

Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2012

International GCSE English (4EA0/01)
Paper 1

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Section A: Reading

Questions 1-3

The passage studied in Section A was a powerful piece of writing from David Attenborough, drawing comparisons between mankind and apes and their use of teamwork as a defining factor in their domination over others. The passage proved to be accessible to almost all candidates, with very few experiencing any difficulties in reading comprehension. Question 1 was worth two marks and was done well by almost all candidates. Question 2 asked candidates to outline the different roles played by the hunting chimpanzees. Better answers were those that clearly distinguished between the different roles and were able to briefly explain them. Weaker answers did not always give a full outline of the roles or lacked focus and wrote about other elements of the passage. As always, the key discriminator in Section A is the higher mark tariff question 3 and its focus on developing an interpretation and showing an understanding of the writer's technique. In this instance candidates were asked to focus upon how the writer tries to interest the reader in the subject matter. Bullet points offered further support for structuring an answer around the differing presentation of the two types of monkey, the links that the writer makes between animals and humans and a focus on language and the writer's techniques. The topic was of interest to most candidates and almost all candidates were able to respond to some parts of the passage. Able students were able to analyse a range of techniques effectively and recognising the many ways in that the writer sought to engage the reader, such as his focus upon telling and exciting and at times harrowing story whilst also drawing us into a painful recognition of ourselves in some aspects of the behaviour of the monkeys. There were many quite competent middle band answers that again commented on a range of features, though wrote more about the hunt and less about the comparisons with mankind. As has happened in the past, some candidates were able to find the relevant text but were less able to use the text to craft an explanation. Linked text and paraphrase does not constitute an explanation. Weaker answers tended to recognise the differences between the monkeys but often said little or nothing on the writer's techniques. Some commented on the picture whilst from others it received very little attention at all.

Section B: Reading and Writing

Question 4

Section B was based upon the pre-prepared text from the Edexcel Anthology, *Touching the Void* and focused upon the differences between the two storytellers. Many candidates were well prepared and showed a strong involvement with the passage. Better quality answers recognised a range of differences and were able to comment on them together with the devices used to communicate them. Weaker answers tended to be narrow in their identification of difference, tending to recognise that Simon was calm and lacking in emotion whilst Joe was quite the opposite. There were differences

in interpretation as to whether Simon was pragmatic and level-headed or callous and cruel in his assessment of the situation.

Question 5

The writing task in Section B was linked to the reading task in section B and asked candidates to write about a time when they were let down by somebody. Most candidates had a lot to say, especially when venting fury about parents or friends and the question seemed to inspire many to write at some length. Better answers were able to craft a response based upon emotion without allowing the emotional dimension to displace the need to relate an event or an anecdote. Weaker responses were sometimes very short and undeveloped. Some struggled with paragraphing and textual cohesion was a common problem as was the inconsistent use of tenses and verb/noun agreement.

Section C: Writing

Question 6

The activity asked candidates to write a letter to a friend or relative visiting where you live. This question gave many an opportunity to write engagingly about their relationship with their own locale. Better answers developed a clear sense of relationship between letter writer and receiver and also generated a sense of excitement at their imminent visit. Weaker responses were often brief and tended to list places that would be visited or events that would take place, without any real sense of the person being written to and their relationship with the writer. Language control and clarity was often an issue with weaker answers often being shorter and struggling with tense control and the appropriate use of future/present tenses and irregular verbs. As before a key discriminator between Band 2 and Band 3 writing is that of structure and once again weaker responses were often lacking in paragraphing and a sense of structural cohesion.

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