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## **PE Report 4EB1/01 November 2024**

### **Introduction**

The texts about celebrations were accessible across the full range of abilities and examiners commented that candidates were able to engage with the tasks and respond appropriately.

There was evidence of some good teaching and learning in preparation for this examination in the responses seen and some candidates seemed well prepared on the whole. However examiners did comment that a significant number of responses to Question 3 and Question 6 did not focus on the writers' techniques and their intended effects, instead describing or re-telling the content of the texts. While examiners saw some good responses across all the questions, several examiners commented that there were fewer higher-level responses than in previous series, despite the accessibility of the texts.

Successful candidates were able to engage fully with both texts and their responses demonstrated exploration and sometimes analysis. Their writing responses were engaging and effective. They were well-controlled and accurate.

Less successful candidates sometimes struggled to understand the passages and the questions. Their writing was often brief or lacked coherence and had weak language controls.

There were some candidates who made references to the pictures in their responses to Question 3, 6 and 7. This is not a valid way to respond to the texts as the pictures are not language or structural devices chosen for effect by the writers. A small number of candidates did not attempt Question 7, suggesting that they may have had problems with timing.

There were some candidates who copied out all, or considerable parts, of the extracts in response to Question 8. This is not a successful way to respond as candidates are required to produce their own work and show the ability to adapt the original texts for a different audience and purpose.

There was some evidence of planning and proofreading which is to be encouraged. Some examiners commented that candidates did not always plan responses to Sections B and C and plans might have benefitted them. Candidates should be encouraged to plan their response in the answer booklet rather than on separate additional sheets.

There were some responses to Questions 9 in particular, that had evidence of learned templates and inappropriately sophisticated and unhelpful vocabulary. There was also evidence of learned responses being used in response to Question 10 (in some cases nearly identical). Centres should not encourage candidates to use learned templates or responses because this approach does not allow candidates to demonstrate their own skills and will limit their achievement.

## **Section A (Questions 1-7)**

This section consists of two short retrieval questions and a question on the writer's use of language and structure to create effects on each text and a question requiring candidates to compare the two texts.

### **Question 1**

This is a straightforward question on Text One which does not require candidates to use their own words.

The majority of candidates responded correctly identifying points such as: 'the first reference to a birthday is in the Bible', 'the first recorded invitation to a birthday party was written in Latin' and 'women's birthdays were not celebrated until around 12th century'.

Incorrect responses referred to the paragraph before the given lines or were too brief to be credited e.g. 'a feast', 'giving a cake', 'a celebration'.

Candidates must ensure they read the text and the question carefully, ensuring they select material from the correct section of the text.

### **Question 2**

This is a straightforward question on Text One which does not require candidates to use their own words.

The majority of candidates responded with correct examples of points the writer makes about why we celebrate certain dates or events, most commonly: 'we are social creatures' or 'reinforces the community network'.

Some candidates wrote more than was needed, making several points in one which was unnecessary for a one mark question.

Candidates must ensure they read the question and the text carefully, ensuring they select material from the correct section of the text.

### **Question 3**

This question requires the candidate to explore how the writer uses language and structure to present her ideas about the importance of celebrations.

Examiners commented that they did not see many higher-level responses.

Candidates were able to use evidence and show an understanding of Keegan's ideas about the importance of celebrations, although there were a number of responses which ignored the AO2 focus of the question and simply narrated Keegan's ideas and re-described the celebrations she used. Most candidates demonstrated some understanding of the text and some of the techniques employed by the writer. They were able to identify and explain features such as the use of questions, the use of expert opinions, the use of tricolons and listing and direct address. They used mostly appropriate examples to support their

points but a significant number of candidates did not clearly explain how these features helped the writer to present her ideas about the importance of celebrations. The explanations sometimes consisted of simply giving generalised statements such as: 'this makes the reader want to read more', or 'this makes the article more relatable to readers' (but not how) or 'this engages the reader' but with no explanation of how it was engaging.

More successful candidates wrote comprehensive responses showing a thorough understanding of language techniques and exploration of the effects of the various features chosen. The most popular techniques identified were the use of: direct address, pronouns (and especially inclusive pronouns), tricolons, historical examples and dates in particular, references to experts and scientific terms, and comments were made about the ending which was sometimes seen as optimistic. Some of the more successful responses were analytical however some examiners commented that although the majority of these responses were thorough, they did not always offer analysis or perception.

Less successful candidates produced responses that were content based and lacked focus on the writer's techniques. They wrote about 'what' the writer said rather than 'how' she presented her ideas about the importance of celebrations. There was evidence of 'feature spotting' where candidates identify (correctly) techniques used by the writer and offer textual support but do not explain their effectiveness. Less successful responses were often lists of techniques spotted and a quotation to support with no further explanation or attempt to relate it to the idea of celebrations. Expressions were used such as 'she explained', 'she presented', 'she lists', but these were followed up by references to content, not to 'how' the writer achieved effects. Some less successful candidates re-told the text. Some did use quotations but these were used to support a narrative response, essentially explaining the content of the text. The weakest responses were simply summaries or direct copies of the text. Occasionally candidates commented on the image.

Centres need to remind candidates that this question asks **how** the writer achieves his/her effects not **what** he/she says.

#### **Question 4**

This is a straightforward question on Text Two which does not require candidates to use their own words.

Most candidates responded successfully in identifying one thing that will make people happy. The most common correct responses were: 'a new hobby', 'reading more' and 'taking more photos'.

Occasionally candidates did not select material from the correct line references and gave incorrect responses such as: 'working out more' or 'eating better'.

Centres need to make sure that candidates read the question carefully and select their points from the correct part of the text.

## Question 5

This is a straightforward question on Text Two which does not require candidates to use their own words.

A significant number of candidates responded incorrectly by not reading the extract and question carefully enough and saying what made people happy rather than unhappy e.g. 'quitting smoking', 'breaking bad habits', 'cutting back on drinking'.

The common correct responses given were: 'unhealthy attachments', 'bad habits', 'social media' and 'smoking' or 'drinking'.

Centres need to make sure that candidates read the text and question carefully.

## Question 6

The question asks the candidate how the writer presents her ideas about New Year's celebrations. Most examiners commented that candidates' performance on this question was similar to Question 3 but some examiners thought it was not answered so successfully.

Examiners reported that most candidates were able to understand the text about New Year's celebrations and could demonstrate some understanding of the writer's techniques and how these were used to present her ideas. They were able to select appropriate features of the text to comment on such as the use of sub-heading, the use of dates, direct address and listing, and make some relevant comments on the effects of these features. However all examiners commented on responses that did not focus on the language and structural techniques the writer used and the intended effects of these techniques. There were a lot of generic comments such as 'this engages the reader', 'this makes the reader want to read more', 'this makes the reader think' with no further explanation of how these effects are achieved.

More successful candidates were thorough and supported their points with appropriate quotations, whilst exploring the effects on the reader. They examined how a variety of language and structural devices were used to present the writer's ideas. They considered features such as the use of: inclusive pronouns, repetition in the sub-headings, the comparative adjectives 'happier' and 'healthier', tricolons, alliteration, imperatives and the metaphor 'unpacking a little emotional baggage...' They also commented on the reassuring advice given and the positive tone.

Less successful candidates produced responses that were content-based and lacked focus on the writer's techniques. They wrote about 'what' the writer said rather than 'how' she presented her ideas about New Year's celebrations. Expressions were used such as 'she explains', 'she lists', but these were followed up by references to content, not to 'how' the writer achieved effects. There was 'feature spotting' where candidates identify (correctly) techniques used by the writer and offer textual support but do not explain their effectiveness. Less

successful responses were often lists of techniques spotted and a quotation to support with no further explanation. Some less successful candidates re-told the text. Some did use quotations but these were used to support a narrative response, essentially explaining the content of the text. The weakest candidates simply copied out all or sections of the text with no comments of their own.

As with Question 3, centres need to remind candidates that this question asks **how** the writer achieves his/her effects not **what** he/she says.

## Question 7

This question requires candidates to compare how the writers convey their ideas and perspectives about celebrations.

Examiners commented that a number of candidates struggled to make and express specific and relevant comparisons between texts and noted that they did not see many higher-level responses to this question. The majority of candidates were able to identify and discuss basic comparisons and a few produced well-thought-out comparisons of the extracts. A number of examiners commented that candidates did not support their comparisons with relevant textual references. Some examiners noted that it was pleasing to see evidence of planning in the responses to this question.

Many responses did discuss both texts throughout their responses, rather than discussing each text individually and then putting a brief comparative comment at the end. However some candidates are still writing about each text individually and then writing a comparative comment at the end. These comparisons were often not developed or supported. Examiners commented that these responses were not as successful as those candidates whose responses were comparative throughout.

Comparative points made were: Text One is about celebrating in general whereas Text Two is about one specific celebration; Text One is about sharing and being with other people whereas Text Two is about how an individual can change; both texts are about the importance of celebrating; both texts reference historical facts and dates; both texts deal with the future; both texts use direct address; both texts have a reassuring and an optimistic tone.

Most candidates were able to identify some relevant comparisons and use some valid references from the texts as support, but they did not always develop their responses sufficiently. Most candidates could identify the difference in focus in the two texts, in terms of the type of celebrations that were explored.

More successful responses were able to make a wide range of comparisons with some exploration of the writers' ideas and perspectives. These candidates were able to compare the two texts in an appropriate manner, with some well-observed points. They were able to integrate a range of comparisons, intertwining their evidence in an effective exploration of similarities and differences. They balanced their answers between the articles well. Equal attention was paid to both. They were able to examine the similarities and

differences and what these showed about the writers' ideas and perspectives. They structured their responses comparatively by taking the various features of the texts and comparing and contrasting them throughout. However some examiners commented that not many responses showed analysis in their comparisons of the ideas and perspectives.

Less successful candidates either did not compare or made few limited comparative comments. They wrote about one text and then the other without making comparisons or had a brief comparison at the beginning or end of their response. These responses often lacked supporting references. Sometimes the texts were only linked by a single phrase, e.g. 'Whereas in Text Two...' or candidates identified a feature in one text and simply commented that the other text did not have this particular feature. The weakest simply summarised the texts or parts of them with no comparisons at all. There were examples of candidates using lists of comparisons, sometimes presented as bullet point lists, with no real explanation or expansion of ideas.

Some responses were very brief for a 15 mark question. There were also a number of blank responses. These issues may suggest problems with timing.

Centres will need to continue to work with candidates to make sure they have a clear understanding of valid ways of responding to texts. This should include how to analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve their effects and how to write comparative responses. Candidates should also be reminded that they should provide relevant textual support for their points but lengthy quotations are to be avoided.

### **Section B (Question 8)**

There was evidence of some good teaching and learning in some of the responses to this section. There was some evidence of planning which was pleasing. The most useful plans were relatively short but allowed candidates to focus and organise their ideas effectively. Plans should be in the answer booklet rather than on an additional sheet. Examiners commented that candidates who planned their responses seemed to respond in a more focused manner.

Examiners commented that most candidates engaged with this task and some produced lively and convincing responses. Most candidates understood the requirement of the task and were able to use the appropriate register for an article for a school or college website. The most successful responses had a good sense of audience and purpose and included personal touches, humour and rhetorical questions to engage the audience.

All examiners commented that there was quite a lot of evidence of direct lifting from the texts which limited achievement.

### **AO1**

Most candidates were able to select and interpret the relevant information from both texts and were able to include details from all three bullet points. Some examiners noted that the bullet points were generally covered evenly although a few examiners commented that some candidates did not focus on the first bullet point sufficiently.

More successful candidates used a wide range of appropriate points of information from both texts, supported with perceptive comments. They covered all the bullet points in detail, selecting the most relevant points from the texts and developing their ideas. They were able to successfully re-work the texts, bringing in their own interpretations to enhance their response. All of the obvious occasions for celebration were included and there was a mention for Valentine's Day, the birth of a new child, passing an examination and acquiring a new job or promotion. It was even suggested that you find a reason for celebration if your life was dull, or you were suffering unduly from stress.

Less successful candidates were sometimes able to select and interpret a small number of relevant points but their responses were often short and therefore did not include many details. Some less successful responses lifted information from the texts or used very close re-wording. Unsuccessful responses simply copied out the texts.

#### **AO4**

Most candidates were able to adapt the material for the audience and purpose. Most responses were able to communicate clearly with their audience and were written in an appropriate format and style for an article for a school or college website. They made use of features like direct address, humour and rhetorical questions to create a friendly and persuasive tone.

More successful candidates were able to create a lively and engaging style that suggested they had a well-developed understanding of the required approach. These responses were able to engage the audience with a range of techniques, for example rhetorical devices, anecdotes, a personal voice and some use of hyperbole and deliberate repetition. Most were full of encouragement and had a warm and empathetic tone.

Less successful candidates communicated at a basic level and had problems sustaining the required register throughout their response. Some candidates lost the focus on writing an article and wrote speeches, letters or promotional leaflets. These candidates relied too heavily on the extracts, often using direct lifts from the texts which impacted their achievement. They often had issues with clarity as they had weak writing skills and this impeded their ability to communicate clearly.

#### **AO5**

There were some examples of successful responses with good levels of accuracy.

Most candidates were able to use their spelling, punctuation and grammar to make their meaning reasonably clear. They were able to produce a structured response with some range of vocabulary and sentence structure. Most employed some paragraphing, sometimes using the given bullet points to help them. However examiners commented that expression, grammar and punctuation were not always secure.

More successful candidates used a varied range of correctly spelt vocabulary and a range of appropriate punctuation. They used a range of different sentence structures to help them create particular effects. These responses employed accurate paragraphing. There was often evidence of proofreading.

Less successful candidates sometimes struggled to communicate their ideas and their language controls were not always secure, especially grammar. Some examiners commented that less successful candidates had problems with grammar and expression, despite good spelling and punctuation. Other examiners noted that punctuation was an issue with candidates writing long, one sentence paragraphs or using very little sentence punctuation.

Common errors commented on by examiners were: missing basic sentence punctuation; the use of very long, unstructured sentences; comma splicing; missing or misused apostrophes; problems with homophones; misspelling of basic vocabulary; not capitalising 'I' for the personal pronoun; missing capital letters at the beginning of sentences as well as random capital letters within sentences; verb tenses and other grammatical errors.

Centres should continue to work to ensure candidates have a clear idea of how to adapt ideas from texts and how to write appropriately and accurately for different audiences and purposes.

### **Section C (Question 9, 10 and 11)**

Examiners commented, as always, on how much they enjoyed reading some of 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. However the use of very long plans or draft essays is to be discouraged as they 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.

Some examiners commented positively on evidence that candidates had proofread their work but other examiners observed that candidates would have benefitted from proofreading their work more carefully.

## Question 9

### AO4

Examiners saw a relatively small number of responses to this question. Some examiners commented positively on some of the responses and it was clear that some candidates who chose this question had been prepared to write in a persuasive and argumentative style. However other examiners thought that some candidates struggled to develop and sustain a response.

Most candidates who chose this question appeared to understand the requirements of the task and attempted to present an argument. They engaged reasonably well with the subject of 'The best things in life are free'.

Many candidates agreed with the statement and argued, with varying degrees of effectiveness, that the best things in life such as love, family, parents and friends are free. Examiners noted some interesting content focused on relationships and family being free and more valuable rather than wealth or position. There was also positive comment on the value of the natural world being free. Those who disagreed with the statement presented arguments such as that you need money for most things that you enjoy – particularly as a teenager and there were those who felt that material possessions were necessary to enjoy life.

More successful candidates were able to use persuasive techniques for great effect and tended to employ a range of rhetorical devices to persuade their reader of their point of view. They produced lively and well-thought-out responses. Some more thoughtful responses considered that even things that are ostensibly free, such as family, friendship or education, require some degree of sacrifice and effort and so cannot be considered free. In a few successful responses candidates made a strong case, often considering counter arguments and making a balanced conclusion.

Less successful candidates had problems with both maintaining a clear argument and structuring their responses. They made some attempt to address the statement but these responses were often unstructured, with limited ideas and development. These candidates sometimes struggled to find enough ideas and their responses became repetitive or were brief. Some less successful candidates offered lengthy 'sources' rather than their own opinion.

There was evidence of heavily scaffolded essays with prepared phrases which were repeated by a number of candidates e.g. quotations at the beginning such as: 'Clearly a topic like this calls for deep thinking', 'It is important to tell people what side they are on', 'I am going to present some robust points'. Structural phrases were also evident e.g. 'I will continue to convince you to switch to my side' as well as the use of phrases like 'indubitably exigent'. It seemed that these candidates were more engaged in remembering the scaffolding than they were in constructing a considered argument and developing their own ideas in response to the task.

Centres need to ensure that candidates who choose this option are well prepared in argumentative, discursive and rhetorical techniques and are able to develop and sustain their ideas effectively. Candidates should not rely on scaffolding and learnt phrases but should be able to produce a personal response.

### **Question 10**

Question 10 was the most popular question.

#### **AO4**

Some examiners commented positively on the quality of some of the responses to the title 'The Reunion'.

Examiners noted that there seemed to be more evidence of pre-learned responses slightly adapted to 'fit' the question, often unsuccessfully. Many of these responses were almost identical. Centres should encourage candidates to develop personal responses to writing tasks and not to rely on memorising a response which may or may not be appropriate for the title.

Popular themes were school reunions, reunions with friends, family gatherings, re-visiting places and about lost and found pets as well as some unusual and individual topics. Examiners noted that there were fewer gory narratives although one examiner commented that although the title allows the possibility of a happy ending (and quite often this was the case), there were also some very upsetting endings where there was a reunion with a dying or dead body. A number of candidates successfully used personal experiences to inform their narrative. The time span of events was generally handled well with a period of anything up to ten years being used between initial and reunion meetings.

Most candidates were able to communicate with some clarity and develop believable plots with some character development. There were attempts to include dialogue, character and setting description and other devices to make the writing engaging. Occasionally candidates were over-ambitious, producing extremely long responses with complicated plot-lines. Often candidates chose to reveal the reunion at the end of their writing and, whilst in some cases this appeared to be deliberate, examiners commented that sometimes it seemed to be an afterthought.

More successful candidates were able to write coherent, well-crafted narratives which were engaging. They were not over-adventurous but were written with clarity and a sense of purpose. Some candidates were able to produce compelling and imaginative narratives well-focused on the title and were able to build a sense of character and place to great effect. Some responses were very well-crafted with some detailed descriptions and heartfelt emotional content, linking to family and relationships. Their writing was imaginative and skilful.

Less successful candidates lacked development of ideas or the ability to maintain a narrative or tended to write simplistic narratives. Sometimes there was little focus on the actual reunion and the word 'reunion' only appeared in the final sentence. They often had over-complicated or muddled storylines and weak endings that were not closely related to the events that had unfolded. Their responses were often lengthy with repetitive and unfocused plot ideas. Some re-told plots from film, TV and gaming, which were barely adapted for purpose.

Examiners commented that candidates seldom benefit from writing very long responses.

Centres need to ensure candidates have a secure understanding of narrative techniques and the ability to develop a coherent personal response without relying on plots from other sources or learned responses.

## **Question 11**

### **AO4**

Some candidates produced well-written responses that were fully focused on the task of describing a busy place. There were descriptions of a busy tube or train journey, busy streets, shopping centres, markets, bus and train stations and airports. Examiners commented that this question gave a real insight into the lives of candidates across the world and it is a privilege to read some of their accounts.

Most examiners noted that there was a tendency to write narrative responses (often first-person) to this descriptive task.

Most candidates were able to express and order information and describe some aspects of a busy place. Most candidates were able to use descriptive techniques. Most responses focused at least partially on description of the place although examiners commented that some responses were too narrative, with pockets of description.

More successful candidates were able to maintain a clear focus on describing a busy place, with some responses using descriptive techniques effectively, and a few perceptively. They were able to write with flair and enthusiasm, with effective use of imagery, creating mood and atmosphere. There were some effective literary devices used such as alliteration, figurative language and varied sentence structures. One examiner was impressed by some of the overseas candidates who wrote about their lives in vivid detail describing street markets in Bangladesh using a wide range of sensory descriptions to really bring the scene to life.

Less successful responses were often pedestrian, undeveloped or unclear. These responses often drifted into narrative or showed a limited descriptive ability. Some wrote a short, factual account of a place with very few descriptive

features. Clarity was often an issue with these responses. This limited their achievement.

Centres need to ensure candidates are aware of the techniques they can use in descriptive writing and also ensure candidates develop a varied vocabulary which they can use appropriately.

### **AO5 Comments across Section C (Questions 9, 10 and 11)**

(The comments for AO5 on Section C are similar to the comments on AO5 for Section B).

Most candidates were able to express and order information and ideas with some correctly spelt vocabulary, some control of punctuation and some accurate paragraphing. Most candidates were able to communicate clearly even if there were errors.

More successful responses were accurate, using a wider range of grammatical constructions, punctuation and vocabulary. They were able to shape their writing, using an increasingly wide vocabulary, with mostly correct spelling and punctuation used for effect. The very best offered cohesion, an increasingly complex vocabulary and the use of punctuation to craft their responses.

Less successful candidates had difficulty communicating clearly. Less successful responses often did not paragraph at all and used basic sentence structures which became quite repetitive. These candidates had numerous errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

There was some evidence of good spelling and reasonably accurate punctuation but most examiners commented on the number of candidates who had problems with grammar and expression such as problems with tenses and sentence structure, including missing words. Some examiners also commented on the use of over-ambitious vocabulary which was not effective or appropriate. Examiners noted that the use of paragraphing was an issue for some candidates. These problems limited the effectiveness of the communication.

Common errors commented on by examiners were: missing basic sentence punctuation; comma splicing; missing or misused apostrophes; problems with homophones; misspelling of basic vocabulary; not capitalising 'I' for the personal pronoun; missing capital letters at the beginning of sentences as well as random capital letters within sentences; grammatical errors such as problems with sentence structures; subject-verb agreement and verb tenses.

Centres need to focus on developing accurate and effective grammatical structuring and punctuation to enable candidates to express themselves clearly and access the higher mark levels. Candidates should be encouraged to proofread their responses.

## Summary

Most successful candidates:

- read the texts with insight and engagement
- were able to explore language and structure and show how these are used by writers to achieve effects in response to Questions 3 and 6
- were able to select a wide range of comparisons and explore the writers' ideas and perspectives in response to Question 7
- were able to select and adapt relevant information from the texts for Question 8
- wrote clearly with a good sense of audience and purpose in an appropriate register in response to Question 8
- engaged the reader with creative writing that was clearly expressed, well developed and controlled (Questions 9, 10 and 11)
- used ambitious vocabulary appropriately
- wrote with accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Least successful candidates:

- did not engage fully with the texts
- were not able to identify language and structure or made little comment on how these are used by writers to achieve effects in response to Questions 3 and 6
- were not able to compare the texts or offered very limited comparisons in response to Question 7
- sometimes narrated or copied the texts in response to Questions 3, 6 and 7
- were not able to select and adapt relevant information for Question 8
- did not write in an appropriate register in response to Question 8
- sometimes copied from the original texts in response to Question 8
- were not able to sustain and develop ideas clearly in response to Section C (Questions 9, 10 and 11)
- did not demonstrate accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

