

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

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

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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 January 2014 candidates had to respond to the poem “Electricity Come to Cocoa Bottom”. Question 2 is a writing question and candidates have to complete one written piece from a choice of three. The choices for January 2014 were the text of talk to a teenage audience about their use of the internet and television, a letter to a head teacher about how to spend money to improve their school and a creative piece entitled “The Fall”.

This was considered to be a fair paper which any candidate who had covered the syllabus should have been able to tackle confidently. Given that, some markers noted that they were using the full range of marks including marks at the lower end; some felt that a minority of candidates had language skills which were too poor to allow understanding and expression and thus could have been more appropriately considered for the second language IGCSE.

Reading

Question 1. The poem was accessible to many candidates and was often answered well. The most able showed understanding of language and poetic techniques and linked them effectively to effects achieved, showing evidence of interesting teaching in a range of interpretations. The less able tended to list techniques and make simple, undeveloped points. For question 1 about Electricity Comes to Cocoa Bottom, I found that the students were about half and half on this one. Some of them seemed to know what was happening in the poem and could identify a few or a number of techniques. On the other hand, there were some who seemed to have never encountered the poem at all before and didn't really have an understanding of what was happening in the poem.

Writing

Question 2a. This proved to be an engaging question and it elicited some very good responses where candidates wrote thoughtfully and considered their audience carefully. There were also some responses which disregarded the instruction to write the text for a talk to be given to a teenage audience. For question 2a, students seemed to do really well on this question for the most part. They were aware of the structure of a speech and many of them referred to the audience in their speech, which was good. There were a few who did not answer it well by repeating themselves about how young people spend too much time on the internet and watching television; these few candidates did not seem to know how to develop their answers.

Question 2b. This was another popular question which allowed students to really use their own experience and some did that to great effect: suggestions for improvements ranged from the provision of 'chill-out' rooms - essential for GCSE students - to the rather more sensible better recycling facilities and better libraries. Generally the tone and content were appropriate for a letter to a head teacher. For question 2b, students responded well to this question and produced a variety of responses regarding how their schools could be improved. A few did not do this in the correct letter format; however, the majority of candidates did.

Question 2c. Some markers commented that this was sometimes the question which was handled least well. It was felt that some candidates could have been better prepared to produce a creative piece of writing. Perhaps unless students have had time to practise this skill they should be discouraged from trying to write creatively in the time set. On the other hand, other markers reported that the title, "The Fall", elicited a wide variety of responses and seemed to capture the imagination of a number of students well. There were a few, clichéd stories about doomed protagonists falling in love, but for the most part this was a question on which candidates coped well. This was especially the case if candidates planned their work carefully and concentrated on the quality, rather than the quantity, of their writing.

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