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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

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In English Language (4EA0) Paper 01R

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Introduction

The paper is organised into three sections. Section A tests only reading and is based upon an unseen passage. The passage studied in Section A in June 2018 was adapted from *The Climb* by Chris Froome with David Walsh.

Section B tests both reading and writing by asking candidates to respond to one of the non-fiction passages from the Anthology, in this case, *Explorers or boys messing about? Either way, taxpayer gets rescue bill* by Steven Morris.

Section C is a single writing task that is not connected to either of the reading activities already undertaken on the paper. The paper was well received with most candidates finding it very accessible.

Section A: Reading

Questions 1-4

The passage chosen proved to be accessible to almost all candidates, with very few experiencing any difficulties in reading comprehension. Question 1 is intended to be a gentle way into the paper and tests the skills of selection and retrieval, asking candidates to name the hills featured in the passage. There was a single mark for this question and almost all candidates were able to recognize the only correct answer: Ngong. Question 2 asked candidates to select two words or phrases that the writer uses to show the difficulties the cyclists faced. The mark scheme identifies a number of possible responses and many candidates gained full marks but those who did not do so often failed to find two distinct words or phrases from the selected lines or did not directly answer the question. Question 3 asked candidates to explain what we learn about Leone Nero. As a five-mark question there were many possible responses to this question with ten featuring in the mark scheme and many achieved full or nearly full marks, as they were able to explain about his dedication and commitment to the race, his appearance and style of dress and forgiving nature as he does not blame Chris Froome for causing the accident. Some also recognized his sense of humour, with some interpreting this as sarcastic or ungenerous. Where candidates did not score full marks some failed to give sufficient detail for full marks and others listed features without offering any explanation. It is possible to score full marks on this question without finding five distinct characteristics of Leone Nero, as the quality of explanation is a key part of the response. Centres should know that the mark scheme explicitly instructs markers to reward the quality of explanation rather than simply counting the number of features that have been identified and they should bear this in mind when preparing candidates for this type of question. Question 4 was the higher mark tariff question in Section A with its greater focus on the writer's technique. This asked candidates about how the writer tries to create interest in events described in the passage and provided bullet points for additional support and structure. At the standardising meeting all markers were made aware of a range of possible interpretations and that they should credit any that were clearly founded in the text. In the published mark scheme examiners are told that they, "must reward all valid points that show an engagement with the text and an appreciation of the writer's technique rather than have a set agenda of

items that they are looking for.” Weaker responses were often limited to a small number of points focusing on particular elements within the passage, such as the details of the accident, often providing little or no development. Many candidates were able to recognise the broad structure of the passage and how the writer creates a sense of pace and excitement at the start which then builds to the climax of the accident and the subsequent return to the race as the passage ends. Better answers commented on the playful nature of the title and the creation of humour whilst less able candidates did not comment on the structure of the passage at all. The weakest answers were unable to recognise the complex relation that Leone Nero has with Chris Froome, seeming to be a mentor, an inspiration and a tormentor all at the same time. Some answers showed a subtle and perceptive understanding of the link between the landscape and the riders as they move from the heights of the Ngong Hills, so high that Froome feels he could reach heaven just by raising his arms, down into the dangerous, humid and exotic ‘moonscape of Magadi.’ Many commented on the powerful use of metaphor and simile in the passage, such as “cackling like a hyena” or “His knees alone are a horror show”. Better answers were often able to comment upon the distinctive sentence structure and the frequent use of short sentences, such as “I am chasing him. As always.’ Essentially the most successful candidates demonstrated higher skills of analysis and interpretation in evaluating the writer’s techniques and did so by a careful reading of the passage and by focusing on the question. As has been said before in these reports, linked text and paraphrase does not constitute an explanation. It was a feature of better answers that they were more able to recognise the manner in which the writer creates pace and excitement whilst deepening our understanding of the relationship between the two riders and marveling at the stunning landscape they race through. The shock of the accident, Froome’s overwhelming guilt and then Leone’s Nero’s humorous, insouciant final remark serves as a climax to this passage.

Section B: Reading and Writing

Question 5

Section B was based upon the pre-prepared text from the Edexcel Anthology for International GCSE English Language and Literature, *Explorers or boys messing about? Either way, taxpayer gets rescue bill*, and focused upon how the writer criticised the actions of the two men in the passage. As a prepared text almost all candidates seemed to have knowledge of this text. Most candidates could recognise the catalogue of disasters that their expedition was prone to. Better answers were able to comment upon the writer’s sarcasm created through certain vocabulary choices, such as ‘plucked’ or ‘farce’. Weaker responses were often quasi-narratives that did not focus upon the question and simply described the different elements of the passage or were sometimes unable to see that the writer was being critical and not sympathetic, as some claimed. Stronger responses were those that were able to recognise the writer’s appeal to the taxpaying public and how he generates a sense of righteous indignation in the reader and were able to recognise the quasi-parental relationship that Mrs Brooks has with her husband, based upon his phoning her for help and how she chooses to describe the actions of the

two men. Stronger answers were then able to evidence these from the text and to explain in detail how those contributed to our understanding of how the writer criticises the actions of the two men.

Question 6

The writing task in Section B was related to the reading text in section B inasmuch as it raised the issue of maturity and asked candidates to write a letter to a newspaper giving their views on the proposal to raise the legal voting age to 25 because of the lack of maturity and responsibility of the younger generation. The title was accessible to almost all candidates and produced a wide range of responses. Understandably, the majority of responses were opposed to the proposal in principle with more successful responses being able to explain the detail of their objections. More successful responses often made the point that there are many irresponsible and immature adults older than 25 and many created an emotive point about rights and entitlement and the future of the country being in the hands of the young. As in the past, the weakest responses were often incomplete, lacking in paragraphing or structure and communicating at a basic level, often focusing solely upon a very limited range of ideas. Better responses wrote with a skilful command of the language showing a strong ability to engage the reader in the reasons for the choices made.

Section C: Writing

Question 7

Candidates were asked to write about a place that means a great deal to them, explaining why it is so important. This proved to be accessible to most candidates. Once again, it is noted that the writing responses and particularly the final, 20-mark question, are sometimes not answered at all by some candidates. It is vital that students time their responses carefully and take note of the mark tariff, giving section C one third of the time available to them. This question produced a variety of responses including exotic holiday locations and familiar places such as school and home. Stronger responses quickly moved from describing the place to its significance to them and relationships with others, particularly parents and grandparents. These often produced writing that was thoughtful and moving. Weaker responses were often very brief and were limited in their ability to clearly express their thoughts, often describing places without any explanation as to why it was so important. Weaker responses were often lacking in paragraphing and a sense of structure, which kept them in the Level 1 and Level 2 mark bands. More able responses wrote with imagination and communicated passion and interest in what they were describing and created a genuine sense of a relationship with their reader. The best writing showed subtlety and maturity and a control of a wide range of techniques to produce writing that connected strongly with its reader.

Conclusion

Each section above contains specific advice about what characterises weaker and stronger candidates. Centres are strongly encouraged to practise responding to unseen passages in timed conditions. This will support students in focusing their answers on what the question has asked for and in using their understanding of literary effects as a means of addressing the question rather than being seen as an end in their own right. The same principle applies with regard to studying the Anthology texts. The best practice in writing involves time management so as to respond appropriately to the mark tariff and the time available. Candidates need to focus on developing textual cohesion through effective paragraphing and structuring their writing. At all times have the intended reader in mind and make word level, sentence level and text level choices with a clear understanding of the intended effect. Writing should be seen as a crafted artefact and students should be taught the skills of writing with this in mind whatever the task may be.