

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
in English Language A (4EA0)
Paper 02

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Overview

IGCSE 4EA0 Paper 2 is a paper lasting one hour and thirty minutes. Question 1 is a reading question based on the Edexcel Anthology and in June 2016 candidates had to respond to the story, "A Hero". Question 2 is a writing question and candidates have to complete one written piece from a choice of three. The choices for June 2016 were a letter advising a project leader on fundraising, a talk on the importance of teamwork and a short story with the title, "The Promise".

Examiners believed this was a very reasonable paper which gave candidates of varying abilities the opportunity to demonstrate their reading and writing skills. Candidates of all abilities responded appropriately to the short story and the question on it. The writing questions also elicited responses from candidates with a wide range of abilities.

Reading

Question 1

In general most candidates followed the rubric and attempted most parts. The vast majority of candidates seemed to understand the text and engage with it on some level. However a significant minority of candidates did not fully touch upon the use of language, simply stating that the writer had used literary devices such as similes and onomatopoeia, without explanation and support from the text. The successful candidates were those who explained the use of language when exploring the previous three bullet points. These candidates were more likely to score higher. There was a clear gap between those candidates who paraphrased from the text and those who quoted from the text with clear explanations. Stronger candidates analysed the effect of language for each of the bullet points. However, middle to lower ability students seemed to leave the analysis of language to the end (when addressing the fourth bullet point), resulting in many of them listing the features, rather than analysing them in depth. Often, the first three bullet points were dealt with in a more narrative way by weaker candidates. For this question, it has been the convention for the bullet point about language to be the final bullet point, but this is not intended to send the message that they should leave their comments on language until the end. The more successful candidates tended to integrate their comments on language, structure and form into their responses to the other bullet points.

It is worth mentioning that some examiners noted that they came across fewer candidates who relied slavishly on the bullet points this year. Most were able to dig into task embedding their overall ideas and contextualising these into appropriate responses on the task. Overall, the majority of the responses were between Level 3 to Level 5, with candidates demonstrating sound engagement with the text, clear understanding of language and making sound connections between particular techniques used by the writer in presentation of ideas, themes and settings.

Candidates who were not awarded marks in Level 4 or Level 5 were largely let down by not addressing language appropriately. Conversely, relatively fewer answers fell into the Level 1 band than in previous years, because there was less reliance on simple re-telling of the text. Higher order candidates understood the irony of the title and its relation to the conclusion. They also appreciated the effect of structure, as the initially unpromising situation from the boy's point of view developed accidentally to his advantage.

Writing

Some examiners felt that question 2C was the most accessible to the candidates. Perhaps this was due to their training or their having practised writing stories rather than writing in other registers.

Question 2a

Fewer candidates chose this item and it is a shame as the majority used their knowledge of vocabulary to write their letters. The range and register was almost always correct. Examiners noted some very good examples in response to this question. Most structured their responses appropriately as a letter and understood the need to attempt to use formal language. In weaker candidates, some of the paragraphs were a little under-developed. Candidates were mostly successful with this question. Most candidates had at least a sound understanding of the structure of a letter, but weaker responses did not vary the structure of paragraphing or sentences. Although weaker candidates performed better on this Q2 option than on the others, and understood how to structure a letter, there seemed to be some uncertainty about how to answer the question precisely. Some candidates did not understand that the word 'however' should be used to introduce a new sentence, not as a connective.

Question 2b

This was a more popular question. Most candidates were able to choose the right style and register to reflect the specified context of a talk to a group of young people. Structure and expression were mainly adequate with awareness of audience demonstrated in most responses. Some of the writing was very engaging with candidates showing deep awareness of sentence variety and using a wide range of punctuation to support ideas.

The most perceptive answers recognised that teamwork is not suited to all personalities and balanced personal experience with argument and cogent conclusions. Examiners noted the tendency among weaker candidates to paragraph 'mechanically' instead of grasping the idea of introducing new topics and linking these coherently. Some candidates' answers became repetitive and would have benefited from more consideration about the structure of the responses.

Question 2c

Some examiners were very impressed with how some students were able to interpret the topic and write from divergent points. Narrative styles varied a lot and many were able to maintain the narrative from start to finish.

Overall, there is consistency with structure on this task. Some of the stories were perceptive and controlled, with an impressive attempt to entertain.

This was the most popular question and many examiners reported that they enjoyed reading all the stories. The title of "The Promise" was very open and gave an opportunity for a wide selection of options. However, there was scope for improvement in the use of punctuation when it comes to dialogue.

The stories were very varied and some were very interesting and entertaining. Stronger candidates used some excellent descriptive techniques and incorporated these well into their writing. There were many candidates, however, who did not place enough emphasis on the craft of their writing. For some, the narrative detail was given more attention than their use of descriptive techniques, which prevented them gaining the higher marks. Weaker candidates did not focus enough on accuracy of punctuation and sentence structure. Candidates were mostly successful in the writing of "The Promise". Many responses focused on themes around broken promises. More successful candidates had accurate spelling and grammar. Weaker candidates struggled to separate their writing into purposeful paragraphing, and found it difficult to distinguish between different people speaking in dialogues.

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