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In English Language (WEN03)

Unit 3: Crafting Language (Writing)

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Introduction

The source booklet consisted of four texts relating to the topic of Computing Pioneers taken from a range of sources, and most candidates clearly engaged with the task of producing a speech on this subject. Section A prompted a variety of valid approaches to the task and a number of skilled pieces that used the material creatively and demonstrated insight into writing a text that is intended to be spoken. There were very few responses that did not manage to produce a convincing speech of some kind, although at all levels some candidates showed less skill when selecting and editing material from the source texts.

The second task required the candidates to produce an analytical commentary on the text produced in Section A. This commentary should explore the intended audience, purpose and context of the speech and how this influenced the candidates' choice of register, tone and language techniques, as well as discussing structure, organisation and how the original sources were adapted to create a new text. For many candidates, comments on audience, purpose and context proved to be more insightful than analysis of language techniques.

Candidates continue to find Section B more of a challenge than Section A, although more are now timing their responses more carefully to allow enough time for the thirty mark commentary.

Overall, candidates produced work which was engaging and often highly convincing as a text to be spoken to an audience. Similarly, many commentaries at all levels included carefully considered ideas about audience, purpose and context and comments on these ideas that showed some insight. Centres continue to prepare candidates for the exam in a way that enables them to demonstrate their ability to write both creatively and analytically.

Section A

At all levels, candidates showed the ability to write with engagement and flair, often alongside some understanding of the genre and the potential audiences for their speech. However, where candidates made better use of the source materials, achievement was much higher. Centres should continue to work on their candidates' ability to select key information from the source texts and use that information to create an original new text. Some candidates used very little material from the sources, resulting in speeches that were often imaginative and well expressed, but relying almost entirely on material from the candidates' own understanding of computing.

Equally, significant direct "lifting" from the source texts, even with some attempt to reframe or paraphrase the material, is not a productive approach to this question. Inevitably, the writing can lack originality and flair and the responses can be quite long, as candidates struggle to be selective with the information. Even at the higher levels, where candidates were often able to adopt a fluent and lively voice when writing sections entirely from their own imagination or experience, many included passages that were lifted from the source with only

minor amendments. At the lower levels, this kind of reliance on the language of the source texts was quite significant, particularly for Text A, where candidates often copied Carrie Anne's distinctive original phrasing, and Text C, where details about the NASA space missions and the lives of the human "computers" was copied word for word rather than paraphrased or reframed as quoted direct speech. More successful responses managed to combine their additional creative ideas with dates, organisations and people mentioned in the source texts.

Many candidates chose a specific group of "pioneers" to focus on, and explored the challenges they faced in an industry often represented by a narrow range of genders and ethnicities. This approach tended to be successful and enabled candidates to structure their speeches effectively with a cohesive argument throughout.

At all levels, many candidates showed a subtle understanding of audience, purpose and context, which was very encouraging. Most pursued an educational or informative purpose, with a clear focus on the concept of being a pioneer in a particular field. Responses were aimed at a variety of appropriate listeners and delivered by many different types of speaker: there were addresses to Microsoft employees at a staff conference; motivational speeches to computing students at their graduation; and students talking to their peers at school assembly. This led to a range of relevant styles and registers and often helped candidates to focus their writing effectively. Some candidates interpreted the task quite broadly and scripted spoken language in an informal talk, presentation or lecture, rather than as a more formal prepared speech. At times these types of responses were less convincing and effective, particularly where candidates attempted to script spontaneous spoken language or describe audience reactions.

Where candidates had identified a specific audience, purpose and context for their speech (including who the speaker was) and then adapted their language in an appropriate way, they were able to transform the material in the source texts convincingly throughout. However, where there was over-reliance on the source texts, there was little change in register and tone in the new text from those of the source material, which tended to result in less realistic speeches where the style of writing was not always appropriate for the stated listening audience, purpose and context.

Section B

Where candidates had allowed sufficient time to produce a detailed commentary and had covered a range of features from their own writing, perceptive and accurate analytical commentaries were produced; if they prioritise planning and writing for Section B, candidates are more likely to cover a range of different methods and effects within the commentary. For a few candidates, writing over-long responses for Section A limited the time available to produce a meaningful response for Section B.

Many candidates were able to make some insightful and considered comments on audience, purpose and context and link these to register and tone. There was often a clear sense of who

would be listening to their speech and why they might be interested in the computing pioneers. Moreover, this had enabled candidates to tailor their anecdotes, facts or details from the texts to build their listeners' interest in the history (and indeed the future) of computing, as well guiding decisions made about register and tone. It was encouraging to see that the majority of candidates at all levels had made specific decisions about audience, purpose and context before writing their speeches, enabling them to make detailed comments about these factors in their response to Section B.

However, at the lower levels, comments on audience, purpose and context were often not linked to specific effects or language choices. This is an area where candidates at all levels could achieve better results in their commentaries, by giving more detailed evidence and analysis of how they crafted their writing to meet the requirements of their stated audience, purpose and context. Many commentaries at the lower levels lacked terminology, exemplification or close analysis of technique. This was particularly disappointing to see for those candidates who had produced an effective response for Section A.

Candidates at the higher levels were more able to describe the examples they provided using relevant terminology and to analyse the intended effect of their writing techniques. Similarly, the range and relevance of technical methods and terminology explored were often a discriminator between the lower and higher levels. For the commentary, candidates need a toolkit of a range of terminology and techniques to discuss and this is an area where centres can continue to develop their candidates' knowledge.

Some candidates devoted a significant proportion of their commentary to a detailed explanation of where and how they had used the material from the source texts. This type of discussion can be helpful when combined with an exploration of methods and techniques, or to explain how choosing which information to use was influenced by the audience, for example. However, it is not helpful to include a great deal of this kind of descriptive comment unless it is used to explain or analyse language choices made when reshaping the material.

Paper Summary

The candidates were able to take inspiration from the source materials, producing engaging work at all levels. The task was accessible for all and many candidates had clearly enjoyed the topic and showed confidence when writing a speech. Where candidates managed their time well and had a clear sense of audience, purpose and context, detailed commentaries were produced in Section B to explore the writing process and analyse the language choices made.

Centres can continue to help their candidates by developing their skills in selecting relevant information from the source materials and then using that information in a completely original new text. For the commentary, candidates would benefit from a more comprehensive range of technical methods and terminology with which to comment on their own writing. Similarly, encouraging candidates to make consistent links with a specific audience, purpose and context

enables them to make more insightful comments about the choices they have made in their writing. For this unit, candidates should build on the skills and techniques first studied for WEN01, applying these analytical and evaluative methods to their own original writing.

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

Section A

- Take the time to decide on a specific audience, purpose and context before you start writing and try to adopt an appropriate register, tone and language techniques.
- Be selective with the material you use from the source texts, combining it with your own original writing; avoid any direct “lifting” of whole sections from the material.
- Plan your response, paying close attention to structure and organisation; you do not have to follow the same structure as the source material.
- Think about your commentary when planning your response to Section A, noting down any decisions you have made or techniques you have used that you could explore in Section B.
- Time your response and make sure you leave enough time for Section B.

Section B

- Explain why you chose the language methods and techniques you used in your response to Section A, and evaluate their effect on your new audience, purpose and genre.
- Link technical features to audience, purpose and context; explain why the language used was appropriate and be as specific as you can.
- Develop a flexible “toolkit” of frameworks that can be applied to a variety of texts and techniques, along with a range of linguistic terminology.
- Always supports your points with examples from your writing, or from the source materials, as appropriate.

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