

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
in English Language B (4EB0)
Paper 01R

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Introduction

The texts were accessible across the full range of abilities and enabled candidates to respond appropriately. Stronger candidates were able to engage fully with both texts and respond with sensitivity and fluency. In their writing they produced lively and confident responses which were well-controlled and accurate. Weaker candidates sometimes struggled to understand the passages. Their writing lacked coherence and the use of idiomatic English.

There are still candidates who copy out all or considerable chunks of the passages in response to Question 11. This can never be a successful way to respond as the candidate is required to produce their own work. Similarly, responses to Question 12 should be original and not prepared essays or regurgitated film plots. Some responses to Question 11 and 12 lacked paragraphing, and this was not confined only to the weaker candidates. Candidates must understand that the lack of effective paragraphing will limit the success of the response.

There was some evidence of good teaching and learning in the responses to this exam.

Section A (Questions 1-10)

This consists of mainly short answer questions that require candidates to locate and retrieve relevant information. Some questions required candidates to use their own words. Question 10 is longer, requiring candidates to give a personal response and justify it with references to the text.

There were some good answers to questions 1-9 but many candidates continued to have difficulty with the requirement to use their own words, thus limiting their performance. Some candidates gave too much information for the straightforward retrieval questions (1, 3, 4, 6 & 8) and wasted time that could have been better spent on the longer questions. Examiners commented that a number of responses to questions requiring candidates to use their own words (2, 5, 7 & 9) had direct lifting from the texts. A number of candidates misunderstood Question 5 and wrote about the things in Antarctica which Jill would miss when she was home again, e.g. Mount Erebus, rather than the things she misses when she is in Antarctica. On Question 7 a number of candidates misinterpreted the point about keepers only being allowed to eat in the tower in an emergency. Centres need to work with candidates to develop their vocabulary and ensure that they realise they must attempt to produce responses to these questions using their own words.

Question 9 produced a variety of responses with many candidates able to provide points about women and families but not all were successful in offering valid support for them. The advice to give the point 'in your own words' was meant to help candidates to respond in the correct manner to this question, however this has not always been the case with a number of candidates simply using quotations for both parts of the response, which meant they could not access any marks. A number of candidates produced paraphrases of their chosen support as their point – often too close to the text to be rewarded. Some examiners commented that the layout of this question clearly helped

some candidates understand what was required. Centres need to work with candidates to ensure they understand that they must attempt to provide points in their own words and not use quotations from the text.

Question 10 provided a variety of responses with most candidates able to make some sort of choice, but only the more able could provide the developed ideas and close reference to the texts that the task required. If candidates are able to offer two clear reasons why they have chosen a text and support them with two clear references (quotations or indirect references) and a clear reason for not picking the other text with appropriate support, they will produce a successful response. There were some candidates who only responded on their chosen text, which limited their achievement. The majority considered the second text to be the more successful explanation, though a few dismissed it as irrelevant since such jobs no longer exist. Others dismissed the first text as they considered modern technology and forms of transport made life in Antarctica quite tolerable. Jill's enthusiasm was also picked up as a sign that her working conditions were more acceptable than those of the lighthouse keepers. Examiners commented that responses were often content-based rather than analysing the techniques of the texts. Centres need to continue to work with candidates to make sure they have a clear understanding of valid ways of responding to texts.

Section B (Question 11)

There was evidence of some good teaching and learning in the responses to this section. There was also some evidence of planning, which was pleasing. The most useful plans were relatively short but allowed candidates to focus and organise their ideas effectively. Unfortunately, long plans wasted time and often affected the final response, as it was rushed. Plans should be in the answer booklet rather than on an additional sheet.

Most candidates understood the requirement of the task, however not all were able to use the appropriate register for an article. More successful responses had a good focus on the texts and the ability to write a convincing article. Examiners commented that a number of candidates had problems sustaining the required register for an article throughout their response and some candidates did not really attempt an appropriate register. Some candidates did not use the stimulus material, but instead wrote about soldiers, astronauts, fishermen or scientists in the jungle, for example. One examiner commented that many candidates expressed great respect for those working in challenging occupations, such as street cleaners and the police. There were some less successful responses that did not use the ideas from the texts as a focus for their responses and struggled to cover the three bullet points, limiting their achievement. Better candidates were able to integrate ideas from the texts with their own points very effectively. Examiners commented that some candidates directly lifted content from the original texts, which affected the overall quality of the response. Language controls were not always secure, especially grammar, and some responses lacked paragraphing. The three bullet points provide a rudimentary structure which should help candidates to use basic paragraphing. Centres need to remind candidates that lack of accurate paragraphing will limit their achievement. Centres should work to ensure

candidates have a clear idea of how to write appropriately for different audiences and purposes.

Section C (Question 12)

There was evidence of some good preparation and teaching in this section. There was also evidence of planning in this section, 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. Examiners commented on how much they enjoyed reading the responses in this section.

Question 12a produced a few well-written responses with ambitious vocabulary and clear and developed arguments. A number of candidates who answered this question came up with a range of ideas and examples (sometimes from personal experience) and wrote in an engaging and entertaining manner and used persuasive devices to great effect in presenting and arguing their point of view. Most candidates agreed with the assertion, though their interpretation of 'an adventure' was very wide, ranging from tasting different foods to exploring the wilderness alone. Some candidates chose unusual or unexpected interpretations of what an adventure would consist of, but the more successful of these then went on to substantiate and illustrate their choices in an interesting and persuasive manner. Weaker responses had limited and undeveloped ideas with no clear sense of direction. Some of the responses seem to have been rather limited, suggesting candidates had not chosen well. Better responses were fully controlled with accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar, however the weaker responses had poor language controls and weak paragraphing. Centres need to ensure that candidates who choose this option are well prepared in argumentative, discursive and rhetorical techniques and are able to develop their ideas effectively.

Question 12b was the most popular option chosen by candidates. This question produced some original ideas with a wide range of interpretations of the title. Some examiners commented on how lively and interesting the responses were. Better responses were able to create tension and use effective description and dialogue with good technical accuracy. These responses showed a good control of plot and an ability to write evocatively. Some candidates wrote what seemed to be autobiographical accounts of a time in their lives when a 'door' (as in a welcome or an opportunity) had been opened or remained open for them. Other candidates wrote a narrative in which an open door was featured, sometimes building up tension quite successfully. Weaker responses had narratives that were unrealistic or illogical. Weaker responses had poor language controls and limited and underdeveloped ideas. Centres need to ensure candidates have a secure understanding of narrative techniques and the ability to develop a coherent personal response.

Question 12c produced some well-written responses that were fully focused on the task effectively describing a safe place. One examiner commented that the best responses to Question 12 were for this option. Better responses were detailed, effectively using imagery to create a vivid picture with good vocabulary choices and evidence of crafting. These responses explored the

reasons for the sense of security offered, made links with important people in their lives or significant events and described the place evocatively. Weaker candidates tended to list features in responses that tended to be pedestrian and lacked detail. Most candidates were able to select an appropriate safe place to describe, often bedrooms or homes. Better responses had full control of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Weaker candidates had poor language controls and weak paragraphing. Centres need to ensure candidates are aware of the techniques they can use in descriptive writing and also ensure candidates develop a varied vocabulary.

Quality of Written Communication (QWC)

This is assessed in Questions 11 and 12.

Better responses were accurately using a wide range of grammatical constructions, punctuation and vocabulary. There was evidence of good spelling and reasonably accurate punctuation but most examiners commented on candidates who had problems with grammar/expression. Some of this was unidiomatic English but there were also problems with tenses and sentence structure. These problems limited the effectiveness of the communication.

Centres need to focus on developing accurate and effective grammatical structuring and idiomatic English to enable candidates to express themselves clearly and access the higher mark bands.

Summary

Most successful candidates:

- read the texts with insight and engagement
- selected relevant points, from the appropriate part of the text, in response to the reading questions
- used their own words in response to questions that required them
- wrote clearly with a good sense of audience and purpose in an appropriate register in response to Question 11
- engaged the reader with creative writing that was clearly expressed well-developed and controlled (Question 12)
- used ambitious vocabulary
- wrote with accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Least successful candidates:

- did not engage fully with the texts
- did not find enough relevant points in response to the reading questions

- did not attempt to use their own words in response to questions that required them
- did not write in an appropriate register in response to Question 11
- were not able to select and adapt relevant information for Question 11
- sometimes copied the original texts (Question 11)
- were not able to develop ideas clearly in response to Section C (Question 12)
- sometimes used prepared essays or copied plots from films and novels in response to Section C (Question 12)
- did not demonstrate accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

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