

Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

June 2011

GCSE English/English Language
(5EH01) English Today

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June 2011

Publications Code UG027785

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Candidates have a choice of two themes to answer on set by Edexcel. For 2010-2011 these are 'Animal Welfare' and 'Extreme Sports'.

For Reading candidates must complete one reading task individually and following their preparation they have up to two hours to complete the task. The response must be a written response of up to 1000 words. For the chosen theme candidates select two texts from the Edexcel texts provided and prepare by making notes and planning their response to the task.

The reading response must show that candidates can:

- make comparisons between two texts
- select appropriate details from two texts to support their ideas
- explore how writers use presentation and language to communicate their ideas and perspectives in two texts.

In Writing candidates must complete one writing task from a choice of two on their chosen theme. Following their preparation they have up to two hours to complete the task and their response must be an individual written response of up to 1000 words. The writing response must show that candidates can:

- make choices in writing that are appropriate to audience and purpose
- spell, punctuate and use grammatical structures that are accurate and appropriate for purpose and effect.

The range of centres entering in this series included those taking the module for the first time and those who were resubmitting following the January 2011 series. Most candidates performed very well and coped with the demands of this module. Candidates had been successfully prepared by centres for this component and engaged with the given Animal Welfare and Extreme Sports tasks and texts. Both topics were well received by candidates, being accessible and within their experience and these provided candidates with opinions and knowledge which helped in the writing tasks. Most candidates completed both tasks; there were few incomplete folders submitted.

Both topics were popular, with slightly more candidates opting for Animal Welfare. It was pleasing to see that some centres had chosen themes relating to their candidates and had varied theme. For the reading response most candidates used PETA and Go Veggie with a few referring to the WWF and RSPCA texts. Particularly successful responses were found when comparing the PETA fur advert and the Animal Aid, 'Go Veggie' in Theme 1.

For the Extreme Sports topic, the 'Go Big' advert and the Telegraph article also invited some interesting responses from a full range of candidate abilities. There were few responses to the Snowboarding video and the Red Bull Project video. The responses for Extreme sports mainly used sources 2 and 6, 2 and 4 or 4 and 6. The 'Go Big' source lent itself very well to language analysis and candidates engaged well with this in particular.

In the writing task for both themes, the article was the most popular choice. There were few responses to the script for a video for Extreme Sports and a small number of podcast scripts for Animal Welfare. Although most candidates are familiar with the media of podcasts and video websites, significantly fewer candidates opted or were directed to write using the form of a script. Tasks were accessible to the full range of candidate ability and marks had been awarded using the full mark scale.

Candidates made good use of time. There were few unfinished units although some were very fragmented and had been joined as the response was built up.

Most centres interpreted and applied the marking criteria accurately and consistently, with fewer than 10 inconsistent centres arising. All tasks achieved the required differentiation; the whole mark range was evident in moderator allocations.

In Reading the interpretation of the assessment criteria varied. Some clearly understood that comparison is a key skill in this section of the paper. While many candidates integrated their comparisons with their analysis of the two texts, some candidates added a perfunctory comparison after their two separate analyses. Some candidates made no attempt to make any comparisons at all. The better candidates analysed and compared the two texts, making a number of speculative judgements, always related back to the target audience and purpose of the texts.

Some analysis of language use was mature and original. The weakest candidates described the features of the two texts and made little or no attempt to analyse any of the features that they described. Candidates were still sometimes rewarded too generously for comparison across the band boundaries where 'some' had been credited as 'sound', 'sound' as 'detailed' and 'detailed' as 'specific'. Several centres rewarded 'no comparison' with a band 2 mark and some centres did not match comment to summative mark.

At the upper end of the mark range there was evidence of discriminating overview and comparison in a sustained manner. At the lower end of the range candidates tended to spot similarities and differences and then to draw the two sources together in a final paragraph. There does need to be more focus on the difference between 'describe' and 'analyse' - for example, candidates offered detailed descriptions of images and presentational features without explaining what effects had been achieved by them.

Candidates need to be aware of time constraints and manage their time to focus on purpose and audience as well as analysing language and presentational features. In many cases there was little understanding that texts can have more than one audience and more than one purpose. The key to successful comparison is the selection of two comparable texts. Some text selections meant that candidates struggled to say things such as 'Text one has pictures while text two doesn't', or, 'Both texts use the colour red.' There are also some superficial comments such as 'I know that it is a magazine cover because there is a bar code on it' and 'The magazine cover is persuading you to take up the sport'. Some candidates are still including

comments on their own preferences - which text they thought was 'best' or 'most successful', which is not necessary. Those centres who had chosen to set the comparison of two videos found it difficult in the main to ensure that candidates were able to meet assessment objectives.

Centre application of the marking criteria for the writing task was more accurate and it was clear that centres were more comfortable with the demands of the writing task which were familiar to teachers and candidates. Writing responses were varied and used the whole range of tasks with fewer candidates choosing to write the script of a podcast – those who did so managed this task well. Centre assessment of writing AO3i and ii was generally within tolerance. Candidates succeeded in writing persuasively about an animal welfare issue; there was evidence of conscious crafting for effect here and strong candidate voice and opinion was expressed. Most candidates chose to write the article option for extreme sports and the range of topics was interesting and varied: ski cross, skateboarding, snowboarding, wing suit flying, wakeboarding, motocross, base jumping, equestrian vaulting and some very well written imaginative responses such as 'extreme ironing' and 'extreme cheese rolling'. Some chose the video script option and sustained voice, viewpoint and register successfully. The range of subjects chosen in the Animal Welfare writing task was varied and many showed real engagement with responses rooted in research and containing credible evidence of abuse to animals. The topics were less varied than in extreme sports, with many on fur, animal testing, hunting and battery farming. Some were too general, focussing on 'animal cruelty'. There were a few varied responses such as those on bull fighting, shark finning, dog shows, foie gras, bear baiting and badger culling.

There were some centres where there was little evidence of research: this was particularly noticeable in centres where the majority of candidates wrote about dog fighting or 'animal cruelty'. A few articles had open titles such as 'Are Zoos Necessary?' which led to discursive rather than persuasive responses. The most successful responses across the ability range and in the two options were those where candidates clearly had a personal interest. In one centre all candidates wrote about the same topic and responses lacked any individual voice. Some candidates seemed to struggle with the concept of a newspaper article writing campaign ads or even advertorials and in some cases this was not reflected in the comments of the marker.

There was a small increase in the number of candidates writing a podcast, however in some cases the voice for a teenage audience was not successful, appealing to a younger audience, and candidates struggled to balance the serious nature of an animal welfare issue with conventions of the media.

Assessment criteria for AO3iii were applied consistently in most cases. These marks were variable across some centres and there was inconsistency between Bands 2-4 where some were harshly marked while some were too generous, particularly in relation to punctuation and sentences. For high achieving candidates in Bands 4 and 5, there was a tendency to award 6/7 marks where there was clearly not enough evidence

of using punctuation devices with precision and sophistication, and for deliberate effect, whilst in some centres there was a clear reluctance to award 7 marks if only minor errors had occurred. The standard of AO3iii was diverse, with many candidates having sound ability to construct sentences and express meaning in a mature manner, whilst others either used 'stream of consciousness' or simply 'rambled' to fill the page.

Most candidates performed very well and coped well with the new demands of this module.

INSET needs to identify that comparison is the core part of the reading question and that this should underpin all other parts of the reading response. Comparison is a key skill in this section of the paper.

There were very few difficulties with assessment. There was some evidence of internal moderation. Comments on scripts were very often written to candidates rather than to the moderator and in some cases folders had been graded. With controlled assessment is that there is no need to give the work back to candidates with comments once completed, and grading them may be misleading.

Administration

Some difficulties with administration of the moderation process and notes taken into the controlled assessment could be reduced with further professional development. Some centres that had entered in January had not fully followed the advice on administration given in their feedback reports.

There were some administrative issues which affected the moderation process. These included:

- omitting to send in any samples
- late submission of moderation samples: some were sent after the deadline and in some cases after the end of the marking period.
- missing front sheets for each candidate
- missing centre mark sheet for each candidate
- samples did not always include the highest and lowest scoring candidates
- some candidate work did not include any teacher comments
- samples missing the print out of marks from Edexcel Online
- some information was missing from coversheets.
- A small number of candidate notes were teacher structured or contained full sentences.

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Order Code UG027785 June 2011

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