

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2015

Edexcel Certificate in English
Language A (KEA0)
Paper 02

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Overview

The Certificate in English Language Paper 2 lasts one hour and thirty minutes. Question 1 is a reading question based on the Edexcel Anthology and in June 2015 candidates had to respond to the poem "Refugee Blues". Questions 2a and 2b are writing questions and both are compulsory. The writing tasks for June 2015 were a magazine article about leadership qualities and a short story entitled "The Journey".

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. There were fewer examples of candidates failing to complete one of the writing questions, which indicated that timing was better. Overall, it was felt to be a good paper, which worked on a variety of levels.

Reading

Question 1.

Many candidates responded well to the poem which, though on the surface deceptively simple, was sufficiently layered to be analytically demanding at the highest level. Stronger candidates recognised the complexities presented by the poet's use of language and structure in particular and were able to give insight into their responses whilst even those who struggled were aware of some of the cultural tensions within the poem. This question was adequately evaluated by most candidates focusing on how the writer presents the meeting with the unknown girl. Many candidates were able to use textual details to support their writing with the majority spotting and discussing the contrast. Surprisingly, the vast majority of candidates used the bullet points to guide the structure of their responses.

Overall this question seemed to work well. Many were able to pick up on the theme of identity, commenting on the 'new brown veins' the girl discovered, and many also commented on the juxtaposition of eastern and western culture in the poem (the shop dummies, for example). More able candidates suggested that the unknown girl is the narrator, struggling with her sense of self. Most candidates recognised that the poet was Indian but only some grasped the idea of a confused, dual identity. It was common for weaker candidates to focus on the relationship between the characters, saying that she wanted to get her hand hennaed again / wanted to stay in touch. The narrator was often mistaken as male by weaker candidates, who over-read the poem, suggesting a love/romantic interest. Generally this was fertile ground for the range of abilities seen, although it did seem like some candidates were reading the poem for the first time. Also, while most pupils could identify technique, evaluating the effect on the reader was less secure. A full range of responses were seen.

A tendency to go through the poem and paraphrase was noted by some examiners, with feature spotting very common. However, the prompts clearly helped many candidates. There was occasional confusion of interpretation,

showing a lack of understanding. Fully developed answers showed an understanding of the whole poem, but more candidates needed to deal with language usage and the ideas behind the poem in a more developed way. Some less able candidates simply copied quotations to no real purpose.

Writing

The contrast of writing tasks in Section B of this year's paper was a particularly good approach, enabling candidates to show their skills across a range of genres and allowing them the freedom to soar. There were some surprisingly thoughtful responses from the leadership question especially, showing that candidates had considered their ideas and structured their answers to take into account register and audience. The creative writing question elicited a good range of responses as its openness encouraged experimentation, allowing the less able to take risks that generally paid off.

Question 2a.

Some candidates showed real focus on text structure and organisation. Most candidates are aware of the purpose of the task and enthusiastically give their thoughts of leadership qualities effectively using a wider range of sentences and punctuation to convey meaning.

Several seemed to want to try to write something descriptive and drifted off into accounts of when they had to be a leader, but most were focused on the task. There were a number of responses that used case studies of world leaders (good and bad) to exemplify their points, and this worked well as a way of adding depth and detail, but did rely on wider knowledge.

Some candidates listed the qualities of being a good leader, resulting in a lack of developed answers. More mid-range answers satisfied the criteria but needed more sophistication of language and structure.

Question 2b.

Some examiners were very impressed with how some candidates were able to interpret the topic and write from divergent points. Narrative styles varied a lot and many are able to maintain narrative from start to finish. Overall, there is consistency with structure on this task. Some of the stories were perceptive and controlled, with impressive attempts to entertain.

While there were many rather dry accounts of holidays, there were also many that showed real humour. As an examiner this was a blessing, as the question was never boring or repetitious to mark. One response that stood out was a less literal journey: an account of a girl who had overcome various health setbacks, including cerebral palsy. The concept of 'journey' was widely interpreted, especially at the upper end, with many focusing on life journeys or inner journeys of discovery. A significant number were clearly influenced by their own reading of dystopian fantasy novels such as *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, and these were often highly engaging and well written, creating complex settings and alternative realities through first person narratives.

The task was readily accessed by the whole ability range, with most candidates able to have a go at writing something really relevant. There was a range of approaches from the very simplistic to dramatic developed responses. The best responses were those which were more fictional and creative as this allowed candidates to show their writing skills. It was noted that some autobiographical responses were pedestrian.

Grade Boundaries

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