

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

November 2015

GCSE English and English Language
(5EH01)

English Today

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Report to Centres on 5EH01 November 2015

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'. In this series there were very few centres focused on the two video texts.

UK Attractions:

Out of the available texts, the *Lightwater Valley* leaflet was the most popular choice, compared with the *Independent* article or the *Beamish* leaflet.

2) Writing

Writing task choices were split fairly evenly.

Pets

The writing tasks were fairly evenly split, with the blogs showing awareness of audience and purpose overall and the articles focussing on relevant issues.

UK Attractions

Again, both tasks were used. The leaflets for teachers were often very effective, but there were a significant number which were wholly persuasive rather than informative. There were a number of engaging, entertaining and persuasive responses. The review task had fewer responses and occasionally students wrote general reviews, not specifically aimed at families with young children.

Overall, the candidates showed a clear engagement with the themes. When candidates had a clear sense of 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. However, 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. 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 and perspectives. Some 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.

Images and presentation

Image was very sharply focussed on in this series and some candidates were able to make detailed comments.

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.

Overall, analysis of language (and really getting to grips with deeper meanings) required improvement again this series as comments were general and lacking in detail.

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 and in some cases were fixed just into a grade boundary from the June 2015 series, especially at C and A. For example 'Some sound comparison' was accurately assessed but given a mark at the top of Band 3 rather than the bottom, 'some specific comparison' given a mark at the top of Band 4 rather than the bottom of the band or top of Band 3.

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.

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 of no more than sound.

Summary

Overall, a significant number of centres were generous in their application of the assessment criteria for the reading task. There was clear evidence of 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
- 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.

2) Writing

Generally the marks for writing were accurate. There were some enjoyable and amusing tasks 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 detailed pieces of writing. 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.

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. Centres need to be aware 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.

Candidates who responded to the U.K. Attractions task generally showed knowledge of how to organise points. The best responses stated specifically how visiting a particular attraction 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. 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.

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. There was some awareness of the requirements of a newspaper article, although this was rarely sustained across a whole response.

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 absolutely accurate. 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.

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 JCQ 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 (in some cases significantly later than 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.

There was also an issues with some centres not withdrawing candidates where work was being 'carried forward', or where parts of a folder had been completed with the idea that one piece, for example reading OR writing, could be 'carried forward'. A candidate must complete a full new folder if entering a resit.

Grade Boundaries

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