

Examiners' Report
June 2012

GCSE English Language 5EN2H 01

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Introduction

This report will provide exemplification of candidates' work, together with tips and comments, for Questions 1-10.

This is the second year of the new GCSE English Language specification, with its new form of language-based questioning on extracts from long texts. The specification consists of three elements:

Unit 1: English Today - 20% (tested by Controlled Assessment)

Unit 2: The Writer's Voice - 40% (examination)

Unit 3: The Spoken Language - 40% (Controlled Assessment).

Unit 2 is assessed for skills in **both** reading and responding to prose texts **and** candidates' own writing.

When introduced last year, the examination included a new form of language-based questioning on extracts from long texts. Candidates must answer two questions, as follows:

- one reading response to EITHER an extract from a Different Cultures prose text OR an extract from a non-fiction text
- one writing task for a specified audience expressing opinions and analysing ideas on a topic relevant to students' experience

The Assessment Objectives for the paper are:

Section A: AO3: Studying written language

(i) Read and understand texts, selecting material appropriate to purpose, collating from different sources and making comparisons and cross-references as appropriate.

(ii) Develop and sustain interpretations of writers' ideas and perspectives.

(iii) Explain and evaluate how writers use linguistic, grammatical, structural and presentational features to achieve effects and engage and influence the reader.

Section B: AO4: Writing

(i) Write to communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, using and adapting forms and selecting vocabulary appropriate to task and purpose in ways that engage the reader.

(ii) Organise information and ideas into structured and sequenced sentences, paragraphs and whole texts, using a variety of linguistic and structural features to support cohesion and overall coherence.

(iii) Use a range of sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate punctuation and spelling.

Examiners are looking above all for signs that candidates are responding in a mature and reflective way to the language and ideas of prose writers and are communicating effectively on the selected topic.

The responses of candidates had many excellent features. Examiners were impressed by:

- evidence that they had understood the cultural contexts and purposes of the chosen prose texts
- the widespread ability to select pertinent examples of the writers' language, with a grasp of a wide range of language features, and to offer informed comment that related these examples to the ideas and themes of the extracts
- personal writing that showed a strong and suitable form and register and which engaged effectively with the specified audience.

Less successful responses:

- showed an insecure grasp of language (for example, confusion over terms) or of ideas
- failed to support their points by appropriate textual evidence
- wrote reasonably about a topic, but without a secure control of language or argument.

Overall, the response of candidates was a pleasing one to examiners, as confidence grew with the greater familiarity of centres with the new requirements. Candidates had often engaged at a deep level with their study of the prose texts. The best wrote detailed, perceptive responses to the texts, at times above the quality expected at this level, and examiners read many delightful, strongly argued and convincing answers to the two Writing tasks.

Question 1

Touching the Void

(a) From the small number of responses, there were some effective answers on this text. One examiner noted that "candidates gave good responses and understood the questions well".

Another commented that "weaker candidates sometimes tended to be narrative in style without a great focus on language techniques. Their responses tended to have too little on language, with sparse use of quotations from the text and little reference to specific words". These contrasted with effective answers which focused on the loneliness portrayed in the extract and were well written.

Choosing an appropriate second section of the book was done by the majority of candidates.

Popular choices of extract included the rope scene, and the journey back to the camp. Answers were often very detailed, and most were able to reflect on 'loneliness and friendship'. However, weaker answers were often too descriptive as opposed to being properly analytical.

The best answers really delved into the writer's use of language and gave appropriate quotations.

This is the first paragraph of a candidate's response to Question 1 (a).

Write your answers to Section A Questions (a) and (b) here:

(a) In the extract it seems like Joe finds it hard to cope with loneliness and hardship. For example in the very first paragraph of the extract it states: "My boisterous mood vanished and I felt despairingly lonely and silly". This makes you think that Joe is in a difficult place and is finding quite difficult living with loneliness. It appears to me that Joe has no beliefs, dreams or aspirations!

ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate makes a number of points but does slip into narration. There is little attempt at language analysis. The response was awarded 3 marks out of 16, a Band 1 mark.

ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

The answer would need more development to qualify for a higher band. Think how the points made could have been supported with further evidence and detail.

Question 2

Anita and Me

(a) Many candidates demonstrated insight over the representation of Punjabi culture in Tollington, with a focus on language and understanding of Meena's feeling of being between two cultures and an appreciation of the details given about Punjabi culture. Good use was made of the extract; candidates found plenty of relevant evidence to support their points.

An examiner commented on the range of performance exhibited by candidates, suggesting that "the strongest responses tended to focus on the contrasts in the passage (volumes of noise on this occasion/usual quietness; indoor/outdoor; Meena's conflicting emotions) and the most able candidates were able to explore the ways in which language was used (e.g. some interesting, thoughtful comments on the 'tight-mouthed letterboxes'). Meena's own feelings (clearly students find her a very appealing and sympathetic character) were explained effectively, and the humour in the extract was identified. Weaker candidates slipped very readily into paraphrase – they could identify interesting examples of language, but struggled to comment on how they were used."

Although still a minority choice, the text was one where a good response was often evident: another examiner commented: "The candidates' enjoyment of *Anita and Me* was really obvious throughout the responses marked. On the whole they seemed to really empathise with the characters and this gave the lower ability candidates something to focus on when they were not so sure about the language devices used."

However, there were, according to another examiner, "some disappointing responses where bright candidates did not appear to be aware of many of the nuances of the text and in particular seemed to be really struggling with race issues". Weaker candidates often failed to use embedded quotations to support their points, although most managed to comment on the effect of some language features.

(b) Most candidates were able to find a suitable extract.

There was a wide variety of extracts chosen. Many students used the text immediately before or after the extract in part (a), and this was fully acceptable. There was effective exploration of the grandmother, her role, and Meena's response, including sometimes embarrassment. The shop scene was quite popular. However, occasionally weaker responses tried to focus on passages which were really too long to facilitate detailed comment on language. Language comments often focused on dialect.

This is the final section of a candidate's response to Question 2 (b).

At the end of chapter 2 the language that is used shows that Meena enjoys being part of a different culture and hearing stories from the past. "What obsessed me was this meeting of two worlds." This shows the reader that Meena is not used to seeing two different cultures or religions come together that's why she found the stories so fascinating as they were unusual and something she had not experienced.

(Section A continued)

At the beginning of chapter 2 the language that is used shows that Meena eats food that is associated with her culture. "chipolata" This shows the reader that Meena enjoys the food and does not care what other people think about that.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

The extract chosen is Chapter 2, although the length makes it perhaps more difficult to deal with in terms of close reference. The writing is clear and sound on the ideas of the writer. The mark awarded was 9 out of 24, a high Band 2 mark.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Note that it is important to select an extract of manageable length, so that your comments can be focused and specific.

Question 3

Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress

(a) There were some very strong and perceptive responses. Examiners commented on the high standard of some of the answers they saw, highlighting the contrast between Luo's normal bravado and his 'dread' in the extract. One examiner stated that "it is a pleasure to read responses on this text". Many candidates displayed a true engagement with and appreciation of the text.

The best demonstrated a wide-ranging, discriminating and subtle understanding of the writer's craft. There was excellent use of embedded quotations to permit close analysis.

Candidates were often able to give the context of the extract in some detail, and understood Luo's motives.

(b) Popular extracts were the theft of the books, scenes with the Seamstress's father, and story-telling. Some examiners found this part of the question less well answered, with far less focus on language; answers also tended to be shorter than for part (a), despite the fact that there are 24 marks allotted rather than the 16 for part (a).

This is the opening section of the response of a candidate to Question 3 (a).

Write your answers to Section A Questions (a) and (b) here:

a) In this extract we see a different side to Luo. Throughout the novel he is perceived and presented as in charge, strong and capable. He helps Ma in the coal mine and is a year older. Here we see that this is not the whole picture.

Luo is presented as 'daring' but his life-long fear is also addressed. His "dread of heights" implies to the reader that Luo may also not be as strong as his facade in other things. Words such as "dread", and "fear" suggest that it is not just a dislike but more, maybe even a phobia.

Ma decides to "accompany Luo" to see the Seamstress. This journey has been referred to as "Luo's 'daily pilgrimage'" which tells us that it is a journey he makes often. Ma is greeted by a "perilous path". This alliteration intensifies the effect of the language. Perilous suggests death, which everyone is afraid of. Through this description ^{Dai Sijie} ~~the author~~ is telling ^{the reader} ~~us~~ that anyone would be scared of the ridge, implying that ~~the~~ Luo's fear means this.

daily routine is a terror. The "mountain gale" creates a nervous and tense atmosphere, the word "mountain"

(Section A continued)

also suggesting that it is huge. This is also a metaphor for Ma's realisation or change of thought. The words "... Luo had told me about" tell us that the narrator already had a picture of the ridge in his head, painted by Luo. The "soft morning breeze" refers to Ma thinking it was Luo's phobia talking. "... made way for ~~the~~ a mountain gale" shows that Ma is surprised and frightened by the reality of the situation.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This is an excellent response, with confident and perceptive analysis of language. The answer goes beyond the standard normally expected for the highest mark, and it was therefore awarded 16/16.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Look closely at the way this candidate has embedded quotations into well-made points which reveal a sure-footed interpretation.

Question 4

Heroes

(a) This offered students a clear opportunity to focus on the presentation of Larry LaSalle; references to his "knife-like" body were handled well. More assured responses commented on the writer's description of Larry's perception of himself as a hero and the perception others had of him. Some very strong responses showed insight in the understanding they displayed of how the main characters are portrayed at key moments.

The vast majority of responses made some relevant comments on the ways in which Cormier used language while the best responses were perceptive and thoughtful, commenting on some of the less obvious details (e.g. the significance of 'looking down' and 'his kids'). Weaker candidates, however, understood the question to ask them to work through the extract describing what was happening, rather than commenting; these answers were sometimes too vague and did not focus on language. Most, however, identified Larry's appearance, suitably impressed by the uniform, and more able students also discussed his body language. All mentioned heroism, and what it meant on this occasion.

(b) Examiners commented that this tended to be the weaker response; the main sticking point was the ability to find an appropriate extract for the section (b) part of the question. Most students chose to stay near the extract they had been given and this meant that the depth of their analysis was sometimes limited. Although all candidates chose a relevant extract, several candidates needed to include a wider range of points. Overall, candidates in the lower bands tended to take a narrative approach. They needed to make sure that they focused on specific techniques and individual words, explaining inferences. A limited range of extracts was chosen, including the table tennis scene and the rape scene. The latter was a difficult choice for talking about heroism and students struggled to find relevant points and textual evidence. It was a memorable scene, and hence an easy choice, but not well chosen for this question.

Responses which dealt with the incident at St Jude's (Ch. 6) were generally more successful.

This is the second half of a candidate's response to Question 4 (b), showing another example of a character being depicted as a hero.

(Section A continued)

Another example of language used to show the views ^{towards} Lasalle is the emotive adjectives used to describe the Strangler's voice when talking about Lasalle. 'His old voice was suddenly formal and dignified.' This shows the effect that Lasalle's 'heroism' has had on The Strangler, in that he feels passionate about his pride of Lasalle. This is also shown when The Strangler, who

rarely drinks, joins in with the toast to celebrate Lasalle's heroism. This profound pride felt by the Stranger represents the close-knit town's feelings towards War and its heroes. In this extract, Cornier also uses ~~the~~ a stark contrast in language to describe Francis' feelings towards Heroism. He uses gentle and subtle imperatives such as 'Don't make a fuss, Arthur' to show that he ~~is~~ determined to keep his identity a secret, but still has respect for Arthur. ~~Francis~~ Francis also says 'I look away from the admiration in his eyes.' This is highly emotive, and shows that

(Section A continued)

Francis does not believe that he is a hero. This is significant because it shows he is deeply ~~ashamed~~ ashamed and cannot stand to be seen as something he is not.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The choice of the meeting in the St Jude's Club enables the candidate to explore different perspectives on heroism. The aptly chosen examples are well used, and there is perceptive word level analysis. The candidate was therefore awarded 21 marks out of 24, a Band 5 mark.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Note the way the candidate not only identifies (correctly) a number of language features, but also shows the effect of their use.

Question 5

Of Mice and Men

(a) Question 5 was a very popular question. Responses to language aspects of the text were often full of insight, though the full range was encountered: from perceptive and detailed analysis to very limited understanding from a small minority. Some candidates showed very sensitive use of foreshadowing, anthropomorphism and animal characteristics; while others became bogged down by terminology that was not fully grasped, with some confusion over basic terms such as adjectives and verbs, even where the response was good in other respects.

Many candidates picked up immediately on Lennie's comparison to an animal ("pawed") and many clearly identified with his genuine fear, confusion and "bewildered" reaction to the death of Curley's wife. Many also commented on how Lennie "really didn't mean to kill her". There was also focus on the use of repetition of "I done a bad thing". Thoughtful comments were often offered on the changed appearance of Curley's wife, although some weaker responses used their reference to the character as a springboard to write rather vaguely about themes / cultural context and the role of women at the time. The most successful answers also analysed the reaction of the natural world and the atmosphere in the barn and how it was created.

On the whole candidates showed they had thought carefully about the writer's craft, intentions and the effect on the reader. They commented on a wide range of techniques and there were some very original, insightful and sensitive interpretations. Most candidates realised the importance of making close reference to the extract to support their response. In the higher bands there was some very deft and sophisticated use of embedded quotations which enabled candidates to comment on language in a subtle and discriminating way. In the many assured and perceptive responses, candidates demonstrated a real appreciation of how Steinbeck uses language to create atmosphere, for example. Some interesting – if occasionally 'stretched' – comments on the symbolism of the pigeon were offered and some of the weaker candidates tried (but failed) to find significance in the 'little sausage' curls.

There were many good answers, exploring in detail how the author created effects such as the slowing down of time through sentence structure; the sudden movement of the dog and the bird; and the muted, then increased, sounds from inside/outside the barn. Lennie's words and verbs such as 'crept' were well addressed. Similarly, light imagery was often discussed effectively.

Apart from imagery, there was a strong focus on Curley's wife's new-found attractiveness – but even with some more able candidates, this led to long digressions about Curley's wife's history and role in the novel as a whole.

(b) There were some extremely confident and perceptive responses. Many candidates showed a genuine sense of engagement and empathy with the characters, coupled with good understanding of themes and the text as a whole.

Popular and appropriate choices were the shooting of Candy's dog and the death of Lennie; the former evoked much talk of foreshadowing and the latter led to some thoughtful evaluations of the setting and the final exchange between George and Lennie. Curley's attack on Lennie also worked quite well although it did lead to some lapses into narrative.

Some chose Crooks' room or Candy joining in with the dream.

One examiner noted "often a thematic response was given with little or no reference to language at all, e.g. writing about the American Dream or loneliness" with reference to many different parts of the book, and that these resembled "literature essays". The examiner suggested that candidates could also be warned against writing essays on the

American Dream without anchoring them in the text and without keeping to the demands of the question.

Those who chose reasonably brief extracts were able to home in on language more closely. A comment from one examiner was that "weaker responses tended to omit quotations; 'feature-spot'; veer into narrative rather than analytical mode or simply make too limited a range of points".

This was one candidate's response to Question 5 (a).

Write your answers to Section A Questions (a) and (b) here:

a) The language in this bit of the book suggests that something bad will happen after Curley's wife's death because Lennie is always repeating the same words over and over again "George'll be mad", this shows the reader that Lennie knows that has done wrong and thinks that he will get told off. Steinbeck is portraying Lennie the barn as being quite dark because of Curley's wife being in there, because he uses light and dark contrasting by saying "Sun streaks high on the wall... light was soft on the barn", because ~~Curley~~ the light is going this hints that something dark could be happening to Lennie after this extract in the novel.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

The candidate shows generally sound understanding, but only a few points are made in what is a rather brief response. It was given 3 marks out of 16, keeping it at Band 1.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

This answer underlines the need for a more sustained coverage of the passage, with examples drawn from the whole of it. The quotations are relevant, but not commented on in detail.

This is a paragraph from the central part of a candidate's response to Question 5 (a).

In this extract ^{Steinbeck} ~~Steinbeck~~ also shows us that this moment was ~~meant~~ meant to be and things were ~~meant~~ supposed to be like this. He shows with the way everything is done. He shows us how peaceful everything is 'seemed to grow quiet'. He also does this when he describes the sunset 'The light was growing soft inside the barn'. The word 'soft' making it more peaceful. He also makes us feel it was supposed to be like this with the way he describes Curley's wife looking peaceful and layed out beautifully with her ^{face} ~~hair~~ 'sweet and young' and ways she ^{like} ~~is~~ looks ^{like} ~~is~~ 'sleeping very lightly'.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

This is a well-developed response which shows sufficient assurance in the language comments to move it into the lower end of Band 4.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

When thinking about the language features of an extract, make sure you consider why you think the writer has chosen particular words, phrases or images.

This is the start of a candidate's response to Question 5 (b).

(Section A continued)

b) Another extract that shows an important event is Lennie's death. This is important because it shows the relationship between George and Lennie, and George and Slim.

The passage I have chosen starts with Lennie talking about the dream, "Let's do it now. Let's get that place now." Steinbeck presents George's reply as very blunt, using short sentences. "I gotta. We gotta." George just wants to get it over with.

The way Steinbeck describes the shooting is almost like a set of instructions, short quick events, "And George raised the gun and steadied it."

Steinbeck uses words like "crash" to show how loud the shot was, but also to show how silent everything else was, "rolled up the hills and rolled down again."

Steinbeck makes the reader feel that they are there, in the book. "The brush seemed pilled with cries," the reader almost forgets that all the other men were looking for Lennie, this comes as a surprise, Steinbeck does this to show actually how much George cares for Lennie, as he blocks out all other sound.



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Examiner Comments

The candidate chooses, appropriately, the incident of Lennie's death. Analysis of language is confident and assured, with well-judged and individual comments on particular examples and on the writer's craft. The candidate shows great assurance in the selection of key words and language features, and hence was awarded 19/24, a mark at the top of Band 4.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

For a Band 5 response, think about how comments could have been developed yet more fully so as to demonstrate a really perceptive grasp.

This is the concluding paragraph from a candidate's response to Question 5 (b), on the final section of the book.

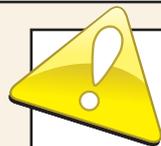
After the death of Lennie, Steinbeck mentions twice that George looked at his right hand. 'George sat stiffly on the bank and looked at his right hand that had thrown the ~~gun~~ gun away.' 'He looked steadily at his right hand that had held the gun.' Steinbeck emphasises that George looked at his hand to show that he still can't believe he had killed ~~to~~ Lennie and it ~~not~~ may also show he regrets and feels lonely without Lennie. ~~and~~ He ~~he~~ ~~still~~ can't accept the truth so he kept on looking at the hand he used to hold the gun and shot Lennie.



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Examiner Comments

The extract where George decides he must kill Lennie is an appropriate one, and is explored in depth and with conviction. Textual references are very well supported and analysed, with discrimination shown in the interpretation, which is personal and makes some unusual points. The response was therefore given a mark of 22 out of 24, a clear Band 5 mark.



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Examiner Tip

Think carefully about your own interpretation of the way the writer has described the scene, as the candidate has done in this case.

Question 6

Rani and Sukh

Although numbers are still comparatively low, in some centres this is proving a popular and successful text to study.

(a) There was clear evidence of a degree of empathy between candidates and the characters in this book. The invitation to write upon relationships produced much good comment.

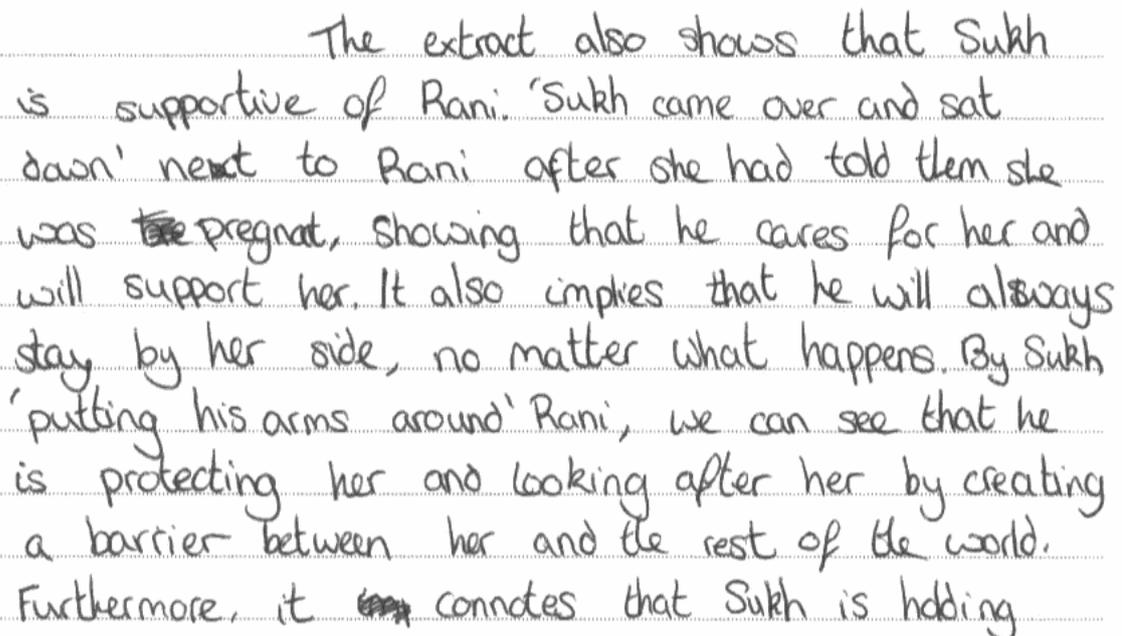
The stronger responses offered some very sensitive analysis, focusing on such features as the simile of the wall and the use of varying sentence lengths and ellipsis to comment on the developing relationship and on Rani's fears and tensions.

Many candidates well understood her state of mind, and there was good discussion of what led up to this scene and also what followed it. There was also effective comment on the fast-paced dialogue in this extract, and the jittery nerves behind it.

Weaker responses to this question offered relatively superficial comment on language.

(b) Responses were more variable, depending to a large extent on how suitably candidates selected their second passage to illustrate the subject. One examiner felt that responses "tended to replicate some of the same points only applied to a different extract". Many candidates seemed to struggle to find a suitable extract and their answers were often inclined to narrative. Rani's first meeting with Parvy was used quite effectively by some.

This is the second half of the response by one candidate to question 6 (b), looking at the extract where Rani tells Sukh and Parvy that she is pregnant.



The extract also shows that Sukh is supportive of Rani. 'Sukh came over and sat down' next to Rani after she had told them she was ~~the~~ pregnant, showing that he cares for her and will support her. It also implies that he will always stay by her side, no matter what happens. By Sukh 'putting his arms around' Rani, we can see that he is protecting her and looking after her by creating a barrier between her and the rest of the world. Furthermore, it ~~connotes~~ connotes that Sukh is holding

(Section A continued)

Rani up and supporting her when she needs it. However, Sukh 'tried to smile but failed,' showing that although he is trying to support Rani and help her, it has also affected him and he cannot hide it. The short sentence also shows his broken mind as he tries to support Rani as well as come to terms with the news himself.

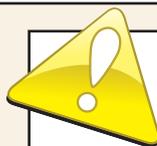
It is also shown that Sukh stands up against Parvy to defend Rani. The verb 'snapped' shows Sukh is angry at Parvy for accusing Rani and he defends Rani and 'snapped back' at his sister. Italics are also used to stress words as Sukh replies to Parvy, 'We *did*' ~~the~~ emphasises 'did' showing that Sukh is sure and he won't let Parvy accuse either of them for things they didn't do. This shows that Sukh cares about Rani because he is willing to stand up against his sister to defend her.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

An appropriate choice of passage. There is a focus on the nature of the relationship between Rani and Sukh. Stronger points are made in the final section. Overall, the response sits comfortably in Band 3, and was awarded a mark of 13 out of 24.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

Think about how, with a slightly stronger interpretation and elaboration of the points, this answer could have moved into Band 4.

Question 7

Riding the Black Cockatoo

There were very few responses to this text, and many examiners, to their disappointment, received no responses and were therefore unable to comment.

(a) The quality of candidates' responses to this extract, on the appearance of the cockatoo, was almost always at least good and often excellent. Candidates responded personally and with evidence of engagement to the vivid descriptive language employed by John Danalis on 'how the bird looks, sounds and moves', as one candidate put it. They focused on individual word-level analysis, looking at the effect of verbs such as 'zigzagged' and 'zipped' as well as adjectives and the striking phrase 'slot-car precision', which some explained fully and clearly.

(b) The quality of responses was slightly less high for this part of the question, although candidates found a good variety of passages on which to comment from throughout the text, such as the visit to Fiona's house or the repatriation ceremony, and their writing showed considerable sensitivity to the Aboriginal culture John Danalis encountered. A number failed to develop their responses, perhaps by taking a narrow range of text, or not grasping the fact that the part (b) question had a higher mark allocation. There was therefore a feeling that candidates who scored quite well could have done considerably better with a more sustained response and fuller use of examples.

This is the whole of a candidate's response to Question 7 (a), focusing on the red-tailed black cockatoo.

In this extract it is plain too see that the red-tailed black cockatoo is a strong majestic bird. In this simile John describes it as being 'as powerful as a mud-crab's claw'

The bird is described as a 'beautiful' figure, possibly almost vain. Danalis uses alliteration to highlight both of these points 'he groomed his glossy coat.'

The bird is clearly at ease with it's surroundings, as Danalis struggles to squeeze his way through tight gaps, 'the bird ~~zipped~~ zipped through with cocky ease'. ~~The~~ ~~the~~ Danalis then uses repetition to stick this thought in

the reader's mind and then, clearing the throat,
floated up, up, up.

~~the~~ ~~point~~ Danalis lets the reader know that
this bird is very rare, 'I've never seen one before'
he puts the 'never' in **italics** just to
highlight this point and embed it in
the reader's mind.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

This is a sound response. Points are clearly made, and there is analysis of Danalis' techniques. The answer is quite brief, and it was awarded 5/16, a mark in the Band 2 range.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

Note that there is insufficiently thorough development to move it into Band 3: sometimes the explanation needs more elaboration.

Question 8

To Kill a Mockingbird

This was the second most popular choice. A variety of responses was evident.

(a) Many candidates commented successfully on how Harper Lee conveys the significance of the knot-hole finds and the reactions of Jem and Scout. Many responses were perceptive and detailed with sophisticated focus on language.

There were good comments on the relationship between Jem and Scout, for example on who was in charge and on Scout's relative immaturity. Jem's superior understanding was made clear, including the realisation about Boo, and the selective involvement of Atticus.

There were some very impressive higher band responses, commenting on features such as embedded clauses, speaker tags, dramatic irony and syntax and demonstrating a sophisticated and subtle understanding of the text.

An examiner noted that "a significant number of candidates talked usefully about this novel as a bildungsroman" - the term for a novel about a central character's development or education which some critics have applied to this text. Candidates very often responded powerfully to the theme of racism in the novel but sometimes forgot to root their comments in the language of the text.

Weaker responses tended to be too brief or did not comment on language in detail; some adopted a very narrative approach. An examiner commented that at times technical terminology appeared to be used for little purpose other than to demonstrate that the candidate knew the jargon.

(b) This part of the question saw a wide range of appropriate and relevant extracts with Scout's fight with Francis and the lynch mob episode working particularly well; other successful choices included the assault by Ewell at the end of the novel and the shooting of the rabid dog: candidates who dealt with these extracts often discussed the use of language very confidently; a number chose the end of the trial, but generally these candidates struggled to discuss the way language was used and slipped into paraphrase/narrative.

Candidates mostly showed a sympathetic understanding of Scout.

This is the opening section of a candidate's response to Question 8 (a).

Write your answers to Section A Questions (a) and (b) here:

Section A

a) Scout and Jem started to find gifts for themselves in a knot hole outside the Radley house. It seemed like Scout ~~expected~~ had frequently found gifts in the tree as she referred to it as her knot hole. Furthermore it showed Scout somewhat

~~out~~ and Jem share the gifts that they find and that they weren't shocked to see something in the tree as ~~the~~ ~~the~~ 'the honours' ~~to~~ were given to Scout to pull out the gift. The word 'honour' makes it seem that they enjoy getting the gifts and it's a special for them to receive them.

Scout 'shrieked and threw them down,' which shows that she was scared for some reason. ~~the~~ Harper Lee

(Section A continued)

~~does~~ ^{uses} this well as it gets ^{us} ~~the reader~~ thinking about what's happened. But then Jem 'snatched them up,' which shows how prestigious the items are to Jem. It influences us by making us understand how nervous Jem is.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

This response just qualifies for Band 3 because of its thorough analysis of some aspects of the language and ideas of the extract. The candidate was awarded 7 out of 16.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

Make sure that you analyse examples as fully as possible to reach the higher bands.

This is the final part of a very sustained response to Question 8 (b), focusing on Scout's encounter with the lynch mob.

(Section A continued)

Scout's persistence with Mr Cunningham and her desperation for her friendly gesture to be received is what cracks the mob. She appeals to Mr Cunningham as a father rather than a member of the 'mob'. This can be seen when she says 'He's a good boy.' Here she ~~talks to~~ ^{addresses} him as a father and reminds him of his family. The men are shocked and slightly impressed by Scout as they stand with their 'mouths half-open.' This underlines their utter shock at the young girl making casual conversation in this dangerous situation. Scout's impressive ability to diffuse the situation also leaves her father, Atticus, in shock. Atticus is also described as having his ~~mouth~~ ^{mouth} 'half-open' which denotes his shock and disbelief.

Scout begins to feel under pressure as all the mob stare blankly at her making conversation. She felt 'sweat gathering' which underlines her nerves and uncertainty. This image of sweat contrasts with her previous statement 'drying up.' This highlights how Scout is unsure and unaware and

(Section A continued)

that she feels under great pressure but
doesn't know why.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

This response is perceptive and shows a discriminating understanding of how Scout is presented to the reader. The passage is explored in great depth – no stone is left unturned – and the writing shows subtle insight and maturity. It was rewarded with a mark at the very top of the Band 5 range: 24/24.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

Note how the excellent choice of section allows the candidate to analyse the actions and reactions of Scout with an excellent grasp of the writer's craft.

Question 9

Personal safety

AO4(i)+(ii) (Content and ideas):

The most effective responses were witty and assured – a delight to read – and the advice offered in all the responses was fully appropriate and reassuring, if young people can follow their own advice. A point made by some examiners was that many of the responses they saw had confined themselves to the topic of internet safety (aspects such as passwords and privacy settings). It is important to make it clear that this approach was perfectly acceptable, and indeed it seems to have helped some writers to maintain focus. However, there were other equally engaging responses covering various aspects of the topic from road safety to alcohol awareness. Overall, many examiners felt that this question was tackled well – “I was impressed by the range and quality of responses” and felt that the responses should provide “a comforting reassurance for any parents that young people do recognise the need to exercise caution with the ‘faceless void’ that is the internet”. Another noted that “at all levels great concern for the personal safety of children and young people in general was shown and candidates were familiar with such terms as ‘awareness’, ‘precaution’, ‘privacy’, and ‘concealment’. The knowledge and understanding of these terms was often clearly articulated.” A developing practice is for candidates to introduce statistics to assist them in persuading their audience. A developing practice is for candidates to introduce statistics to assist them in persuading their audience. This is fine if it addresses the audience and purpose and fits with the question. Students should remember that this is not a creative writing piece and therefore should not spend too much time inventing witness statements and statistics. This is a transactional writing piece, so students must remember to address the question from this perspective.

There was a wide variety in levels of awareness of a teenage audience.

Occasionally the audience was muddled: some wrote for parents, others switched between parents and children.

Several writers clearly forgot that brief before they started.

Most candidates adopted an appropriate style and tone, although some of the more able struggled to find the balance between being colloquial and chatty and trying to demonstrate an ability to use a wide vocabulary.

AO4(iii) (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar)

One examiner “was pleased to see that the standard of grammar and spelling had improved slightly” and another noted that “higher band candidates were able to use all punctuation necessary smoothly, and showed an imaginative and entertaining vocabulary”. Some problems such as homophone confusion, and the use of commas instead of full stops, still persist; moreover a large number could not spell ‘safety’ correctly even though it was on the paper. Examiners noted that they had seen a worrying number of examples of basic errors in punctuation in responses from (apparently) relatively articulate candidates – including such errors as comma-splicing, where a stronger stop was required, and failure to use a capital letter for ‘I’ – evidently a casualty of textspeak.

This is a central section from a candidate's response to Question 9, on personal safety.

I'm just going to get straight to the point now. Over 60% of teenagers aged between 13 and 17, smoke. Why? There are no positives to smoking: it stops growth, damages lungs, makes you more prone to illnesses and you will die younger. Teenagers who smoke make excuses like "I feel relaxed" or "it stops my stress" when really they're saying "I feel cool". 9 out of 10 teenagers have revealed that they were peer pressured into it. Don't be like everyone else; don't smoke just because your friends do.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

The candidate writes about personal safety with an appropriate register. Arguments are deployed clearly with use of evidence. The writing is lively and offers some interesting suggestions: it is sustained and organised, and has a sense of audience as well as touches of humour. (9 marks out of 16, Band 3) The spelling, punctuation and grammar are mostly accurate, with flaws in expression and spelling not impeding meaning. (5/8, Band 2)



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

Note the strong personal voice adopted by the writer, showing a keen awareness of a teenage audience.

This is the closing section of another candidate's response to Question 9 on personal safety.

One of the biggest fears for ^{young people} ~~young people~~ online, is cyber bullying. It affects 1 in 10 children and is a very serious issue. Cyberbullying is ~~very~~ difficult to deal with because the bully can choose to stay hidden. Therefore if you feel intimidated or victimised online, you know the drill! Tell an adult you can trust ~~as well~~ and keep proof of ^{the bully's} ~~the~~ ~~their~~ behaviour. Finally, see that little button that looks like an eye? This is ~~not~~ to report abuse, and can be used

(Section B continued)

when necessary to catch the culprit red handed.

Well, I hope you found this information helpful! It's important to follow these steps so that not only you, but those around you are safe. The internet is a useful and ~~is~~ fun place, but if you're not careful it can pose threats; so type wisely! This is me signing out.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate has responded in a confident and engaging manner to the task. A variety of apt points are made and the candidate uses cohesive devices effectively. (Band 5, 14 out of 15.) There is a neat balance between formal vocabulary and more immediately accessible language. Spelling is accurate. (Band 3, 7/8.)



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Try to find a style of writing that is as well suited to the task as this - one which really engages with the intended readers and captures their interest.

Question 10

Mobile phones: essential?

AO4(i)+(ii) (Ideas and content):

There were many sustained, pertinent responses to this question, which examiners enjoyed reading. One commented: "a brilliant question that truly engaged candidates", being struck by the sentence "My phone is the epicentre of everything I do!", which epitomised the very high dependency levels that not only teenagers recognise nowadays. This examiner quoted the delightfully – almost magisterially – written comment: "No piece about the prevalence of the mobile phone would be complete without mentioning the humble text message, one of the defining features of humanity in recent years."

A weakness was that there were a number of candidates, however, who did not write in letter form or acknowledge the fact that what they were writing was a response to an article and some wrote the actual article itself.

At the higher end there were some interesting, original responses, for example responses written in role, effectively and entertainingly. The ability to focus upon the word "essential" tended to distinguish between candidates.

One examiner analysed the responses received as follows: "At one level a simplistic view of mobile phones' capabilities and whether these were necessary in olden as compared to modern times prevailed. At other levels, the realisation that mobile phone technology applied to 'life on the move' (portability) and was a great contribution to businesses and personal safety was more apparent. At all levels great concern for the possible effects of radiation emission levels and its effect on the health of children in particular, who were using mobile phones in increasing numbers, was shown and candidates were familiar with such terms as 'radio waves', 'radiation' and 'brain tumours'."

An effective stance from some candidates was a hint of self-mockery about the pathetic nature of their over-reliance on their mobiles: how could such dependency really be classed as justifying the term 'essential'?

There were also some perceptive comments made, too, on how mobile phones discouraged social interaction and families' spending time together. The strongest responses were therefore often those which argued against the 'essential' claim and many of these used wit, irony and humour to excellent effect.

One very strong response developed the argument that we were a nation of 'Blackberry clutching monsters' and adopted the persona of a 'Mr Angry' to bemoan the demise of face-to-face communication.

In weaker responses some candidates became caught up in content, such as listing features of phones at the expense of crafting. On the whole, candidates demonstrated a sound grasp of persuasive effects, with even candidates in the lower bands showing awareness of rhetorical techniques. Candidates clearly made use of cohesive devices, although a handful, who had produced a secure response otherwise, sadly overlooked paragraphing.

The best responses often had an imagined article in their heads, to which they referred as a structure for their own letter. This was often a successful technique although one or two responses did become literary criticisms of the imagined publication and forgot to give any views themselves on the topic.

AO4(iii)

Comments mainly echoed those on Question 9. In addition, examiners commented on the number of candidates who were unaware that letters to the editor could begin 'Dear Sir/ Madam' and end 'Yours faithfully'. Instead we once again had every possible variety of spelling of 'sincerely' and the addressees were many and varied.

This is the start of the response by a candidate to Question 10, a letter to a local newspaper on whether mobile phones are essential.

Dear Local Newspaper

I am writing to tell you what I believe about your article "Mobile phones are essential for real life."

I think that mobile phones are essential for real life because they can get help in an emergency, just call ~~app~~ also you don't need to send letters or walk to someone's house just to tell them a message because now with phones you can just text and if you lost just go on Google maps, you can even get millions of apps on your phones just by pressing a few buttons. If you didn't have a phone you would feel left out, no Facebook, no Twitter, no messaging, but is it essential?



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

The candidate writes a letter which has a sense of audience and engages with the topic of mobile phones. Organisation is generally sound, but would need to be tighter if it were to qualify for a higher band. Examples could also be stronger. (Band 1, 3 marks out of 16.) There are frequent and at times rather basic spelling errors, although some more ambitious vocabulary is correctly spelled. (Band 1, 2/8.)



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Make sure to write in complete sentences, correctly punctuated, and watch out for basic errors such as 'your' for 'you're'.

This is a paragraph taken from part-way through a candidate's response to Question 10, the letter to a local newspaper.

However, the phones that are being made recently have 'apps' you can download, there is a variety of different 'apps' available - food, clothes, money management and you can even locate others. These apps are there to make people's lives easier. But what about old people, surely they need a mobile phone too, just to make phone calls when they are out. ~~But~~ However, old people can't keep up with today's ~~technology~~ technology. The world is just moving too fast for them. It's hardly fair that they can't purchase a better, more stylish phone just because they don't know how to use them.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate appropriately addresses the letter to the editor, and maintains a suitable style and register for such a letter, except for the slip of 'wanna'. There is a good range of ideas, and the content is consistent and sustained, with evidence of crafting. (Band 4, 12/16.) Spelling and punctuation are mostly very accurate (Band 2, 6/8).



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Make sure that your assumptions are well-supported and beware of over-generalised statements, such as are made about older people in this extract.

This is the whole of a candidate's response to Question 10.

Write your answer to Section B here:

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to give my views on the topic
'Mobile phones are essential to modern life.'

I personally, completely agree. I feel that with
out mobile ~~of~~ phones the modern society will flop!

When I got my first mobile phone, I was aged 11, it
was for safety reasons as well as personal use.

Without a mobile phone, if I got lost or injured I
would have to rely on a kind passer by to help, and
not all passers by are kind! I feel a lot safer if
I have my phone on me.

They are now a lot lighter and smaller, and
easier to carry around. Now-a-days, most mobiles,
have everything you need installed. There are "apps"
and your email and social networking.

Understandably many people cannot afford ~~modern~~
mobile phones, ~~therefore~~ and therefore do not find them
an essential to life, they can find other ways to
get in touch with people. But I feel that if some people
manage their money more wisely, some would be
able to buy a mobile phone, ~~they will find~~

(Section B continued)

I think that they will ~~find~~ find that it can
make their lives a whole lot easier.

Some times people can find that mobile phones
are addictive. They find themselves constantly checking
their phone even if they know theres nothing there.

However mobile phones, I believe, are an essential to modern life. They are notably one of the best inventions since sliced bread!

Thank you for reading, and I hope you are able to voice some of my views to the public.

yours gratefully,

Tara Goldsmith



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

This is a clearly-written response, which shows a sound grasp of the content and an appropriate style. The points it makes are relevant, but mostly undeveloped. (Band 2, 4/16.) Writing is mostly accurate in spelling and punctuation, although the variety of expression is not particularly large. (Band 2, 5/8.)



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

Think about why this answer does not get beyond Band 2: the points need to be elaborated with more detailed argument, and the expression could be more flexible and varied. Look especially at whether the writer engages clearly with the imagined reader - you could improve the opening and closing, for example.

Paper Summary

Greater familiarity with the demands of the examination was evident this year. Candidates' work often reached an impressively high standard, through meticulous preparation and strong personal response to the prose texts, dealing precisely with the language of the extract they were faced with and concentrating well on how this communicates the author's purpose and methods, as well as on the presentation of character and ideas. They also often demonstrated the capacity to write with an apt, stylish and coherent manner on the Writing tasks, although some still need to aim for a stronger awareness of their audience.

To improve their performance, all candidates should ensure that:

in Section A (Reading), they:

- engage in a sustained manner with the effect of the writer's use of language
- avoid the use of excessively long quotations, by embedding short examples effectively into their sentences
- select an extract for part (b) that enables them to explore language sensitively in relation to the writer's presentation of ideas, themes or characters

in Section B (Writing), they:

- address the audience, which was clearly specified in each of the two questions, with a focus on communicating effectively
- construct a coherent argument, developing and connecting points in a clear, well-planned fashion.

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