

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

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

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Publications Code EC035883

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Introduction

There are two sections in the examination paper, which are equally weighted. In Section A, students have to answer a question on a prose piece or poem from the *International GCSE and Certificate Anthology*; this year the piece was *A Hero* by R. K. Narayan. The story was reprinted in the examination paper. This section assesses the students' reading and understanding. For Section B, there are two writing questions, both of which are compulsory. The students had to argue about a health issue or describe a special place. This section assesses the students' writing.

The overarching view was that the June 2013 paper was a very accessible paper. It was interesting and challenging, as well as giving opportunities to all abilities. A full range of marks was awarded. There were no major problems with the interpretation of the questions or with rubric infringement, although a minority of students interpreted Q2(b) as being an article written by the magazine, rather than an article to the magazine, as was intended; these students were still marked on the quality of their writing. It was also noted that a number of students failed to attempt or complete Q2(b), so timing was an issue for some students.

There was a significant increase in the number of entries for the paper this year.

Q1

Many students approached this question with a very good understanding of the text. Many explored at various levels the relationship between Swami and his family members: mother, father and grandmother.

Higher level answers included good reference to the text and discussed how the writer used language, structure and form to create various literary effects. Weaker students failed to provide effective evidence for the points made. The responses were varied in quality. The majority of responses which were placed in level 2 and 3 were weak on language, so this is an area which students could have worked on more.

The question gave more able students the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, while still allowing scope for the weaker students to perform. Students engaged well with the text, which was appropriate and interesting. Students' understanding of the story was generally very good.

It seems that most students benefited from the outlining of bullet points to help structure their response. Of the three bullet points in the question, students wrote most detailed responses to the first one (Swami's family relationships) and this was generally well-handled. The bullet point asking about Swami's/the child's perspective was also attempted by many students, although not so convincingly answered; some students made generalised or undeveloped statements about Swami's childish belief in the supernatural. The third bullet point, on language, was often ignored by lower band students.

The strongest students addressed all bullet points, not necessarily independently; the very top band answers tended to embed language analysis throughout their essays. Some students seemed to be confused about the form/genre of the text and referred to it as being a poem.

This question was attempted by most students and most students identified the tumultuous relationship with his father and the contrasting good relationship with his grandmother. However, quite a number of students adopted a simplistic view of the relationship with Swami's mother. The most insightful answers came from students who recognised the shift in her attitude, as well as highlighting the patriarchal background she came from, which may have been responsible for her distant attitude to her son.

Many students seemed well prepared for the question. The best answers came from students who focused on language techniques from the beginning of their answer, as well as the explanation for their use. There were a few cases of students rewriting the story with no real analysis and focus on the use of language techniques.

Q2(a)

This question was accessible to most students as the topic was something with which they could identify. There was a mixed response highlighting whether young people did or did not lead a healthy lifestyle. Answers which were well controlled and structured were awarded high band marks. Less controlled answers contained spelling mistakes, punctuation errors and grammatical inaccuracies which hindered communication. Responses were varied in quality with most students responding in the requested format, although some chose to respond in an essay style format with advantages and disadvantages.

The majority of students agreed with the statement, mostly blaming fast food and technology for the state of young people's health. There were some very good answers where students made a distinct decision as to which side of the debate they stood, exploring the issues fully and citing some good examples and facts to substantiate their views, such as the media's, schools' and parents' role in ensuring teenagers lead a healthy lifestyle. Students also noted the pressure on teenagers to look a certain way and how being slim does not necessarily mean one is healthy but could be hiding issues such as bulimia and anorexia. Insightful answers for the opposite side of the debate concentrated on the use of the Olympics 2012 to promote fitness, healthy eating in schools and how education has improved in this area. Some more pertinent ones commented on how generalising the statement was.

Some students failed to plan their response. As a result, they seemed to write down a random selection of thoughts and ideas. Most spent a lot of time discussing healthy eating but some went as far as talking about littering. The higher band responses, however, were appropriately detailed, well structured and convincing as a speech. In a number of cases, however there was no real sense of 'speech' and no recognition that a speech needs to appeal to an audience for its effectiveness.

A lot of good content was marred by poor punctuation, grammar and spelling; even very strong students often did not use the full range of punctuation and a significant minority of responses contained little or no punctuation at all. Although there was good use of paragraphing and linking devices, some students would have benefited from using a range of punctuation to make their answers more effective. The use of the apostrophe proved particularly problematic for some students. Mistakes with homophones were also relatively frequent, particularly 'their/there/they're', 'trys/tries' and 'are/our'.

Q2(b)

Again, this was a very accessible question, eliciting a wide range of answers. Many students cited theme parks, holiday destinations and even rooms in their houses as the best places they had visited; some common destinations were Disneyland, New York and Spain. Some students thought, however, that they were offering advice to someone wishing to enter the competition, so a misreading of the question had taken place. As aforementioned, these students were still marked on the quality of their writing; however, their chosen approach could have been self-limiting as their responses could not always gain access to the full range of marks on the mark scheme. As with Q2(a), there was evidence of a less than secure grasp of control which affected communication and, ultimately, the overall mark.

Some examiners who marked whole scripts noticed that this was often the stronger response of the two. It seemed that some students enjoyed this question more. Furthermore, it showed that the students could be creative with regard to language and ideas; on the whole, students were innovative and creative in their responses.

There were, however, some predictable responses reminiscent of a holiday brochure about favourite resorts. Some responses were more of a 'journey', with the destination being disclosed at the end. Some higher level responses were very eloquent, with detailed and evocative descriptions of sights and sounds.

More simplistic answers tended to tell the story of what students did on holiday, often lacking awareness of the need to write an article or use language devices to engage the reader. Top level answers often took a more imaginative approach to the question, selecting unexpected or fictitious 'best places', for example a fantasy kingdom or the hospital looking after a sick relative. These students tended to describe the place in detail, using a full range of linguistic devices, as well as addressing why these places were important to them.

Many examiners felt the students had been offered a topic on which they were happy to write something. As a consequence, there were some excellent responses to this question and there was a real sense of excitement and interest in them. It proved an inspiring question with a wide enough scope to be engaging and open to all students; a significant number of well-worded and enjoyable responses were produced, indicating that the students engaged comfortably with the task. Strong students produced some wonderful pieces and even those whose responses were structurally weak had some very interesting content.

It should be noted that a number of students failed to answer this question, probably as a result of not managing their time appropriately.

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