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Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel GCSE  
English Language (1EN2)

Paper 1: Non-Fiction Texts

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## Introduction

The majority of the entry was re-sit candidates and examiners commented that they did not see many higher-level responses, especially to Section A (Reading). There was evidence that candidates had been prepared for this examination. Examiners commented that the texts about hobbies were accessible across the full range of abilities and candidates were able to engage with the tasks and respond appropriately. The writing topics were ones that all candidates had experience of, although some examiners thought the format for Question 7 might have been less familiar.

More successful candidates were able to engage fully with both texts and respond thoughtfully. Their writing responses were engaging and effective and were mostly well controlled and accurate. Less successful candidates sometimes struggled to understand the passages and the questions. Their writing was often pedestrian or lacked coherence and had weak language controls.

Some candidates were not clear about the focus of the reading questions eg they responded to the evaluation questions as language analysis and the language analysis question as evaluation.

Examiners did comment on a number of blank responses especially to the reading questions, in particular Question 5 and 6. There were some indications that candidates may have attempted the writing question (Section B) first and run out of time to complete the paper.

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

- evidence that the majority of candidates had understood the ideas in the texts
- the ability to make at least some comments on language and its effects for Question 3
- the inclusion of judgements at different levels for Questions 2, 5 and 6
- writing that showed a range of ideas and suitable tone, style and register for audience and purpose
- writing that used some ambitious vocabulary and accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Less successful responses:

- confused the texts, answering questions on Text One using Text Two and vice versa
- showed an insecure grasp of language and its effects and did not use relevant or accurate subject terminology in response to Question 3
- failed to support points using appropriate textual evidence, or used textual evidence that did not support the point being made

- did not attempt to make judgements in response to Questions 2, 5 and 6 or based their responses to Question 6 entirely on their own ideas with no reference to the text
- did not organise and develop ideas in their writing
- did not write with a secure awareness of audience and purpose
- did not use a range of vocabulary and lacked accurate spelling and secure control of punctuation and grammar.

## **Section A**

### **Question 1**

This is a straightforward question on Text One which does not require candidates to use their own words.

There were very few candidates who did not attempt to provide four points. Many candidates were able correctly to identify four points the writer makes about the benefits of hobbies. All the bullet points in the mark scheme were seen by examiners but the most popular were: 'benefits well-being', 'good for the young' and 'good for the old', often combined as one point, and 'benefit later in life'. Other popular responses seen were: 'keeps from temptations', 'fills up spare moments', 'can create stimulating communication with others' and 'can connect people with the same tastes', the last two often being combined as one point. The most common cause of failure to be awarded a mark was 'of great utility', with no further explanation. Other unsuccessful responses were too vague such as 'it is good' which missed the specifics of for whom, along with 'for the young/old' or 'for all ages' without mentioning 'good for...' or words to that effect.

### **Question 2**

This question requires the candidate to evaluate how successfully the writer persuades the reader that having a hobby is useful for people of all ages.

Examiners commented that there were some clear responses to this question with evidence of preparation however the majority of examiners commented that while it was clear that most candidates understood the text, a significant number of candidates had difficulty in developing evaluative comments.

Most candidates tried to find three reasons with evidence, as the question requested, but examiners commented that a significant number only gave two reasons which limited their achievement. Candidates chose to comment on 'of benefit in later life' as it was an easy point to identify and to explain, showing that this proved hobbies were presented as being useful to both younger and older people eg 'The writer clearly and successfully states that these skills can be used all through life', 'hobbies can get you somewhere (maybe even famous)'. Another popular choice was 'incalculable benefit' showing the range of benefits, and therefore how useful hobbies can be. Examiners commented that many

candidates explained their chosen references rather than making a judgement about how effective these were in persuading the reader that having a hobby is useful for people of all ages. However some examiners commented that some candidates were able to offer a sufficiently clear evaluative opinion, linked to a clear explanation of the writer's ideas. There was evidence that candidates had been taught evaluative vocabulary eg successfully, skilfully, clearly, which sometimes helped them to focus on the question.

More successful candidates were able to use evidence from the text to evaluate writer's ideas and viewpoints about the benefits of hobbies for people of all ages with some good explanation but not many managed a developed critical evaluation. Some of the more successful responses considered the importance of bringing people together and there were references to the success of the words 'stimulating' and 'incalculable' in emphasising this.

Less successful candidates were able to find some relevant examples but were not able to provide a valid comment to justify the examples selected. Their comments were often generic eg 'this makes it easy for the reader to follow it', 'it made the reader want to keep reading'. Some less successful candidates paraphrased their chosen quotations eg 'may be found of benefit in later life means it can be beneficial later' with no further explanation of ideas or evaluation of the text. Some responded as if this was a language question, picking out individual words and commenting on them, missing the evaluation focus of this question.

Many candidates used examples from the given lines but examiners observed that there were a significant number who made points that were outside the line references, using the first paragraph for some or all of their points.

### **Question 3**

This question asks the candidate how the writer uses language to interest and inform the reader across the whole text.

Examiners saw some reasonable responses to this question but although most candidates were able to demonstrate some understanding of the text, many candidates had difficulty in explaining the effect of their chosen words or phrases. Some candidates did not seem to understand the focus of the question and responded as if it was an evaluation (AO4) rather than a language (AO2) question. All examiners commented that the majority of candidates did not use relevant or accurate subject terminology and did not correctly identify similes, adverbs, nouns, and other language devices. Many responses used 'word' as the subject terminology for terms such as nouns, adjectives and adverbs or simply used the words 'positive language' or 'phrase'. Some examiners thought that responses to this question were the weakest on the paper.

Popular points for comment were: the use of 'good' and 'well-being' to show the positive aspects of hobbies and the adjective 'incalculable' with the explanation that was taken from the glossary: 'The adjective incalculable is used to inform the reader that the benefits of hobbies are endless.'

More successful responses could offer some explanations on how the language interests and informs the reader eg 'The alliteration of 'later life' rolls off the tongue and gives the impression that the benefit of hobbies may make later life smoother.', 'He uses adjectives like 'honest' to show how simple this hobby can be and therefore how accessible.' The words 'adopted/adoption' were also commented on and some candidates were able to write convincingly about the impact on the reader of these words and the connotations associated with their use.

Less successful candidates did not focus on language and sometime used quotations simply explaining what they said eg 'The writer uses 'The struggle for existence' to show that people are struggling to live'. There was often limited, incorrect or no subject terminology. There were also those who wrote about structure eg sentence length. These less successful responses often made generic comments on the effects of their chosen features eg 'to keep the reader interested' and 'to make the reader read on' which could apply to any text.

Occasionally candidates wrote a response to Text Two. These were rewarded but were penalised for using the wrong text (not reading the instructions carefully).

#### **Question 4a**

This is a straightforward question on Text Two which does not require candidates to use their own words.

Most candidates achieved two marks on this question. The most common points identified were 'plant collecting' and 'fern hunt', although all points were seen. The most common reason for not achieving marks was using the wrong text eg 'carpentry' or 'pioneering' or using the wrong line references eg 'music' or 'reading'.

#### **Question 4b**

This question requires candidates to understand implicit meaning and ideas in a text. Many candidates used quotations to answer this question and some of these were appropriate responses but candidates should try to use their own words to show they have understood the implied information and ideas.

Most candidates were able to provide two reasons, commonly 'reduces the excitement' and 'reduces irritation' although sometimes candidates wrote the single words 'irritation' or 'excitement' and thus missed the idea of them being decreased. Bullet point 4 (hobbies can be like medicine) was frequently made,

often along with bullet point 10 (promotes well-being/good health) expressed in various ways.

Occasionally candidates lost marks by not writing sufficient to answer the question eg 'commended' or 'encouraged', with no further expansion, or quoted random phrases such as 'hot race of life'. A few candidates responded on the wrong text.

## Question 5

This question required candidates to evaluate how successfully the writer shows that indoor hobbies are interesting and enjoyable for everyone.

As with Question 2, examiners commented that many candidates struggled to be evaluative and did not move much beyond explaining or paraphrasing the text. Similarly to Question 2, a significant number of candidates did not give three reasons. Examiners noted that there were a quite a few blank responses and also those with very little written.

Most candidates felt the writer was successful in showing that indoor hobbies were enjoyable and responses tended to centre round reading in a comfortable or snug atmosphere. 'Solitary and secure' and 'make cosy the mind' were frequently quoted. One candidate wrote, 'as if it were a mental shield protecting you.' There were also positive references to the range of reading material suggested showing that there is something for everyone. Quite a few felt the balance between reading and science was successful as the writer exemplified completely different hobbies. One who enjoyed the scientific references wrote that, 'botanical enterprises makes it sound like you are building an empire of plants.' There were some who argued the writer was not successful as 'there weren't many examples of hobbies'. There were also a couple of responses that pointed out that he had made the outdoor hobbies sound such fun that the indoor ones sounded boring.

More successful responses explored three points, supported these with evidence and evaluated how successful the writer had been in showing that indoor hobbies are interesting and enjoyable for everyone. They were more precise in their selection of detail, considering the juxtaposition of warm and cold, indoor and outdoor, with some drawing the inference that this range was inclusive of readers' preferences and tastes. A few candidates identified the simple, domestic diction of 'nice' and 'cosy' and considered its appeal. Some of the more successful responses considered the effectiveness of 'to sit solitary and secure' suggesting that hobbies conducted indoors were safer, providing additional comfort showing them to be enjoyable.

Less successful responses offered basic personal opinions, like that science or reading are boring, rather than evaluating the success of the text. There were some which gave a generalised opinion but without any textual references and

some others where sections of the text had been copied out but with no comments. Some referenced activities which were not in the text: watching TV; playing board games; playing indoor hide and seek. There were some who misunderstood the question and wrote about outdoor hobbies and some who referred to listening to music which, of course, was outside the line references. Some responses used the question as a stimulus to discuss their own ideas about hobbies and lost focus on the question.

A number of candidates used material from outside of the given extract or used the wrong text.

## Question 6

This question requires candidates to evaluate how successfully the text shows that it is important and beneficial for everyone to have a hobby.

Examiners saw a few convincing responses where candidates showed some developed analysis of writer's ideas and critically evaluated how successful the text was in showing that it is important and beneficial for everyone to have a hobby. However most examiners commented that many candidates did not evaluate the text and responses often did not move beyond explanation. All examiners commented on a significant number of blanks and very short/undeveloped responses which may have been a time management issue.

Most candidates, who attempted this question, engaged reasonably well with the task and were able to give some opinions and support their comments with examples from the texts. The majority of responses included straightforward comments although some examiners thought there was some evidence of sound explanation but not many candidates were able to provide developed analysis of the ideas. Candidates thought the writer was successful in conveying the benefits of hobbies for everyone and one of the most frequently quoted phrases was 'both sexes can join and share'. There were some explanations about how the numerous examples and variety of hobbies given in the text were inclusive and had a wide appeal. One candidate wrote, 'As a woman reader this makes me feel welcomed and involved.' Quite a number of responses also addressed the psychological importance of hobbies and there were a number of references to the 'safety-valve' idea eg 'If he didn't have a hobby his brain would be unhealthy' and, more dramatically: 'our minds would explode'. There were several references to the medicinal qualities of hobbies and a general sense that this was a topic and viewpoint with which most engaged. Many used the reference to 'Jack being a dull boy' to show how hobbies 'enrich lives', 'make you a more interesting person', 'stop you becoming weak and dull', however a few became side-tracked into commenting on the use of the quotation in the film *The Shining*. One candidate concluded 'If I knew nothing about hobbies I would definitely take inspiration from the text.'

More successful responses were able to explain ideas and offer some informed evaluative opinion with appropriate references. They were able to agree and disagree with the statement. They were able to offer an overview evaluative opinion and then prove their opinion with supportive reference from the text. They used evaluative phrases such as 'I fully agree with...' or 'I partially agree...'

Some examiners commented that there were a significant number of less successful responses. These responses included those where candidates had not focused on the task, instead writing about the benefits of hobbies in general or their own hobbies such as films, gaming and football, with no references to the text. Some examiners thought this was less prevalent than in the summer series whereas others thought that there were a significant number of these type of responses. One examiner commented that many candidates wholly overlooked the instruction: 'Based on your evaluation of the text'. Other less successful responses used very lengthy quotations and then briefly explained their meaning, often simply paraphrasing the quotation.

Occasionally candidates wrote a response to Text One. These were rewarded but were penalised for using the wrong text (not reading the instructions carefully).

There were a number of blanks or very short or undeveloped responses which may have been a time management issue.

## **Section B**

Examiners observed that many candidates made use of the planning box although many simply listed techniques to be used rather than the content of their ideas. Examiners commented that when it was used successfully it helped candidates to provide more structured responses.

There were some very brief and blank responses to this section which may have been a timing issue.

## **Question 7**

This question asked candidates to write a review of an activity they have taken part in for a website for young adults.

## **AO5**

Most candidates were able to create a relevant response to the question and appeared to understand the basic requirements and style of a review for their peer group although some examiners commented that some candidates did not seem familiar with writing reviews. A significant number of candidates made use of the suggested opening paragraph which led them into a sound review of an activity, helping to structure their response. The activities discussed were frequently sport based, with rugby, going to the gym and boxing being very

common. Other examples of activities discussed were: skydiving, zip-lining, rock climbing/bouldering, skiing, motorcycling, camping and other outdoor activities. Most candidates chose to focus on one activity and clearly picked something that they knew a lot about and enjoyed. This was by far the most successful approach. It was quite common for the title to be used at the end of the response, to give shape to the review.

More successful candidates sustained a sense of purpose and audience throughout. These responses adopted an appropriate tone, often telling the story of a day spent doing their chosen activity, with anecdotes and a conclusion to draw their recommendations together. They produced responses which were fully focused on reviewing the activity, showing the highs and lows, as suggested in the prompt eg 'It was demoralising seeing big hench people around me. It was motivating though, the loud music was in the moment.' Some moved away from personal anecdote to look at the wider benefits eg 'Boxing teaches a discipline and in the 'real world' discipline can help in many factors of life.' Those who wrote about the D of E award tended to do this very well, as they had enjoyed a variety of disciplines in the one activity. Examiners commented that it was good to read a range of lively reviews of walks, camping trips, swimming in cold water and many more activities. Some candidates approached the task like a restaurant or film review and gave ratings eg 'three stars', 'nine out of ten'.

Less successful candidates wrote a straightforward account of something they had done, without much sense of purpose and audience. There were also quite a few lists of activities with the overall message that this is what is on offer, go and pick something which were not clearly focused on reviewing an activity. Examiners commented that some candidates did not seem familiar with writing a review and wrote a narrative response about their chosen activity and a few candidates ignored the correct form and purpose and wrote speeches or articles. In some cases the activity was never named or made clear.

### **Question 8**

This question asked candidates to write a speech for their peer group to persuade them to do something useful with their spare time. This was the more popular choice.

Examiners commented that some candidates who chose this option seemed quite well-prepared and offered a range of sensible ideas in an appropriate format. One examiner commented that candidates enjoyed this question and most of them responded with confidence and enthusiasm.

There were some blank responses.

## AO5

Most of the candidates who attempted this question were familiar with the speech format, using at the very least a basic greeting and ending with some reference to the audience. There were many appropriate greetings and a strong sense of purpose and audience, at least at the beginning of the response, and usually at the end too, although this sometimes lapsed in the middle for some of the weaker ones and the response became more of an essay. Some examiners commented that many candidates adopted a suitable tone and register with direct address, rhetorical questions and rules of three used as devices.

The vast majority focused on time wasted on mobile phones or the internet; many suggested worthwhile alternatives and explained the benefits of these activities. There were plenty of initial accusations of time wasting and general apathy affecting the youth of today (possibly echoing the familiar voices of parents and teachers!) eg 'When was the last day you didn't waste at least 3 hours of it engrossed in your phone?' or possibly more motivational than accusatory eg 'When you're old and grey you are not going to remember the time you sat at home watching TV.' The latter was in support of the importance of trying new experiences and building memories from them. This was an approach that quite a few candidates took. One wrote that you must 'find a hidden passion of yours.' Another ended the speech with the advice to 'use your spare time to enjoy life and glow through the darkness.' Various activities were suggested: taking up a sport; doing more revision; learning a new skill (a language, music or drama); helping more round the house; baking and also volunteering.

More successful responses were clear that this was a speech and addressed their peers using the appropriate tone and register, developing their ideas in some detail and ending with a rousing appeal. They were able to adopt an impassioned and strongly persuasive style of writing using personal experiences to enhance their speech. Some more confident candidates used self-deprecating humour in acknowledging their own time-wasting habits and were able to include the reader in a warm acknowledgement of human fallibility. Some used a hectoring wise-old-person-saying tone to satiric effect.

Less successful responses were often brief or unstructured. Sometimes a list of activities was given with little development. Others were less sure on the form required and quickly drifted into a general essay style. These responses often did not always address the bullet points given and showed little awareness of purpose and format. Some candidates wrote a speech that came across as more of a review of an activity that they had themselves completed, almost crossing both the questions over.

There were some extremely brief responses.

## AO6 (Question 7 and 8)

Most candidates were able to make some attempt to select words, sentence structures and punctuation to suit the task. They were able to express and order information and ideas with some correctly spelt vocabulary, some control of punctuation and some accurate paragraphing. Most candidates were able to communicate successfully even if there were errors. Word choices showed some adaptation to the topic being written about.

Examiners commented that vocabulary was often varied although there were spelling errors. Complex words were sometimes correct but there were frequent careless errors which suggested a lack of proof reading. Nearly all examiners commented on weak punctuation with some responses using very few full stops or capital letters.

Stronger candidates were selective with their vocabulary choices and used a range of appropriate linguistic techniques, eg rhetorical questions and direct address to communicate their ideas. Vocabulary range was well-chosen for the task they had selected with some spelling errors for more complex words. These candidates wrote fluently with a range of structural devices. Some used sentence structures to create deliberate effect. They had control of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Less successful candidates were often repetitive with their word choices and, in particular, with their sentence structures. They often used very basic sentences or struggled with basic punctuation leading to a lack of clarity in places. They sometimes had limited vocabulary and poor grammar and made frequent errors, often obscuring meaning.

Common errors commented on by examiners were: missing basic sentence punctuation; comma splicing; missing or misused apostrophes; problems with homophones; misspelling of basic vocabulary; not capitalising 'I' for the personal pronoun; missing capital letters at the beginning of sentences; grammatical errors such as problems with sentence structures, subject-verb agreement and verb tenses.

Examiners remarked that a common spelling error in both Question 7 and Question 8 was 'hobby' (most commonly misspelt as 'hobbie'), which could have been copied from the texts. Some also commented that there seemed to be an increase in the use of 'gonna' and 'wanna', which may be attempts at an informal register but sometimes it did not seem deliberate.

## Summary

Based on their performance on the paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- For short-answer Questions 1 and 4a ensure that you are responding briefly and selecting information, not just writing out a section. Highlight the relevant lines in your extract booklet and read the question carefully. Ensure you answer on the correct text as well as using the correct lines. For Question 4b try to find ideas that are implied in the given text rather than just selecting phrases or quotations from the text.
- For Question 3, make sure you focus on language features eg word choice, alliteration, personification, simile, metaphor. Remember to focus on the effects of your chosen examples on the reader and not just explain their meaning. Try to use appropriate correct subject terminology.
- In Questions 3 and 6, where reference to the whole extract is needed, it is important to consider what references you will use and consider what examples are most significant for comment. Discriminating references are seen where you pick out specific examples across the extract that link to your points, not just where you comment on every feature seen. Remember to use examples from the whole of the extract.
- For your responses to Questions 2, 5 and 6, remember that you evaluate every day, and more so than ever with online feedback and posting of opinions and ideas online. Read the question carefully – what is it you are giving your opinion on? You do not need to comment on language and structure here unless this supports your evaluation. Remember always to link your evaluative points to the text and give examples from the text to support your evaluation.
- Remember to find three reasons for your opinion and support them with examples from the text for your responses to Questions 2 and 5.
- When you are writing, always think about your reader, what ideas you want them to understand and how you want them to react at different parts of your writing; then choose the most useful words, phrases or techniques available to you to achieve those effects.
- Plan your writing, even just briefly. You have been given a planning box to do this. Think carefully about how you will begin to write so that it is engaging for your reader from the very start. As you begin to write, know where you will end. This will help you to write in a cohesive and coherent way. If you start presenting an idea, make sure you are developing it.
- Make sure that you write in the correct format and have a clear sense of the purpose and audience for your writing.
- Take care throughout with accuracy: spelling, punctuation and grammar. Try to give yourself enough time to check your work for errors.

- Focus on timing during the examination and use the number of marks available for each question as an indication of how long you should spend answering each question. Make sure you try to answer every question.