

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2010

IGCSE

IGCSE English Language (4355) Paper 2H

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Section A: Reading

Questions 1-4

The passage studied in Section A was taken from Gerald Durrell's, *My Family and Other Animals* and dealt with an incident when a scorpion, smuggled into the house by the author, disrupts lunch for the whole family. The passage proved to be accessible to almost all candidates, with very few experiencing any difficulties in reading comprehension. Question 1 was a low tariff question done well by almost all candidates. Candidates were required to provide the names of two plants for the single mark, but almost all were able to find two of them. Most candidates scored well on Question 1. Question 2 asked candidates to identify two comparisons used by the writer. They were able to select from a number of possible correct answers. Those who scored less than full marks did so because they did not supply two responses or did not understand the concept of comparison and therefore selected incorrect sections of text. Question 3 asked what we learn about the boy and produced a range of responses. Most recognised the boy's inquisitiveness and his caring nature though some saw the boy as cruel for keeping the scorpion in a matchbox. All of these responses were credited. 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 tension. Bullet points offered further support for structuring an answer around atmosphere, character and language. Weaker responses were often limited to a small number of points focusing almost exclusively on the incidents around the dinner table, rather than the incidents that both precede and follow that. Many candidates recognised some sense of confusion at the dinner table but did not always relate this back to the focus upon tension. As has happened in the past, some candidates were able to find the relevant text but were less able to use the text to craft an explanation. Better answers recognised the manner in which tension is built slowly in the initial sections where the reader is introduced to the scorpions and the danger that they represent. Some recognised the writer's ability to create humour through the tension and likened the antics at the table to slapstick as each of the characters reacts to the scorpion in their own way. The use of strongly emotive language was a key feature as was the deliberate use of paragraph breaks to create and heighten suspense.

Section B: Reading and Writing

Question 5

Section B was based upon the pre-prepared text from the Edexcel Anthology, *Shopping for Romanian babies* and focused upon the writer and what we learn about the people she meets, and the places she visits. As a prepared text almost all candidates seemed to have a sound knowledge of the text and the focus upon people and places 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. Stronger responses were those that were able to detail the wide range of people and to compare and contrast the experiences of the plush offices with the squalid conditions of the orphanage.

Question 6

The writing task in Section B was a close follow on to the reading task in section B and asked candidates to imagine that a family they know is thinking of adopting a child from another country and what the advantages and disadvantages might be for the child and for the family. Although this may have been an unusual task and possibly not one that some had prepared for, it proved to be accessible to all candidates. Many made direct links with media reports of celebrities adopting children from abroad and had clear views about this. 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 did not just explain their views but often sought to persuade the reader to share the same views by using a range of techniques.

Section C: Writing

Question 7

The activity of imagining that your school or college had been awarded a large sum of money to spend and then being asked to write outlining your ideas on how the money should be spent is a task that has been used by examination boards in the past and was familiar to most candidates. Many approached the task by focusing on the facilities, with sports and ICT facilities featuring in many answers. Those that explored the widening of student opportunities often took their essays into less predictable territory. 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. 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: 4355 Grade Boundaries

Option 1 - 03, 1F

| C | D | E | F |
|----|----|----|----|
| 59 | 49 | 39 | 29 |

Option 2 - 04, 05, 1F

| C | D | E | F |
|----|----|----|----|
| 60 | 47 | 34 | 22 |

Option 3 - 03, 2H

| * | A | B | C | D | E |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 76 | 68 | 60 | 53 | 45 | 41 |

Option 4 - 04, 05, 2H

| * | A | B | C | D | E |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 80 | 71 | 62 | 54 | 43 | 37 |

Option 5 - 04T, 05T, 1F

| C | D | E | F |
|----|----|----|----|
| 60 | 47 | 34 | 22 |

Option 6 - 04T, 05T, 2H

| * | A | B | C | D | E |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 80 | 71 | 62 | 54 | 43 | 37 |

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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