

Moderators' Report/  
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2015

GCSE English and English Language  
(5EH01)

English Today

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Summer 2015

Publications Code UG041362

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## 5EH01 Report to Centres

### General Overview

Moderators generally noted that there was a slight bias towards UK Attractions, for example '*Two thirds of candidates chose UK Attractions as their focus*' and '*Of 31 centres, 13 did UK attractions, 11 pets, 7 both*'. The topics were accessible, and it was noticeable that lower ability candidates in particular coped well with the theme of pets.

### Range and suitability of topics/tasks/titles

#### 1) Reading

##### **Pets:**

The choice of texts was fairly evenly spread with no obviously favourite pairings though the *PDSA* leaflet 'Your Right Pet' was a popular choice in conjunction with a range of the other texts. The 'Confessions of a Cat-Sitter' article was very popular, as was 'Rovertaken'. Some centres seemed to miss the humour in the *Independent* blog. Comment on the *Your Cat* magazine article tended to very 'content' based, and weaker candidates struggled to do more than describe 'Rovertaken', the article from *The Sun*. A significant number of centres focused on the two video texts with varying degrees of success, particularly in the quality of comments on language. The *Your Cat* article did seem to provide scope for misreading to a significant number of candidates and many failed to understand the writer's ideas and perspectives.

##### **UK Attractions:**

Out of the available texts, the *Lightwater Valley* leaflet was the most popular choice (chosen by half of all candidates). The most popular comparison was between the *Lightwater Valley* Leaflet and the 'Nemesis Sub Terra' article (chosen by a quarter of all candidates), or the *Beamish* leaflet. There were a small number focusing on *Lightwater Valley* and the *British Museum*. Other popular comparisons were between the *Legoland* video and either the *Lightwater Valley* or the *Beamish* leaflet. More centres than in previous series had some candidates using the videos – *Legoland* was more effectively analysed and compared by more able students.

#### 2) Writing

Writing task choices were split fairly evenly.

##### **Pets**

The writing tasks were fairly evenly split. One moderator commented 'I found the articles on pets to be the most engaging with candidates having a clear understanding of the purpose and audience of the task.' The blog for young people was not fulfilled as strongly as candidates often forgot that it was aimed at 'young people'. They usually discussed the advantages and disadvantages but

in a more pedestrian way. Where the article on an issue was tackled, a number of centres had clearly taught very structured preparation lessons on a specific, single issue. In some cases there was a clear focus on a single issue within centres that was quite alarmist, focusing on 'killer' dogs.

### **UK Attractions:**

Again, both tasks were popular. For the educational leaflet, candidates' usually just persuaded teachers that they should visit the attraction and sometimes there was no clear sense of audience and purpose – or, as one moderator wrote, *'the candidates would suddenly remember and 'shoehorn' it in'*. The leaflets for teachers were often very effective, but there a significant number which were wholly persuasive rather than informative. A significant number of students struggled with the audience requirement of this task, and this was reflected in an overly familiar tone. There were, however, a high number of engaging, entertaining and persuasive responses. Some schools in this theme allowed the students to write their piece based on the Beamish article which led to some quite weak responses. The review task was also problematic in the sense that the candidates again persuaded rather than reviewed the attraction. Occasionally, the candidates also wrote general reviews, not specifically aimed at families with young children. Some lower ability candidates struggled with audience with the blogs, but there were examples of highly creative responses, especially with invented U.K. attractions and negative reviews. These were often appropriately humorous. The podcast responses were slightly weaker as many candidates wrote a simple narrative of their day out while neglecting the review element of the task. A number of candidates suffered from writing a dialogue which meant that ideas were not particularly developed.

Overall, the candidates showed a clear engagement with the themes. When candidates had a clear sense and audiences and purpose they were able to create engaging and lively pieces.

## **Interpretation of Assessment Criteria**

### **General**

Most centres interpreted and applied the marking criteria accurately and consistently. In reading, marks tended to be generous where centres seemed unaware that comparison is the driver of the marks in this unit. However, many centres accurately assessed comparison and put their candidates in the correct bands. The vast majority of centres were aware of the need to focus on comparison and there were some examples of excellent sustained comparisons.

### **1) Reading**

#### Comparison

Overall, while there was evidence that centres are encouraging comparison it is still the key assessment issue in this unit, despite it being the most established controlled assessment unit. Very few candidates failed to compare. In many centres it was obviously the focus of the teaching, but still in many cases there

were spurious comparisons, or candidates making a wide variety of comments about, for example, all elements of language or presentation before making a comparison. There was still evidence of the structure of responses inhibiting candidates in reaching higher bands where texts were analysed separately first then comparisons drawn in the conclusion; candidates analysing one text then attempting to draw comparisons when writing about the second text or writing about all features of language or presentation in one text before attempting to compare. Where the marks were lenient it was most often because of the degree of comparison being over-valued, but there was also evidence of comments being over-valued.

All comparison choices enabled candidates to achieve across the ability range. Lower ability candidates tended to choose to compare leaflets where there was plenty of material on presentational features to explore. As in previous series, in some centres candidates used comparative discourse markers without actually making a comparison, such as 'On the other hand', 'whereas', and 'however' to start statements which were not comparisons. Centres need to ensure that candidates are genuinely making comparisons between texts rather than starting a statement about a text with a comparative term. Whilst any texts can be compared centres need to differentiate these to suit the ability of their candidates. Centres did a cross section of all of the U.K. Attractions with *Beamish* and *Lightwater Valley* seeming to be the most popular. There were some particularly good comments on camera angles in the *Lightwater Valley* text but in some cases when comparing this text to the *Legoland* video there were missed opportunities to compare this aspect of presentation when also used in a moving image text. Furthermore, most centres who did respond to the *Legoland* video text gave disappointing responses on language. There was so much to say here, but candidates seemed to gloss over any detailed analysis of the text, in most cases just commenting on the celebrities that were used and limiting their comments to what each of them said and even then with little real detail.

One moderator wrote:

*'It was disappointing that quite a few centres still seem unaware of the importance of comparison. Many candidates wrote about one text, then the other and compared in the last paragraph. I think this examination series appears to be worse for this than previous years. It was particularly prevalent in new centres. Some candidates even wrote about the texts on separate sheets. In some centres the teachers did not even mention comparison in the annotations or in the summative comments.'*

### **Ideas and perspectives**

The vast majority of candidates were most confident when writing about writers' ideas/perceptions. A particular weakness appeared to be the writers' ideas and perspectives. Many candidates, particularly those at Band 2 and 3, did not understand the purpose/ideas/perspectives of the *Independent* article. Most candidates were able to identify an audience and purpose for the chosen texts, but less able to explain in convincing detail the impact this had had on the texts. Unusually, in a handful of centres there was close analysis of the writer's ideas/perceptions but a lack of analysis of specific techniques with appropriate textual support. Comments on ideas and perspectives were once again of better

quality than the comments on language which were again a weakness across the entry.

## **Images and presentation**

Image was less successful overall, though in some centres it was excellent. Candidates did focus on the use of language but could have focused more on the presentation and use of images. Some candidates failed to write anything on the images used, even when writing about the U.K. Attractions texts. Some candidates spent a great deal of time making vague comparisons about the use of colour.

## **Language**

Detailed language analysis was generally lacking. Exploration of language features was very well done by a minority of candidates, though most had clearly been prepared with a number of points that they were able to make, so that there was often a similarity of points made by whole cohorts. Many candidates found it difficult to explore language any deeper than at a sound level. Vague comments on language were common and there were also frequent misidentification of language features by candidates across the ability range, many of which were not noted in the marking, and some of which were even commended as correct.

One moderator noted:

*'The most egregious and common example was the misidentification of the possessive adjective "your" (e.g. in "Your Right Pet") as a pronoun. When referring to pronouns, most candidates who wrote in terms such as "the writer's frequent use of pronouns" were in fact only referring to the use of "you" in direct address. Apart from pronouns, (and then only the second person pronoun) candidates were largely unable to comment on the use of other parts of speech, even the more obvious ones such as adjectives and adverbs, which could often have been fruitfully explored. Likewise, although candidates were often able to spot and comment on examples of hyperbole, comments on other kinds of metaphorical language were very few and far between. Subtleties in syntax went largely unnoticed by most candidates, except that they sometimes observed that language was sometimes difficult and might not appeal to teenagers. However, even here, examples given to support such comments usually referred to the use of less common vocabulary, rather than to sentence structure and its impact on meaning.'*

Overall, analysis of language (and really getting to grips with deeper meanings) was not very successful this series. This was particularly evident in the *Independent* article entitled '*Nemesis Sub-Terra: Are you feeling scared yet?*' Here, comments were often limited to the use of rhetorical questions, the rule of three and the description of the ride, Nemesis. Whilst these are valid features some candidates who compared this to the *Lightwater Valley* leaflet often relied too heavily on feature-spotting but without doing too much with these, for example '*both texts use the word thrilling to show what rides are like and make the reader want to go there*' and '*both texts use rhetorical questions to make the*

reader interested'. Conversely, an example of a discriminating comparison could be seen in the following comparison on such features:

*The Independent text uses rhetorical questions to goad its audience, persuading them to try the ride. The writer cleverly makes use of the sub-heading, "Nemesis sub-terra: are you feeling scared yet?" to challenge the reader and make them feel the need to prove the writer wrong. This language feature is effective as it suits the target audience and their need for thrills and to prove that they aren't scared. This also makes them challenge the writers' opinions and strive to try the ride as to develop their own. In a similar way, the LWV text effectively uses a rhetorical question in their text but to intrigue its audience instead of slyly taunting them like the Independent does. The use of the phrase, "So, what are you waiting for?" is goaded in the same way as the independent but not mocking. Instead, it spurs its readers into action and rushes them into buying. The use of a question is appropriate for teachers as they themselves are associated with questions and quizzes.*

In other cases where language was explored significantly was with the analysis of the Latin name, 'sub-terra' and its intended pun on 'terror' and the ironic and somewhat playful tone in which the writer's ideas were presented. There were few cases, if any, where candidates explored the ideas of the writer going on this ride as a scientific experiment by computer-scientists for the purposes of designing better rides. This seemed to have been glossed over or not mentioned at all. Comments on language in responses based on the video texts, however, were of a significantly better quality than the previous series.

### **Annotation and summative comments**

There were some cases where the assessment indicated by annotations and summative comments was very accurate, but the numerical marks did not reflect these comments.

Teachers' comments often showed a generous interpretation of the AOs, especially in Bands 4 and 5. Quality of comparison in Bands 4 and 5 very often did not match the quality of the rest of the response. A persistent problem that occurs when moderating folders is when internal moderators' comments often accurately pinpoint the quality of comparison, for example 'sound' comparisons are recognised and yet the numerical mark awarded corresponds to Band 4 criteria instead of Band 3. The summative comments mostly were accurate, for example one did identify that there were 'some sound comparisons' which would indicate top Band 2 or bottom Band 3, awarded top Band 3. Sound comparisons such as 'Both of the texts appeal effectively to their audiences' and 'both texts use images to great effect' were seen across the scripts. Although there were many marks that indicated discriminating comparisons, in most cases these were over-valued. Discourse markers such as 'whereas' and 'however' were frequently annotated as 'specific and detailed comparisons' where only a brief comparison (at best) had been made by the candidate.

A comment from one moderator was:

*'Summative comments were mostly accurate for the mark awarded (although a small number of centres either gave marks not linked to the comments, or wrote*

*summative comments which seemed to contradict the annotations throughout the body of the text.)'*

It was clear from the annotations and summative comments from some centres that marks were not being led by the comparison, for example one centre where candidates were often awarded marks in Band 5 there were perceptive comments but comparisons comprised such linking comments as 'Text ... also makes use of language features such as rhetorical questions etc'. The annotations and summative comments highlighted the perceptive response, not the comparisons.

## **Summary**

Overall, a significant number of centres were generous in their application of the assessment criteria for the reading task. There was clear evidence on attempting to compare the two texts, but the same problems have applied as has been the case in previous series:

- comparisons which formed little more than a connecting phrase indicating that the candidate was now discussing a different text
- comparisons being quite generalised and not being focused on specific features, yet marks being awarded in Band 4 or even 5
- a clear issue with the difference between the various bands. This was most notable between Bands 4 and 5, and between Bands 3 and 4
- teacher comments often did not match the evidence in the text. The overuse of 'discriminating' was particularly prevalent this year (and often seemed to be a reward for the length of a candidate's response)
- candidates had been clearly instructed to comment on one text in detail and then the other, hindering the opportunity for close and discriminating comparison
- some centres had clearly advised quite able candidates to leave comparison to the end of the response, resulting in discriminating comments on language, presentation and ideas being penalised by brief and partial comparisons
- the mark for reading was too often heavily influenced by the candidates' writing ability: eloquent, fluent writers were given awards in Band 5 despite the response not really analysing the text in detail, whereas a smaller number of candidates were given marks in Band 2 despite clear and effective comparisons
- there were very few responses in Band 5 where the comparison was as developed as the comments on the technical aspects of the individual texts.

## **Writing**

Generally the marks for writing were accurate. There were many enjoyable and amusing tasks in the Writing and candidates were obviously engaged with and knowledgeable about their chosen topics. Candidates wrote particularly effectively about the U.K. Attractions tasks, and there were many heart-felt pieces of writing. Candidates had been given a real opportunity to write from their own experiences and there many units of work where candidates were achieving Band 5. Many writing tasks were a pleasure to read. Unfortunately, there were still some centres where candidates focused on decorating and colouring in booklets, rather than writing the text itself. In some centres,

candidates had spent some considerable time sticking in pictures which is not part of the assessment.

Centre application of the marking criteria for the writing task was accurate overall and it was clear that centres are more comfortable with the demands of the writing task which were familiar to teachers and candidates. Centres need to be aware that task setting is vital and that candidates should be primarily rewarded for the ideas and sense of purpose and audience, the top two bullets in the criteria. The main problem with writing was where the writing task had not been completed on the candidate record sheet or on the candidate work. The completion of accurate task titles is essential as it can impact on the candidate's achievement of purpose and audience. Some task titles were incorrect, for example, 'Writing to persuade about UK Attractions' is not the task set. In a small minority of cases, completely arbitrary tasks had been set, for example 'Write an article aimed at Headteachers persuading them about the benefits of outdoor activities'. The marks for writing showed consistency, although they could be a little generous given some pedestrian voice and essay-like organisation, particularly in the leaflets. Audience and sense of purpose are key features for this task.

Candidates who responded to the U.K. Attractions task generally showed knowledge of how to construct this type of text and were able to organise points accordingly. The best responses were where candidates had researched one particular attraction, for example a local museum or one of national importance like the London Dungeons or the Imperial War Museum and stated specifically how visiting these would be beneficial to students' learning, often highlighting how certain aspects could be valuable when studying particular subjects. The least successful responses were where candidates had glossed over the educational benefits and became too engrossed on opening times and restaurant prices and how teachers could get a rest away from their students. In some cases, candidates wrote generalised responses about a few venues for example, various attractions in Liverpool or London with comments on the educational benefits being somewhat superficial and/or unclear. Sometimes, being overly concerned on presentation and layout hindered candidates' ability to develop their ideas in writing which is the main focus of the assessment. However, the leaflet tasks seemed a more popular choice with lower ability candidates there were a couple of issues that this gave rise to, most notably that many responses were similar in both what points were made and how these points were structured and organised. In terms of similar points made, this would suggest that the task was heavily teacher-led, and thus potentially inhibiting original ideas.

The responses to the 'Pets' tasks were lively and engaging, and particularly so in the case of the blog task. The candidates' use of humour and personal experience were frequently charming and appropriate to the task. Candidates sometimes struggled with the tone/structure of a blog, but on the whole the responses were quite well developed and showed a clear engagement with the task. The candidates who attempted the newspaper article task were less successful – there was often clear evidence of heavy coaching beforehand which resulted in quite generic responses across centres. There was some awareness of the requirements of a newspaper article although this was rarely sustained across a whole response.

The responses to the U.K. attractions tasks saw the majority of centres focus on the leaflet aimed at teachers. In the case of some centres, candidates' use of the reading task material as a scaffold for writing saw quite poor responses and, in a small number of cases, quite extensive 'lifting' from the source material. The majority of candidates did engage with the task well, and there was some very effective use of persuasive devices throughout the responses. One moderator commented:

*'The blog responses were less successful (despite it generally being attempted by candidates of mid to high ability) – the use of dialogue was quite limiting in a number of cases, and ideas were not fully developed. Once again, there were a few responses where the candidates seemed to rely on the source material (again most notably the Beamish leaflet), and these were generally poor.'*

Another issue, evident in responses to tasks linked to both themes, was the overly long nature of some responses where candidates did very little to gain credit after the first three pages. A number of centres included candidate notes which were almost universally too detailed given the regulations on notes. In one case, the candidate had more or less written their essay on their sheet of paper.

### **AO3 (iii)**

Assessment criteria for AO3iii were applied consistently in most cases, although there did seem to be a marked reluctance on the part of some centres to give an award in the top band unless a response was 'note-perfect'. Where a top band mark was awarded, the distinction between a mark of 6 and 7 was not clear to centres (again, a reluctance to give 7 marks to anything but completely error-free responses). A number of candidates at the lower end of the spectrum were also quite harshly given a mark of 1 where there was clear evidence of some control of spelling, punctuation and sentences.

One moderator reported:

*'as with previous series it did tend to vary across centres as to whether it was lenient or severe, particularly between Bands 2-4 where some were severely marked while some were too generous, especially 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. Some centres did not accurately assess marks for spelling, giving marks for 'mostly accurate' spelling when there were frequent errors.'*

### **Administration**

As with previous series the same administration issues were evident. Centres are reminded to look back at previous E9 reports and Principal Moderator reports to

reflect on any areas for improvement. Training for centres still needs to emphasise 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. Centres need to be aware that comparison fixes the mark in a band and then the quality of the other bullets determines the mark within the band.

There remained some difficulties with assessment, where assessment objectives were not met. There was evidence of internal moderation but centres still need further guidance on this as occasionally they inflated marks with no rationale, or did not internally moderate the whole required sample which devalues the process. In this series there were again fewer cases of comments on scripts being written to candidates rather than to the moderator and folders and individual pieces being graded.

There were continued difficulties with administration of the moderation process despite reminders and checklists being shared extensively. Some candidate notes taken into the controlled assessment did not follow awarding body guidelines and had full sentences, paragraphs and teacher structured notes sheets. Some centres did not follow procedures for candidates with special consideration and did not include JCO coversheets or indicate whether the candidates had earned marks themselves for AO3(iii).

Key areas for centres to check are:

1. ensuring the correct series is completed
2. moderation samples are sent or candidates are withdrawn
3. deadlines are met – a considerable number of centres sent samples after the deadline with no evidence of extension or reasons for lateness
4. there are teacher comments on the work - at the very least a summative comment on each assessment objective
5. the EDI is included and candidate record sheets are completed fully, identifying the writing task correctly and fully
6. candidate notes are not teacher-structured and do not contain full sentences
7. use of IT is within awarding body regulations
8. the full required sample for the centre size has been sent
9. highest and lowest candidate folders are sent if not included in the requested sample.

## **Grade Boundaries**

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>



