

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

International GCSE and
The Edexcel Certificate
English Language (4EA0 and KEA0)
Paper 1

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General Overview

Section A: Reading

The passage studied in Section A was adapted from *Running for the Hills* by Horatio Clare and described the experiences of a family living in an isolated hilltop farm as a snow storm approaches. The passage proved to be accessible to almost all candidates, with very few experiencing any difficulties in reading comprehension.

Question 1 asked candidates to select and retrieve words and phrases used to describe the sounds made by the fire. They were able to select from a number of possible correct answers. Most scored well on this question. Those who scored less than full marks did so because they did not supply three responses or did not select text that described words and phrases that described sound.

Question 2 asked candidates to describe the character of Jenny, using their own words. This produced a full range of responses. Most were able to recognise a caring or maternal side to Jenny's character. Some were critical of Jenny and described her as being a bad mother as she left her children alone in the house with a large fire. All of these responses were credited.

Question 3 asked candidates to focus on the writer's technique. In this instance candidates were asked to focus upon how the writer creates interest and tension. Bullet points offered further support for structuring an answer around descriptions of the snow, the different reactions to the snow from adults and children and language. Weaker responses were often limited to a small number of points focusing on particular elements within the passage, such as going out to feed the sheep, or waking to find the house engulfed by snow. Many candidates recognised that the children's reaction to the snow was naïve, seeing it as a source of excitement and amazement whilst Jenny dreads and fears the snow, appreciating the dangers that it poses.

Having identified the key difference not all candidates used this insight to refer directly to the question and to explain how this is used by the writer to further develop interest and suspense. This is indicative of a general discriminator in this answer where weaker responses struggle to find relevant text to comment upon, others find the relevant text but are less able to use the text to craft an explanation whilst the stronger responses use textual references which are apt and carefully chosen to demonstrate skills of analysis and interpretation in evaluating the writer's techniques which directly respond to the focus of the question. Linked text and paraphrase does not constitute an explanation. Better answers recognised the manner in which the early section is about foreboding before the storm, based upon previous experience of fierce snowstorms, whilst

the suspense during the actual storm is whether the house will withstand the onslaught and keep Jenny and the children safe. The end of the passage contains further suspense about how the family will escape from the house and what damage the snow may have done. The use of metaphor and in particular the extended metaphor of battles and conflict was a key feature as was the deliberate use of paragraph breaks to create and heighten suspense.

Section B: Reading and Writing

Question 4

Section B was based upon the pre-prepared text from the Edexcel Anthology for International GCSE English Language and Literature, *A Game of Polo with a Headless Goat* and focused upon how the writer shares her experience of being at the race. As a prepared text almost all candidates seemed to have a sound knowledge of the text and the focus upon the experiences of the writer was a familiar one to most candidates. Weaker responses were often narratives that did not focus upon the question, or did not have sufficient range. Many recognised that the writer experiences three races: the donkey race; the race to get the pictures taken and that of the spectators who race to keep up with the donkeys. Stronger responses were those that were able to detail a wide range of her experiences with some focusing upon her viewpoint as an outsider, trying to appreciate the experiences of a different culture.

Question 5

The writing task in Section B was a close follow on to the reading task in section B and asked candidates to write a description of an event or occasion that was important to them. This title produced a wide range of responses with many using the suggestions made in the passage to write about sporting events they had witnessed or taken part in while for many others it was about birthday's, weddings and other family occasions. As a title it was accessible to almost all candidates. Weaker responses were often incomplete, communicating at a basic level that showed little awareness of the reader. Better responses wrote with a skilful command of language and technique that recognised the need to communicate emotion and relationship as well as event and activity.

Section C: Writing

Question 6

The activity of writing a letter to a newspaper explaining how your local area could be improved for young people proved to be accessible to most candidates.

Some candidates are not timing their responses appropriately and as a result are not giving sufficient time to section C, which is worth one third of the marks for this paper. This question produced many heartfelt and passionate responses with candidates showing a genuine interest in improving their local area. Weaker responses were often brief and tended to be limited in their ability to clearly express their ideas, often not making good use of the bullet pointed list intended to help candidates. Weaker responses were often lacking in paragraphing and a sense of structure. In contrast more able responses were able to demonstrate an understanding of how to create and sustain a piece of writing that ranged widely but was thematically linked and one which was consistently accurate and sharply focused upon the needs of the reader.

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