

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2016

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

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Overview

IGCSE 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 2016 candidates had to respond to the poem, "Out, Out-". Question 2 is a writing question and candidates have to complete one written piece from a choice of three. The choices for June 2016 were the text of a talk persuading young people to raise funds for a charity, a letter to the organisers of a time capsule explaining why a chosen object should be included and a short story with the title, "Secrets".

This was thought to be a very fair paper which enabled candidates of varying abilities to demonstrate their reading and writing skills. Candidates of a range of abilities were able to gain access to the short story and the question on it. A variety of abilities was also represented by the responses to the writing questions.

Reading

Question 1

There were many reasonable responses to the poem, with the best responses responding perceptively and sensitively to Robert Frost's language as well as to the literary devices he uses. Mid-range candidates and above integrated their comments on language, with some strong candidates interweaving their language comments very effectively throughout the whole of their responses.

One examiner, however, noted that some candidates did not attempt this question adequately, with some copying out the poem or parts of it without any paraphrasing for which there could be no reward. In addition, some weaker candidates responded briefly to each bullet point, reserving comments about language until the end of the response. These language comments were then often presented as a list of features with an example, although this was not always accurate. Some presented this in a list format, for example, personification - sweet scented stuff; onomatopoeia - "snarled and rattled". Clearly, it would have been better to have written more developed responses on language. There was also some spotting of literary features, but with no real exploration of the effect of these literary devices on the reader. Some even discussed the use of statistics as a language feature ("half/five mountain ranges"). Even at the lower end of the range, many did try to quote and paraphrase but this did not allow them to go beyond Level 2. There was much misunderstanding of the poem with comments such as: the scene was set "as it dropped stove-length sticks of wood", when this really should have led to a mention of the mountain ranges. Better responses talked about child labour, citing as evidence the "man's job" quotation. They recognised the way the writer signalled the danger from the saw and that it was compared to an animal, often as a snake. Candidates tried hard the writer's use of "rueful laugh" and the very best saw irony in it but the weaker ones simply stated that the boy laughed.

A wide range of candidates identified the lack of care by the parents but some referred to them as "careless people", which in some cases could have been a lapse in expression, which would not have necessarily affected a response marked for reading but could have indicated a lack of precise focus. In general, with just a little more guidance on setting out in essay form and greater recognition on the part of candidates to explore the effects of language, some of these weaker responses could have been converted to mid-range answers.

Writing

Question 2a

This proved to be a very popular choice, although a significant minority of candidate tended to write about giving to charity in general rather than donating to a particular charity. This struck a chord as many highlighted that it was their duty to give to charity with a considerable number of references to this bringing blessings back on the givers. There was much usage of "charity begins at home" as well as points about the young being the generation who could take the country forward. There was evidence of crafting with direct address to the audience, repetition for rhetorical effect and questions making use of inclusion (such as "brothers and sisters"). More often than not spelling was reasonably accurate, especially in the more difficult words such as environment. Paragraphing was also quite impressive in the case of most candidates; however, with some candidates the sentence construction was problematic, which sometimes resulted in the overall sense being lost on occasion, which was a pity as many had tried very hard to write at length.

Question 2b

Although this was not such a popular question, it elicited a range of interesting responses. Many of the candidates chose to include items such as photographs and cameras. Candidates proved to be thoughtful about their reasons for including items and most who attempted this task produced appropriate responses and argued their cases well.

Question 2c

This was another popular question. Although most responded to the task by writing a narrative about "Secrets", some wrote a discursive piece about what secrets were and what keeping secrets meant in general. This compromised the amount of marks which could be awarded. Candidates produced a great range of story lines which were interesting and often gave a glimpse of their culture. A number of candidates referred to showing disrespect to their parents by keeping a secret or stealing from them. Some dealt with forbidden relationships which sometimes led to discussions of difficult subject matter such as rape, murder or characters being ostracised by their families and the importance of family. Many talked about the betrayal of friends. Unfortunately, some candidates got so immersed in their

storytelling that they lost sight of the “Secrets” theme, which limited their task achievement.

Some examiners noted that there seemed to be an increase in instances of unacceptable language, particularly when candidates were writing dialogue for this task. This is something that needs to be strongly discouraged.

Examiners reported that they really enjoyed the paper and there were some very impressive responses.

Grade Boundaries

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<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

