commenting on career, university or travel. Mid-level and lower responses were more focused on future employment, a wish for having a family or wealth or, in some cases, a wish to cure cancer due to having a sick or deceased relative/family member.

The same comments found in 2a on spelling, punctuation and grammar could be repeated here.

Conclusion

Although the paper was handled well by many candidates, for the writing questions, a significant amount of candidates need to work on improving accuracy and range with regard to spelling, punctuation and grammar. Because of the need to write two responses for Section B, candidates need adequate examination practice so that they can cope with the timing and organization of their responses. While many candidates wrote briskly, purposely and effectively because of the time restraint for Section B, some submitted uneven writing responses; indeed, some only submitted one writing response instead of two, so timed practice is especially important for these candidates. For the reading question, candidates need to be encouraged to evaluate the use and effect of literary and linguistic devices, since some candidates simply list the features being used by the writers. Having said this, many centres had clearly prepared their candidates very well for the Frost poem and should be commended for this.

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