

Examiners' Report November 2007

IGCSE

IGCSE English Language (4355)

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4355/1F

Section A: Reading

Q1 - Q6

The information text about life in the last ice age was very accessible to candidates and few candidates had problems understanding most of the passage or the questions. The first four questions were essentially factual and tested skills of selection and retrieval of information and were answered correctly by the majority of candidates. Q5 and particularly Q6 were more challenging and proved to be key discriminators. Candidates scored highly on Q6 if they were able to show some appreciation of how the writer had taken an information text and made it vivid and realistic to a modern reader through such methods as the use of the present tense, the opening as narrative and the use of telling detail.

Section B: Reading and Writing

Q7

This question was based on *Impact Alert: Asteroids*, a pre-studied text in the Anthology. Most candidates seemed to have been well prepared and to have an understanding of the passage. Better responses addressed all the bullet points and were able to demonstrate understanding by making several points and using appropriate textual references in support of ideas. In particular, stronger candidates were able to pick out key points of language usage and show a clear understanding of them. Weaker responses tended to repeat part of the original text or failed to focus on the question.

Q8

This produced strong responses from a number of candidates with a wide range of views being put forward. Better responses demonstrated an understanding of structure through paragraphing and an awareness of audience and purpose through language choice and intended effect. Weaker responses often repeated parts of the text without assimilating it into the required form.

Section C: Writing

Q9

This was a question which appealed to most candidates and on which they held strong views. Many chose to present a single side of the arguments whilst others recognised some opposing points of view. Stronger responses were able to explain their views clearly whilst weaker responses were often brief and failed to communicate effectively.

4355/2H

Section A: Reading

Q1 - Q3

The passage from Christy Browne's *My Left Foot* proved to be accessible and engaging for all, although some had problems determining Christy's gender. The first two questions were a useful exploration of Christy's life and condition, before reaching Q3 which was the key discriminator. Candidates should be reminded to pay particular attention to the wording of the question which specifically focused upon tension and how it is created and maintained. A few candidates ignored the question and directed themselves only to addressing the three bullet points. Without the focus of the question the bullet points do not lead the candidate to produce an answer that has coherence and focus. As a result not as many gained high marks on Q3 as they could have done. Candidates should use the mark tariff to help them judge the amount of detail that a question asks of them and tailor their response accordingly. Some were brief and lacking in detail. Weaker responses sometimes made unsupported assertions about Christy and his family or repeated sections of the original text. Stronger responses genuinely focused upon demonstrating an understanding of the writer's technique. These answers were able to recognise the use of punctuation, the use of imagery and emotive language.

Section B: Reading and Writing

Q4

This was based upon the pre-prepared text from the Edexcel Anthology, *Explorers, or Boys Messing About?* Almost all candidates had some knowledge of the text and almost all were able to recognise that the writer's opinion was a negative or critical one. Stronger responses were those that were able to focus upon the question and explain how the writer is able to outline a range of opinions whilst seeming to simply present the facts. These candidates were able to discern the writer's opinion of the explorers as being immature, foolhardy, farcically comical, lacking in skill or understanding of the terrain they were in and indifferent to the cost and massive inconvenience that they were causing to others. Such candidates cited the strategic and telling use of the word "Despite .." and the use of experts as testimony to support the writer's opinions. Weaker responses focused upon a narrow range of points or failed to explain what the writer's opinion was, merely citing parts of the original text.

Q5

This produced a range of responses. Remembering that this was intended to be an eyewitness account, the better responses were able to demonstrate an understanding of form and audience and intended effect. Such responses considered aspects of paragraphing and sentence structure. Weaker responses often assumed a shared knowledge of the original text and often repeated sections of it in their answer.

Section C: Writing

Q6

The subject of growing up and leaving childhood behind struck a chord with most candidates, whatever their age, and produced many lively and engaging responses. The better responses were those that demonstrated they were focused on the purpose of explanation, and were able to develop wide-ranging and detailed explanations. Many of these were skilfully crafted and often quite poignant in their evocation of a lost childhood or in trepidation of the adult world that they revealed. Weaker responses were sometimes brief and often consisted of a list approach with a limited range of ideas and a lack of clarity in explaining their thoughts and feelings.

4355/03

Overall the standard of the paper was very similar to those used in the past. There were no exceptional features, except that the candidature was smaller than the summer's entry.

Question 1: Reading

Questions, which are based on poetry texts in the Anthology, tend to produce briefer, more focused examination answers and this was no exception. The bullet points worked well in supporting the main question and stimulating candidates to write about appropriate aspects of the text.

The most successful answers were those which addressed the central question and explored how the poem conveyed feelings of being lonely and mistreated. The final bullet point was also a key discriminator; those who were able to analyse in some detail how the language of the poem suggested desolation scored highly.

Candidates should be reminded to address the question. There were various kinds of irrelevance; at the lowest level of attainment were those who simply copied or paraphrased the content; moving up the scale of attainment were those answers which used the bullet points as questions in their own right, unrelated to the central question; then came those candidates who adapted the central question to fit their own answer rather than the one actually set.

Question 2: Writing

The writing questions also produced some good responses. All topics were accessible and significant numbers of candidates attempted each, though Q2(a) and Q2(b) were the most popular choices. The content of answers was typically good, as was the focus on the key triplet word, but the quality and accuracy of expression was less satisfying. Insecure technical, grammatical and idiomatic command weakened many otherwise effective responses. The freshness and individuality of many of the responses suggested that candidates benefited from this.

Q2(a)

This question produced some lively and engaging answers. The best responses were well developed and structured, using verbal links between paragraphs. Racism, global warming and imbalances in wealth were the issues that mainly concerned candidates and there were many idealistic schemes to tackle them.

Q2(b)

This was another popular question and, overall, it was well handled. Features of more successful responses included two entries of reasonably substantial length; a contrast of mood and mindset between the two entries and/or a development between them; a convincingly imagined and conveyed setting; and, most importantly, a confessional style which was subtle enough to suggest the thoughts and feelings of the diary author. Weaker responses tended to be brief, sometimes consisting of a single entry, or showed little development between the two entries; they also failed to engage, much less sustain, the interest of the reader.

Q2(c)

This question produced some of the strongest and some of the weakest responses. At the top end of the range were candidates who made out convincing cases for a grant in well structured, formally expressed letters, which were both reasoned and persuasive. Weaker responses were sometimes confused which suggested that the candidate had not fully understood the question.

Statistics for IGCSE English Language 4355

Option 1: 1F, 03

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|----|---|---|----|----|----|----|---|
| Grade | A* | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| Boundary Mark | | | | 53 | 41 | 29 | 18 | 7 |

Option 2: 1F, 04, 05

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|----|---|---|----|----|----|----|---|
| Grade | A* | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| Boundary Mark | | | | 54 | 42 | 30 | 18 | 6 |

Option 3: 2H, 03

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|
| Grade | A* | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| Boundary Mark | 74 | 64 | 54 | 45 | 34 | 28 | | |

Option 4: 2H, 04, 05

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|
| Grade | A* | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| Boundary Mark | 75 | 65 | 55 | 46 | 36 | 31 | | |

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