

Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2009

IGCSE

IGCSE English Language (4355) Paper 2H

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Section A: Reading

Questions 1-4

The passage studied in Section A was the story of a school inspector who visits a school in a depressing and dirty inner-city environment. The passage proved to be accessible to almost all candidates, with very few experiencing any difficulties in reading comprehension and most sympathising for the schoolboy featured in the passage. For Question 1 almost all candidates were able to find the relevant words and phrases to describe, though some did not offer even the briefest of explanations. Despite that, most candidates scored well on this question. Question 2 was a straightforward question answered well by most. Candidates would do well to read the question carefully as it asked for impressions of school life at the school back in 1901, not in the present day of the school inspector. Those who scored less than full marks did so because they did not focus their answer on the historical, rather than the contemporary experience. Question 3 was a useful discriminator and provided a range of responses, many recognising the inspector as sensitive and caring, others seeing him as professional and conscientious. The key discriminator in Section A is the higher mark tariff Question 4 and its focus on the writer's technique. In this instance candidates were asked to focus upon how the writer creates atmosphere and a sense of place. Bullet points offered further support for structuring an answer. Weaker responses were often limited to a small number of points, some writing very little about the people and their relationships, which is crucial in creating atmosphere. Some candidates were able to find the relevant text but were less able to use it to craft an explanation. Linked text and paraphrase does not constitute an explanation. Better answers made much of the contrast between the two schools in the passage and in particular upon the pathos created for the schoolboy when we first meet him as a frightened boy, attempting to flee the school, and later expanded upon when we read his piece of writing, replete with errors of spelling and punctuation, which is dismissed so callously by the teacher. In all this the inspector is a valiant figure, braving the displeasure of the eccentric and lazily misnamed Mr Swan, and always treating the downtrodden with respect and interest.

Section B: Reading and Writing

Question 5

Section B was based upon the pre-prepared text from the Edexcel Anthology, *Touching the Void* and focused upon the differences between Joe and Simon's reaction and how this is brought out in their writing style. As a prepared text almost all candidates seemed to have a sound knowledge of the text and the focus upon the two viewpoints cannot have been an unfamiliar one. Weaker responses did not recognise the need to comment on both writers and were often narratives that did not focus upon the question, or did not have a sufficient grasp of how the writer was demonstrating character through aspects of style, such as Simon's use of complex sentences, indicating his calmness and control. Better responses were those that were able to focus upon the language and the techniques used, recognising the manner in which character and style become one and the same, seeing in Joe's emotive language and use of repetition, a character in the midst of a physically painful crisis, responding to what is happening now, unable to focus at first on what happen later.

Question 6

The writing task in Section B asked candidates to write a letter to a newspaper giving their views upon banning dangerous sports. This was accessible to all candidates and cannot have been an unfamiliar writing task related to this and other texts in the anthology. Weaker responses were often incomplete, communicating at a basic level that showed little awareness of the reader and the context in which they would read the letter. Better responses wrote with a skillful command of language and technique that did not just explain their views but sought to persuade the reader to share the same views by using a range of techniques.

Section C: Writing

Question 7

What schools should do to prepare young people for life in the 21st century was something that almost all candidates were able to express a view about. Most accepted the premise that schools were not preparing young well and that significant change was needed, a small minority argued against the basic thrust of the quotation. Many responses regarded the impact of technology in the 21st century as being significant and looked to schools to improve facilities and access. A reasonably large number looked to schools to adequately prepare young people in a social sense for living and working with those of the opposite sex. Weaker responses were often brief and tended to be limited in their ability to clearly express their ideas. Some weaker responses had little to say whilst others offered a list approach with little or no real explanation. The needs of the reader were not adequately considered. 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.

iGCSE English Language:

Option 1

03 WRITTEN ALTERNATIVE

1F WRITTEN PAPER 1F

Paper No	C	D	E	F	G
Lwr	57	47	38	29	20

Option 2

04 WRITTEN COURSEWORK

05 SPEAKING & LISTENING CSWK

1F WRITTEN PAPER 1F

Paper No	C	D	E	F	G
Lwr	57	47	35	24	13

Option 3

03 WRITTEN ALTERNATIVE

2H WRITTEN PAPER 2H

Paper No	*	A	B	C	D	E
Lwr	77	68	59	51	42	37

Option 4

04 WRITTEN COURSEWORK

05 SPEAKING & LISTENING CSWK

2H WRITTEN PAPER 2H

Paper No	*	A	B	C	D	E
Lwr	82	72	62	53	42	36

Option 5

04T TRANSFERRED WRITTEN CSWK.

05T TRANSF.SPEAK.& LIST.CSWK

1F WRITTEN PAPER 1F

Paper No	C	D	E	F	G
Lwr	59	47	35	24	13

Option 6

04T TRANSFERRED WRITTEN CSWK.

05T TRANSF.SPEAK.& LIST.CSWK

2H WRITTEN PAPER 2H

Paper No	*	A	B	C	D	E
Lwr	82	72	62	53	42	36

Note: Grade boundaries may vary from year to year and from subject to subject, depending on the demands of the question paper.

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