

# Examiners' Report

January 2013

Level 1/Level 2 Certificate in English  
Language  
(KEA0)

Paper 2

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## **Introduction**

The paper worked well and the choice of the poem "Disabled" elicited a range of appropriate responses from students from a wide range of abilities. The writing questions allowed plenty of choice, both in terms of topics and of forms of writing.

There was a range of responses and it was evident that some able candidates had been entered. Equally there was evidence of candidates who were struggling with language expression (particularly in the writing) and their understanding was superficial. The influence of a second language for some candidates was obvious in both sections. Timing did not seem to be a problem and the candidates seemed to divide their time appropriately as section B for the most part did not seem to be rushed or unfinished as may occasionally happen in some other papers.

## **Question 1**

Virtually all candidates attempted to answer this question and the poem was felt to be very accessible. The responses were varied in quality with students receiving marks across the entire range. The weaker responses to Owen's poem lacked depth. The majority of candidates understood the main points of the poem, although some of the weaker ones thought it was an old soldier looking back on his life.

Many candidates followed the suggested structure and addressed the first two or three bullet points fairly well, although there was a tendency among weaker candidates simply to re-tell what the poem was about and adding a few quotations, which were not always fully explained. The better candidates were able to integrate the quotations, alongside explaining why a technique was used and why it was effective. A significant amount of candidates appeared to "tack on" the linguistic aspects to the end of their response and this was not very effective; it would have been better to have borne in mind the language employed by the poet throughout their responses.

In some cases, candidates simply attempted to identify linguistic and literary devices. A few candidates approached the question from a literary and linguistic point of view; this was more successful if, rather than just extracting words or short phrases to show as examples of a language or literary point, they went on to explain consistently what the writer was trying to achieve in relation to the theme of the poem. Some candidates got 'carried away' with the morality of the soldier's situation; the selfishness of women and the unfair treatment of a disabled man who had done his country proud; while personal responses are encouraged, these must not lose sight of the text itself. Candidates often quoted far too much of the poem. Some of the weaker and mid-range candidates would have benefited from planning their responses

more carefully. There was some misunderstanding of aspects of the poem, such as 'suit of grey' representing the soldier's age.

Scaffolding suggested by the question prompts was used by almost all candidates; this enabled points to be organized methodically. Many responses concentrated on the past and present and drew out the ways in which the soldier's immaturity and youth were the reason for his predicament. He was identified as "one of the lads", popular with the girls prior to his injury, but there was less understanding of the notion of 'institutionalised'.

Most candidates described the soldier's feelings well. They commented on the comparison between the past and present life of the soldier well, including his experiences with women and his experiences as a football player, contrasting with the institutes and wheelchair of the present. However, some responses could not reach the top two bands for two reasons. The first was the analysis of language. Many students selected a quotation, for example 'glow-lamps budded in the light-blue trees' and explained that this showed the soldier's good life before the war. However, they did not explain the specific use of language and colour and how the writer uses language to create literary effects. The second was the context of the war. Although the question did not ask for this specifically, when students used the quotation, 'smiling they wrote his lie', they could have linked this to the context of propaganda in the war.

Less able candidates dealt with the thoughts and feelings of the soldier in a cursory way; there was some engagement, some understanding and undeveloped points. More confident candidates showed evidence of clear understanding and provided a range of points. The most able candidates showed secure understanding and assured engagement with the poem, dealing with it in a systematic and thoughtful manner, substantiating points from the poem with good support and dealing with language effectively. There was evidence of some sophisticated and analytical answers. The better candidates moved beyond a commentary on the narrative of the poem. It was noted that some candidates did not deal with the whole poem, so candidates need to be careful to bear in mind the whole of the text in future examination series.

### **Question 2(a)**

Interestingly many candidates were in favour of raising the school leaving age. Responses were varied in quality. Quite a few candidates struggled with or had forgotten the requested format of the response, with some candidates writing a more essay-styled response with pros and cons. Many, however, used the conventions of a speech well, with appropriate persuasive techniques. The best attempted to sway their audience, rather than rehearse their own views

Less confident candidates made simple points, which were undeveloped and highlighted the fact that young people would get 'better' jobs when they leave school. At this level there was a lack of control, with only a limited variety of sentence structure. Mid-range candidates offered more developed points with a clear structure. As one moved through the mark range there was increased engagement with audience and evidence that this was a speech to 'your class'; these candidates benefited from bearing their audience in mind and having a very clear sense of the purpose of the writing. There was some overuse of the vernacular in places but not as prevalent as one would imagine.

Some markers noted that they did not find as many responses in the highest band as expected, perhaps because some candidates were lacking in the rhetoric needed to project a successful, convincing speech, although the majority were well written and clear. Nearly all candidates were able to express a view on the topic. Most attempted to outline both sides of the argument or, at least, to list the advantages and disadvantages of staying at school longer. Many structured this as two separate essays giving opposite points of view followed by one sentence stating their own view. These responses would have been stronger if they had connected the arguments with such phrases as "Some would say..."; "On the other hand"; "Conversely".

### **Question 2(b)**

The higher level responses tended to use more sophisticated vocabulary or more engaging persuasive techniques with imaginative ideas of how they wanted their head to invest the money. The mid/lower level responses were more focused on straightforward or practical ways to use the money, such as investment in equipment. Some markers felt that this question was answered best overall of the paper, because many candidates from a wide range rose to the challenge of writing in a purposeful and persuasive way.

Unfortunately, the tone of some letters was overly aggressive with use of inappropriate terms such as 'crap,' and many were unaware of how to begin a letter with a salutation. "Sincerely" was often spelt wrongly. However, many students produced a good structure to this question, despite only having a short time to answer. They showed conventions of letter writing and understanding of audience generally. Most wrote a couple of paragraphs explaining what they would like to see in their school. For students to reach the top bands, they needed to employ interesting use of language and punctuation for effect; for example, they could use some short sentences for variety, repetition or rhetorical questions.

For both writing questions, some candidates tended to commence with often rushed or no introductions and conclude with abrupt endings rather than to use cohesive devices or create a coherent piece. Sometimes handwriting was difficult to read. While this would not necessarily have disadvantaged candidates, it would be helpful if candidates presented their work more

clearly. Some candidates were hampered by erratic spelling and some markers noted that even the better responses which used a fairly sophisticated vocabulary had some trouble with spelling. Some common errors included: "collage instead of college" and "trys" instead of "tries". There was also confusion over the following pairs: "less/fewer", "their/there", "your/you're", and "where/wear". Future candidates are also advised to practise the use of the apostrophe; for instance, some were using apostrophes to indicate plurals.

## **Conclusion**

All candidates found the paper accessible and were able to demonstrate their reading, understanding and writing skills, across a considerable range of abilities. The vast majority of candidates appeared to find the poem accessible and were able to respond appropriately to the writing questions, which provided them with reasonable choices. In preparation for the reading question, candidates should familiarize themselves with the poems and passages from the anthology, as greater familiarity will elicit more informed responses. As well as spotting literary and linguistic techniques, candidates should be prepared to explain the effects of these techniques. For the writing questions, candidates should become familiar with a range of writing forms and practise writing under timed conditions. They should read tasks carefully to ensure that they are writing to the purpose. During the examination, candidates need to pay special attention to spelling, punctuation, organization of paragraphs and grammatical accuracy. On the whole, centres had prepared their students well for this paper.

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