

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

November 2012

GCSE English (5EH03)
Creative English

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Publications Code UG033708

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General Overview

All of the candidates in this series were taking this module again and therefore coped well with the demands of the assessment criteria. The vast majority of candidates had clearly been well prepared by centres for this component and they engaged fully with the themes, tasks and texts provided.

Overall, most centres accurately applied standards for the various components of this Unit. Internal standardisation remains a vital part of the process which centres need to undertake, even when relatively small cohorts are involved. Attendance at regional standardising meetings by a representative of the English department, preferably the teacher with responsibility for GCSE/KS4, is linked to the internal standardising process. This has always been and remains the reason that Awarding Bodies strongly recommend that time is set aside to ensure robust internal standardising procedures are in place.

Unit Requirements

The unit is split into two elements: 'Speaking and Listening' and 'Reading and Writing'

For Speaking and Listening candidates must complete three tasks – Communicating and Adapting Language, Interacting and Responding and Creating and Sustaining Roles.

For Reading and Writing, centres and candidates have a choice of four themes to answer on set by Edexcel: Relationships, Clashes and Collisions, Somewhere, Anywhere and Taking a Stand.

Poetry (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 *or* a digital media response which demonstrates that they have read and understood the poems *or* a multi-modal response combining the previous options. For the chosen theme candidates respond to two poems which they can select from the Edexcel Poetry Anthology and one poem which is set by Edexcel and changes every year. They prepare by making notes and planning their response to the task.

The reading response must show that candidates can:

- read the poems with insight and engagement
- interpret the writers' ideas and perspective.

Creative Writing:

Candidates must complete one writing task on their *chosen theme*. For each theme, there is a choice of stimulus material which is designed to be used as a starting point. For three of the themes in this series, the stimulus material consists of a series of four photographs, and for one theme a digital video clip is provided. 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:

- Write clearly, effectively and imaginatively in a chosen form to engage the reader
- Ensure spelling, punctuation and grammatical structures are accurate and appropriate for purpose and effect

Poetry (Reading)

Most centres interpreted and applied the marking criteria accurately and consistently. At the top of Band 5, there were a number of candidates who produced detailed and original pieces of Poetry analysis. However, there were some issues in the application of marks around the band boundaries, specifically between Bands 3, 4 and 5. Band 3 responses are '*sound*' – they explain how the writer has used techniques to create effect, and support these points with specific examples. Band 4 responses are '*thorough*' – understanding is more developed and the response is sustained and consistent. For Band 5, candidates need to demonstrate '*perceptive*' understanding across all three poems with well selected and discriminating use of evidence. In some cases, centres identified explanations which were '*sound*' as '*thorough*', despite a lack of development and sustained support. Meanwhile, some responses worked through all three poems but were constrained by rigid adherence to the 'Point, Evidence, Explanation' structure, meaning that they were too pedestrian to be '*perceptive*'. Unlike Unit 1, there is no requirement for comparison in this unit. The key skills are engaging with the meaning of the poems and showing an understanding of the poets' choices of language and technique. In a small number of centres, candidates have clearly been very well-prepared to write about the poems, to the extent where 'over-preparation' seems to be an issue. These candidates tended to list the literary techniques employed, spotting examples of metaphors, alliteration and rhyme schemes but not commenting on how or why these devices were used, or on the effects created. Another issue was the over-use of contextual and biographical detail without ever really engaging with the language and meaning of the poems. The best responses, however, showed candidates engaging maturely and carefully with a range of different poems and often adding a personal comment about how the poem made them think and

feel, and demonstrating impressive understanding of how language was manipulated for effect.

Creative Writing

The application of the marking criteria for the writing task was mainly accurate. The main problem for a number of candidates was that they had not considered the audience for their writing or had tried to include enough plot material for a three volume novel in a task which covered two sides of A4.

Assessment criteria for AO3 (i and ii) were applied consistently in most cases at Band 5 and Bands 1 and 2. Marks at the boundary between Bands 3 and 4 were less secure. The main issue in this area was control. Band 3 specifies 'some evidence of crafting in the construction of sentences' and 'controlled paragraphing', whereas Band 4 specifies 'variety in the construction of sentences' and 'secure organisation'. At times, responses with little control of sentence structure or paragraphing were placed in Band 4 because some of the vocabulary choices were apt and effective. In such cases, centres need to consider the balance between all of the bullet points in the mark scheme.

Assessment criteria for AO3(iii) were applied consistently in most cases but some centres were lenient. For high achieving candidates in Bands 4 and 5, some centres tended to award 6 or 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. A useful reference point for punctuation seemed to be the accurate use of commas – frequently, responses with extensive comma splicing were awarded marks in Band 4, where 'precision' and 'control' are specified. In one extreme case, a response which contained one six line paragraph with only two punctuation marks (a comma and a full stop) and a following paragraph of equal length with only a full stop at the very end, was annotated as 'precise' and given a centre mark of 6.

Task Feedback

Poetry (Reading)

While all of the themes were covered by candidates in this series, 'Clashes and Collisions' remained the most popular, followed by 'Relationships.' A significant number of candidates responded to 'Somewhere, Anywhere' whilst relatively few chose 'Taking A Stand'. There was some evidence of differentiation in the choice of poems from the Anthology, although in many centres all candidates responded to the same three poems. It needs to be emphasised that the set poem is not intended to be 'unseen' at the point of assessment – candidates can

prepare on this poem in exactly the same way as they do for the Anthology poems.

For Clashes and Collisions, 'Exposure', 'Hitcher' and 'The Class Game' were most frequently used and for Relationships 'Valentine', 'Our Love Now' and 'One Flesh' were most popular. Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had engaged with the meaning and language of the poems, and supported their points with clear, well-selected textual references. In some cases, however, the use of literary terms became a straitjacket rather than a supportive framework, leading to a tendency to 'feature spot'. The use of 'Point, Evidence, Explanation' is helpful in allowing candidates to structure their writing, but as noted in the previous report, for students working in Band 5, there is a need to show perceptive and discriminating analysis, and for this purpose a fully conceptualised response is necessary, rather than a more mechanical PEE process.

Across all themes, responses to the Poetry task took the written form, with few, if any, digital or multi-modal responses submitted. Given the nature of this series and the pressures of time for candidates producing new responses for in order to retake a unit, this is understandable.

Creative Writing

As ever, this task produced a range of interesting responses. Many candidates had clearly enjoyed the writing process and moderators were impressed with the calibre of much of the work that they read. Although candidates do not have to use the same theme for the Poetry and the Creative Writing task, many centres choose to do so and again, 'Clashes and Collisions' was the most popular choice. Many responses to this task were first person accounts of London in the Blitz, showing some insight and understanding of feelings, ideas and experiences. The most successful responses focused on a short period of time, such as the immediate aftermath of an air raid, whilst those which attempted to cover the whole of the Blitz were less successful, as were those which became melodramatic and overwritten. Candidates often handled the first person voice very effectively, and wrote from a range of perspectives, including those of very young children. The Somewhere, Anywhere title of 'City of Towers' prompted a number of stories based on the events of 9/11, as well as general accounts of a day in New York. Again, the main factor in determining the quality of these responses tended to be the focus on creating specific voices and writing about short time scales. Candidates do best when they 'show' how characters are reacting and responding, rather than explicitly 'telling' the reader how they feel. While many candidates had, as noted above, focused clearly on voice in the Creative Writing response, they seemed to be less secure in their choice of audience. This is a key part of the assessment criteria and as such needs to be considered as candidates plan their writing.

It is worth noting that the Creative Writing response does not need to meet the 1,000 word limit – in fact, some of the more successful pieces were closer to half that length, but showed evidence of careful crafting by candidates, whereas some of the longer responses struggled to sustain their momentum.

Administration

As in the previous series, the process of moderation was somewhat affected by difficulties with administration. This time, the main problem was the use of incorrect cover sheets. Special cover sheets were issued for this series, asking candidates to sign to say that new work only was being submitted, and with an added section for centres to explain any significant discrepancy between Speaking and Listening and Reading and Writing marks.

Most centres did include the top and bottom marked candidates with their sample, but it is worth noting that if they are not part of the randomly selected sample, centres are asked to ensure that they are included when work is sent to the Moderator.

It is also worth considering how responses are annotated by teachers. In the first instance, moderators are looking to confirm centre marks. Where annotation is included, and is addressed to the moderator to indicate how marks have been arrived at, it considerably helps the process of re-marking. Centres will be aware that there are key words used in the Band descriptors. It is helpful if these are referenced in the annotation, but important that they are used accurately, and that the words used in annotation match the centre mark awarded – eg 'thorough explanation' on a piece with a mark of 17 in Band 4 for Poetry.

Finally, there were some centres where arithmetic errors had been made when totalling up the various components. In the worst case this had very seriously disadvantaged the students, who had marks entered on the system which were well below the actual marks given for the work. It is in the best interests of the candidates to ensure that somewhere in the system, an arithmetic check is made to ensure hard earned marks are not lost by administrative error. This will become even more important in future as marks for Speaking and Listening and Reading and Writing will need to be entered separately.

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Order Code UG033708 November 2012

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