

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
in English Language (4EA0)
Paper 02R

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Overview

International GCSE 4EA0 Paper 2 is a paper lasting one hour and thirty minutes. Question 1 is a reading question based on the Edexcel Anthology and in June 2015 candidates had to respond to the poem "Refugee Blues". Question 2 is a writing question and candidates had to complete one written piece from a choice of three. The choices for June 2015 were a letter to a newspaper about giving an award to someone who had done something special, a magazine article about happiness and a short story entitled "The Gift".

This was felt to be a fair paper. Candidates of a range of abilities were able to gain access to the reading passage and the questions on it. A range of abilities was also represented by the responses to the writing questions.

Reading

Question 1.

The poem worked well for most candidates and was accessible to most. Most candidates, even those of the lowest ability, understood the overall meaning and purpose of the poet, although some at the very lowest end of the range struggled to do so. On the whole, candidates responded well to "Refugee Blues". Many of the candidates commented constructively on the structure of the poem, with a significant minority linking the blues form with the subject of downtrodden people. Many placed the poem in its social and historical context, which in turn enriched their own responses to the poem. Some slightly misunderstood the historical context of the poem, but in general this did not really adversely affect responses of this kind as they still contained valid comments about other aspects of the poem. What was pleasing is that many candidates seemed to attempt a genuine engagement with the ideas in the poem and seemed to be able to relate to the poem. The prompts in the bullet points seemed to assist most candidates in providing some structure to their answers. As noted below, however, strong candidates dealt with the final bullet point about the writer's use of language throughout their answers.

The best candidates responded sensitively to the language used by the poem as well as literary techniques such as the three-line stanzas, the use of repetition and the use of personification. Mid-range and lower ability candidates may also have picked up on some of these aspects, but did not deal with language in as much detail or with as much sensitivity. Successful and effective engagement with linguistic and literary devices was a feature of the best responses. These candidates tended to move beyond the structure suggested by the bullet points and to discuss the writer's use of language throughout their responses rather than leaving it to the end. There was still a tendency for candidates to "feature spot"; it would have been better for these candidates to have discussed the effect of the literary devices or language use in more detail.

Writing

All three questions seemed to be answered well with minimal confusion about what the question was asking. Most candidates were able to engage successfully

with the various titles. Spelling and the use of vocabulary was good. There was little evidence of poor spelling among many responses. The vocabulary used was usually appropriate. Punctuation was generally good to excellent, but there are some candidates who show a good control of punctuation, but do not punctuate consistently. Some centres produced candidates who wrote very well indeed, whichever of the writing options they chose, producing very well-structured, thoughtful and sophisticated pieces of writing. Across the three choices, there were some candidates whose performances were seriously hampered by a lack of clarity caused by a less than secure command of written English.

Question 2a.

This was the least popular choice, so there was less of a range to comment upon than with the other writing questions. Candidates tended to choose a friend, school employee, business person, a person in the community or a donor to charity as their person to write about. Most candidates responded well to the purpose and audience suggested by the task and used the letter format well. While most candidates wrote in a clear and effective way about why their chosen person deserved to be given a special award, some were not very focused or not very clearly expressed. There were some very good responses to the task and these were characterized by successful use of persuasive techniques, cogent use of paragraphs and very aptly-chosen vocabulary.

Question 2b.

This was the most popular question. Most candidates worked well within the task of writing an article for a magazine, which helped with their sense of purpose and audience. Most candidates also responded warmly to the task, with the best candidates writing in a mature and sophisticated way about the topic. Although they were not specifically asked to do so, the vast majority of candidates agreed with the statement, "Money can't buy you happiness". This was a topic which seemed to inspire a majority of the candidature and they wrote refreshingly because of this, building up coherent arguments and making good use of supporting evidence. Many of the responses were well-structured and even at the lower end some of the responses were structured reasonably well.

Where some of the responses were disappointing was in the use of grammar; some responses contained good ideas, but the expression of these ideas was hampered by some quite serious grammatical mistakes, often to do with prepositions, word endings, subject/verb agreement and confusion of tenses.

Question 2c.

This response was quite a popular choice. The title, "The Gift", allowed candidates a good degree of freedom in interpreting what a gift was, and the stories ranged from descriptions of gifts given at birthdays and the excitement generated by that to the idea of abilities as gifts. Some candidates wrote in an interesting and mature way about gifts that were ambiguous and unwanted. A significant minority of candidates wrote about the birth of a younger brother or sister; these candidates often led up to the main event in effective ways, building up an atmosphere of suspense and surprise. While some candidates wrote quite perfunctory stories, quite a large number of candidates chose something which

was important and personal to them, which injected freshness and enthusiasm into their stories.

The best candidates were successful in their attempts at crafting their stories and they genuinely entertained the reader. These candidates structured their responses well, making very good use of paragraphing and using a judicious range of sentence structures. The weakest candidates wrote very briefly or, if they wrote at length, did not write with variety or in a coherent way. These candidates also displayed quite marked grammatical weaknesses, demonstrating an insecure grasp of written English.

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