Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel IGCSE
In English Language (4EA0) Paper 02

Paper 2 of IGCSE English Language 4EA0 lasts ninety minutes and is equally divided between reading and writing. Question 1 is a reading question, based on a text drawn from the Edexcel Anthology. Candidates would have seen the text previously. This year the text was a story, *King Schahriar and his brother* from *The Arabian Nights*. For Question 2, candidates have a choice of three writing questions, of which they choose one. Question 2a was a letter giving views on whether students should do compulsory community work. Question 2b was a talk about a hobby or pastime and Question 2c was a story ending with "That was the best moment of my life".

4EA0 02 is being replaced by the new specification, but there will be a legacy sitting of the paper in January 2019.

Reading

Question 1

This was clearly accessible to candidates across the entry range - most were able to write answers of reasonable length. Examiners were impressed with the knowledge of the story's context and its place in "The Arabian Nights" collection of tales. The majority structured their ideas closely on the four bullet points, working methodically through the text and showing an understanding of the need to refer to it. However, this approach meant that there were few bottom/ Level 1 answers and neither was there much evidence of the top /Level 5 achievement. Weaker candidates relied on lengthy paraphrases of the narrative, interspersed with identification of language features but were unable to develop these references. Nonetheless these answers showed sufficient selection of material relevant to Scheherazade to avoid Level 1. Stronger answers were able to appreciate the character's traditional role as the heroine facing the villain. Reliance on character description, rather than analysis meant that even these answers missed top level marks.

Most candidates covered the first bullet comprehensively, the second bullet reasonably and the third sometimes. Weaker candidates didn't manage the final bullet and if it was covered at all, it was with a fairly random collection of comments mentioning rhetorical questions, similes and adjectives. Sometimes language was simply addressed through a list of features without examples necessarily. They also added very lengthy quotations. The best candidates gave succinct and detailed responses with embedded quotations. The best answers integrated the language elements into the body of the response. One or two candidates spent a long time retelling the story before looking at the character of Scheherazade. One candidate copied chunks of the story.

Candidates were more successful when they were able to name and discuss a range of language, structure and form devices from the extract. Many candidates applied historical and social context, which when linked

with the question was successful but unnecessary. Stronger responses linked to different aspects of the text (character, setting, writing style) when linked to sympathy. Many candidates spent time discussing the Sultan and the background of the story, but did not link it to Scheherazade, therefore making those comments not relevant.

Writing

Question 2a

This question was well-understood and, although not the most popular option, produced strongly-argued answers. Most were concerned about the issues of payment and the proposed compulsory element, with stronger candidates soundly developing their ideas about the wider economic effect of student labour. As was the case with the other options, answers across the range were well-organised and accurate. Some good arguments were put forward in support, offering suggestions for tasks as well. Some weaker candidates didn't structure the letter and merely made a list of comments with very little punctuation or paragraphing. Those that attempted it all seemed to understand the task. Candidates approached this response with vigour and passion. Many incorporated the lack of time, due to sports and academic commitments. Stronger responses considered multiple detailed reasons for, and against, the argument.

Question 2b

This was the least successfully tackled of the options. Candidates found it difficult to structure their ideas into a cohesive whole, often simply allotting a new paragraph to the next hobby on their list. Those who wrote about the general usefulness of hobbies in people's lives produced both the weakest and strongest answers: the first were unable to express their reasons or arguments clearly; the second integrated accounts of their own interests into generally coherent arguments with clear conclusions.

Many students spent time explaining what a hobby is before starting to talk about their own interests. One wrote about a range of different hobbies that the audience could try. This was probably the least successful question, as students tended to struggle with structure and content. Candidates struggled for creativity on this response, especially compared to 2a and 2c. 'Hobbies' did not generate the same interest as the story.

Question 2c

Although the most popular choice, this question produced some of the weakest answers and some examiners also noted that they saw the best responses on this question. Candidates simply used the quoted sentence as a hook on which to hang the usual tales of sporting glory, which often lacked sentence variety and were simplistic narratives. Those who wrote about family events or incidents often did so effectively. Of the options, this questions obviously exemplified most clearly the problem of controlling tense sequence. However, examiners were impressed with the

range of expression and vocabulary shown throughout the entry range in the writing section.

The best candidates balanced description with narrative and produced well-structured, entertaining and sometimes inspiring stories. Some weaker students ignored the task and wrote a story, then added the sentence at the end, even when it was totally irrelevant. Some candidates did not end their story as instructed by the question. More successful candidates used a variety of language and literary features. Strong responses craftily incorporated a balance of dialogue and description.

Some of the candidates did not complete Question 2, so timing needs to be worked on.