

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
in English Language B (4EB0)
Paper 01

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Introduction

The extracts were accessible across the full range of abilities and enabled candidates to respond appropriately. Examiners commented on the engagement with the topics that the candidates showed. The full range of ability was seen in the responses.

Better candidates were able to engage fully with both extracts and respond with sensitivity and fluency. In their writing they produced lively and confident responses which were well controlled and accurate. Weaker candidates sometimes struggled to understand the extracts. Their writing lacked coherence and the use of idiomatic English.

Examiners commented that this series there seemed to be an increase in the number of candidates who copy out all or considerable parts of the extracts in response to Question 11. This can never be a successful way to respond as the candidate is required to produce their own work.

Fewer examiners commented on prepared essays in response to Question 12.

Some responses to Questions 11 and 12 lacked paragraphing. Candidates must understand that the lack of effective paragraphing will limit the success of the response.

There was some good evidence of teaching and learning in the responses to this exam.

Section A (Questions 1-10)

Questions 1-9 are short answer questions which require candidates to locate and retrieve relevant information. Some questions required candidates to use their own words. Question 10 is longer, requiring candidates to give a personal response and justify it with references to the text.

Some candidates ignored the line references in some questions. Candidates should be reminded that line references are to enable them to focus on the correct part of the text to retrieve the relevant information for a successful response. Responses that refer to material outside the line references will not be successful. Examiners also commented that a few candidates used Text 1 to answer the questions on Text 2.

Questions 1, 2, 4, 6 & 7 generally posed little difficulty for candidates who were able to retrieve the correct information from the passage. For Question 2 some candidates unfortunately offered the examples given in the first bullet point as three separate examples thus losing some marks. Examiners commented that in responses to Questions 3, 8 & 9 many candidates achieved full marks and responded mostly in their own words but weaker candidates tended to copy directly from the passage with little attempt to use their own words. Examiners commented that there was some direct lifting from the texts in better responses although there was also some evidence of candidates attempting to re-work the texts.

Examiners were pleased to see responses that used synonyms and were able to change the word order of the details to show understanding. Centres need to work with candidates to develop their vocabulary and ensure that candidates realise they must attempt to produce responses to these questions using their own words. In response to Question 8 a number of candidates misunderstood the reference to online exams and assumed that this was a reference to the USA rather than to the UK. Some responses to Question 9 demonstrated misunderstanding or misreading of the extract with a number of candidates who did not understand the point about 'a whole generation may be able to read but not write by hand' (the final bullet point). Some candidates wrote much more than was necessary to achieve full marks. While it is understandable that candidates wish to ensure they achieve the maximum mark, candidates need to be sure they are not spending too much time on these questions.

Question 5 produced a variety of responses with many candidates able to provide points but not all were successful in offering valid support for them. Better candidates were able to use their own words to identify the points and provide appropriate quotations from the text in support. However weaker candidates often simply quoted from the text for both point and support or re-stated the quotations they had chosen. The question clearly stated that the points should be made in the candidates' own words. A number of candidates used points that did not match the evidence in the text. A number of candidates simply used quotations from the passage with no accompanying point. There was evidence of some confusion with candidates sometimes ignoring the line references, only making points about technology, and sometimes misunderstanding the extract e.g. commenting that handwriting was threatened by technology but not continuing to read the remainder of the sentence 'long before ...carried a phone.' Similarly not enough clarity was shown about the personalisation of typing (not handwriting) by using emoticons. It was felt by examiners that the responses to this question were weaker than in previous series. Centres need to ensure that candidates do not respond to the first part of this question by copying the passage but by making the point in their own words and then supporting it with a relevant reference from the passage.

Question 10 provided varied responses with most candidates able to make some sort of choice but only the more able were able to provide developed ideas and close reference to the texts that the task required. There were responses to this task showing that candidates had been well prepared for this question and had a secure understanding of what is required. Better candidates were able to make a clear, thoughtful personal choice and provide good textual support. Successful responses were well structured with two clear points supported by evidence for the chosen text and then one point against the other text, again supported by evidence. The better responses referred to the writers' techniques and supported the choice they made with good evidence in the form of quotations and developed explanations. However there were some rather vague reasons given to support the choice made e.g. '...written in a way that makes me want to keep on reading.' Some candidates listed the difficult words that they did not understand, or confessed they did not understand the text as a reason why they did not choose it.

The most popular reason for choosing Text One was because it had more facts and Text Two because it was a more personal account. Examiners commented that although candidates were able to respond clearly on their chosen text, they often did not provide a clear reason and support for the text they had not chosen. There were some candidates who only responded on their chosen text which limited their achievement. A number of candidates summarised the texts and so missed the focus of the question. Examiners commented that some responses were content based rather than analysing the impact of the texts. The weakest candidates simply copied sections of the text. Some examiners felt this was answered better than in previous series. There were some candidates who confused Text 1 and 2 and, while examiners marked these responses positively, it would be helpful if candidates could check carefully to ensure there is no confusion. Centres must continue to work with candidates to make sure that they have a clear understanding of valid ways to respond to written texts.

Section B (Question 11)

There was some evidence of good teaching and learning in the responses to this section.

There was some evidence of planning which is to be encouraged. This helped candidates to focus and organise their ideas effectively. Lengthy plans and rough drafts are not, however, a good use of time.

Many candidates understood the requirement of the task however not all were able to adopt an appropriate register for a website contribution. More successful responses wrote lively, engaging pieces, using a range of features and demonstrating sustained awareness of audience and purpose. The most successful were those who shared the writers' concerns and could offer anecdotes about their own experiences at first hand and were able to write detailed rather than generalised responses. There was often a clear awareness of the need to adopt an appropriate tone and register. Better responses were lively and used appropriately informal touches. Some responses appeared to be a formal speech or a straightforward essay. Some candidates had problems sustaining the required register for a website contribution throughout their response, often starting reasonably but failing to maintain the appropriate register. Some candidates also referred to the texts in their contribution in a way which suggested they had lost focus on the task.

Most candidates focused on the suggested bullet points rather than using their own thoughts and ideas. A number of candidates did not cover the three bullet points, commonly missing the last bullet point (how technology has affected written communication) or focusing extensively on the second bullet point (why handwriting is important). Candidates must try to cover all three bullet points otherwise their achievement for AO1 will be limited. The bullet points provided guidance for content and structure which was helpful for some candidates.

Many examiners commented that a significant number of candidates directly lifted content from the original texts which affected the overall quality of the response. In some cases there was a limited attempt to re-work the material, in others whole sentences or paragraphs were simply copied from each text in turn. The task requires candidates to demonstrate reading skills and the ability to adapt the material given for a specified audience and purpose. Centres need to remind candidates that copying from the texts cannot be rewarded. This was more of a problem than in previous series. Language controls were not always secure, especially grammar, and some responses lacked paragraphing. The three bullet points provide a rudimentary structure which should help students to use basic paragraphing. Centres need to remind candidates that lack of accurate paragraphing will limit their achievement.

Section C (Question 12)

Examiners commented on how much they enjoyed reading the responses in this section.

There was evidence of some good preparation and teaching in this section.

There was some evidence of planning which is to be encouraged. A short plan will help candidates focus on the task but lengthy plans and draft responses are not a good use of time. Candidates should be encouraged to plan their response in the answer booklet rather than on separate additional sheets.

12b was the most popular choice.

Question 12a was the least popular choice. There were a few well written responses with ambitious vocabulary and clear and developed arguments. Most candidates found ways to structure and organise their ideas, and a number made some relevant and developed links between the notion of first impressions and what they perceived as society's emphasis on appearances. The majority of the responses seemed to discuss the ideal that 'first impressions shouldn't matter' and then discuss the fact that often they do. Most responses discussed obvious issues e.g. job interviews, first dates, meeting a partner's family. Weaker responses tended to be superficial and lacked sufficiently developed ideas. A few of the responses seem to have been rather limited suggesting candidates had not chosen well. A small number of candidates wrote narrative responses losing focus on the task. Some examiners commented that, although there were clear ideas, some responses lacked organisation and structure, limiting the response. Better responses were fully controlled with accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar; however the weaker responses had poor language controls and weak paragraphing. Centres need to ensure that candidates who choose this option are well prepared in argumentative, discursive and rhetorical techniques and are able to develop their ideas effectively.

Question 12b produced some original ideas with a wide range of interpretations of the title. There were some candidates who chose to interpret the idea of the lost key metaphorically and some of these

responses were very powerfully written and impressively structured and developed. However, many of the more obvious interpretations gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate the strengths of their writing. Examiners commented on how lively and interesting some of the responses were. Better responses demonstrated a secure and sustained awareness of purpose and it was clear that the candidates had consciously crafted the organisation of the narrative. Some responses focused on the consequences of losing a physical key, while others interpreted 'key' with reference to important people or things – parents, happiness etc. A couple of responses were highly imaginative ('the lost key' as narrator). Weaker responses tended to be mundane and lacked detail or struggled to include the idea of a key at all, whilst some candidates started off with overcomplicated ideas and ran out of steam. One examiner commented that some candidates used ideas from books or films. Better responses were able to create tension and use effective description and dialogue with good technical accuracy. Weaker responses had poor language controls and limited and underdeveloped ideas. Centres need to ensure candidates have a secure understanding of narrative techniques and the ability to develop a coherent personal response.

Question 12c produced some well written responses that were fully focused on the task, effectively describing their best friend. This task evoked some effusive description; it also evoked some heart-rending tales, some very effective and very moving. Some of the best responses included writing that was fresh, believable, vigorous and engaging. Some examiners commented that the responses tended to be sentimental and occasionally lapsed into clichés and stereotypes. One examiner commented 'a number of paragraphs contained so many glowing superlatives that the saintly qualities of the 'best friend' in question were quite amazing. However, it is important to remember that many of these candidates are teenagers!' Some responses adopted interesting and unusual approaches e.g. the candidate who described his computer, and made a sound (and rather sad) case for calling it his best friend. Most candidates wrote about their best friend in real life (commonly peers, siblings, parents or teachers). Weaker candidates tended to list qualities or physical features of their friend in responses that tended to be pedestrian and lacked detail. Better responses had full control of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Weaker candidates had poor language controls and weak paragraphing. Centres need to ensure candidates are aware of the techniques they can use in descriptive writing and also ensure candidates develop a varied vocabulary and sentence structure.

Quality of Written Communication (QWC)

This is assessed in Questions 11 and 12.

Better responses were accurate using a wide range of grammatical constructions, punctuation and vocabulary.

There was evidence of good spelling and reasonably accurate punctuation but examiners, again, commented on candidates who had problems with grammar and expression. Some of this was unidiomatic English but there

were also problems with tenses and sentence structure. Examiners also commented that a number of candidates used the lower case for the first person pronoun 'I'. These problems limited the effectiveness of the communication.

Centres need to focus on developing accurate and effective grammatical structuring and idiomatic English to enable candidates to express themselves clearly and access the higher mark bands.

Summary

Most successful candidates:

- Read the extracts with insight and engagement
- Selected relevant points in response to the reading questions
- Used their own words in response to questions that required them
- Wrote clearly with a good sense of audience and purpose in an appropriate register (for a website contribution) in response to Q11
- Engaged the reader with writing that was well structured with fully-developed ideas (Q12)
- Used ambitious vocabulary
- Wrote with accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Least successful candidates:

- Did not engage fully with the extracts
- Did not find enough relevant points in response to the reading questions
- Did not attempt to use their own words in response to questions that required them
- Did not write in an appropriate register in response to Q11
- Were not able to select and adapt relevant information for Q11
- Sometimes copied the original texts (Q11)
- Were not able to sustain and develop ideas in response to Section C (Q12)
- Did not demonstrate accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

