

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2015

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 2015 candidates had to respond to the extract from *The Arabian Nights* "King Schahriar and his Brother". Question 2a and 2b are writing questions and both are compulsory. The writing tasks for January 2015 were a website contribution about school uniforms and a creative piece entitled "If only I could have done things differently..."

This was judged to be a fair paper, enabling a wide range of candidates of varying abilities to demonstrate their skills in reading and writing. The extract worked well for the majority of candidates and it was felt that most candidates had continued to improve their timing on Questions 2a and 2b. Overall, it was felt to be a good paper, which worked on a variety of levels.

Reading

Question 1

Many examiners felt this question was well-answered in comparison with other years. Mostly, students focused on analysing the behaviour and relationships between characters in the story. The biggest weakness was when students described the story without analysis or evidence. For more students to achieve the top band there should have been more exploration of alternative viewpoints of characters' actions and morality. A few students took context into consideration, which was good to see, but not enough to reach the top band. Candidates' responses showed a reasonably sound understanding of the demands of the question. Interpretation of the text for most responses was quite detailed and engaging. Appropriate textual references were used to support the points. Some of the candidates spent much time commenting on character with little reference on how the writer used language, structure and form to create interest, so some answers could have benefited from a more incisive analysis of language features. However, the question was successfully handled by most of the candidates. A number of weaker candidates were seduced into merely re-telling the story with little comment or reference to the text, but only a few answers referenced narrative only.

Among candidates in general the prompts given in the question paper provided a sound framework for responses. The question allowed for a wide variety of responses. Candidates were able to draw textual evidence to support both character and language points. Responses to the characters of the sultan and Scheherazade showed clear understanding of textual clues, whilst the discriminator was very much the candidates' understanding of the grand-vizier's unenviable position between the two strong protagonists. Many candidates concentrated on the use of superlatives and alliteration with the more able also explaining the effectiveness of the dialogue in illuminating character traits. Few candidates focused on lexical fields but those that did provided clear connections across the text. Some markers felt that the analysis of character was extremely well done across the board,

being particularly effective in relation to the characters of Schahriar and Scheherazade. Language analysis was generally well done, with a broad range of answers referencing various language techniques such as metaphor and sibilance for effect. There appeared to be many “sound” and “sustained” answers, with fewer falling in the upper and lower bands, as would be expected. Some markers concluded it was an excellent paper to mark in that it seemed to be accessible to the majority, enabling students to answer well according to their level.

Writing

Question 2a

While some markers commented that more care should have been taken over this question, others remarked that almost all the answers were focused on the purpose of the writing task. Various points were presented in support of the various arguments made. For some of the answers, the points were many but brief with hardly any detailed explanations. On the whole, expression was well-controlled with a good range of vocabulary and well-structured sentences. There were many noticeable errors in punctuation and spelling and incorrect use of lower/upper case letters. This task produced a spark in the candidates, many of whom had a definite view on the issue. There were some feisty defences of individuality. It was good to see that the majority of candidates employed paragraphs, which were well set-out on the page. Less widespread was the understanding of what paragraphs were really for; thus, the content of paragraphs lacked integrity. Most responses held a clear, logical argument with the better ones presenting a more complex development of ideas. The genre of the website contribution helped to differentiate, with some finding tone difficult whilst juggling with how to appeal to their particular audience. At the higher end, this led to the adoption of some sophisticated personae. Text cohesion was generally sound with some good use of connectives. There were very few misunderstandings of the expectations of the response. The majority of students argued either for or against, but some wrote balanced responses which were not in keeping with the task.

Question 2b

There was much less of an issue this year with candidates writing Q2a responses in the space designated for Q2b, although this did happen on a number of occasions. Some examiners reported that this was very well-answered, with varied responses. The question allowed for creativity and students seemed to be more careful about structure and purpose here, building suspense very well in some cases. Others wrote emotional responses about losing loved ones, excellently written. Considering the time allowed, many candidates performed well. One of the weak points about some responses was that when students were re-telling a story from their own life, sometimes they wrote as if speaking and it appeared disjointed and included slang. There were fewer non-responses. Many of the responses to this question were quite engaging and relevant. The stories had some depth with reasonably developed plot and character. However, a

few of the answers were not quite successful in this area as the stories were of little relevance and did not reflect the opening line. Some of the answers were very short and a few struggled with clarity and lapses in sentence structure. Some markers noted that problems with punctuation and spelling were very evident. The freedom of this question allowed some imaginative responses which were pleasant to read. In some cases, however, liberty became licence and the stories spun off uncontrollably. A significant number of responses were regretful of having wasted the years in school. At their best the responses to this question were imaginative, insightful and creative with excellent wide-ranging vocabulary and a sophisticated use of sentence structure. Less original contributions still produced solid answers. At the basic level some responses lacked clear sentence punctuation.

