



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2022

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In English Language A (4EA1)
Paper 02R: Poetry and Prose Texts
and Imaginative Writing

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Introduction

This report will provide exemplification of candidates' work, together with tips and comments, for Paper 2 (Regional) of the International GCSE Specification A in English Language. This was the January series of the 'A' specification in IGCSE English Language 9-1 which followed a second 'extraordinary' November series. It was therefore a very small series.

The specification consists of three components: Unit 1: Non-fiction and Transactional Writing - 60% (examination); Unit 2: Poetry and Prose Texts and Imaginative Writing - 40% (this examination) OR Unit 3: Poetry and Prose Texts and Imaginative Writing - 40% (non-examination assessment). Candidates may also be entered for the optional Spoken Language Endorsement (non-examination assessment).

Unit 2 for Poetry and Prose Texts and Imaginative Writing is assessed through an examination lasting one hour and thirty minutes. The total number of marks available is 60. The reading and writing sections on this paper are loosely linked by the theme of the text from the Anthology which appears on the examination paper.

This focus of this component is:

Section A - Poetry and Prose Texts: study and analyse selections from a range of fictional poetry and prose texts.

Candidates should study the poetry and prose provided in Part 2 of the *Pearson Edexcel International GCSE English Anthology* in preparation for responding to a given prose extract or poem in the examination.

The specification identifies that candidates: 'should be able to read substantial pieces of writing (extended texts) that make significant demands on them in terms of content, structure and the quality of language. Throughout the qualification, candidates should develop the skills of inference and analysis.'

Candidates are advised to allocate 45 minutes to Section A, and there will be one essay question on a poetry or prose text from Part 2 of the *Pearson Edexcel International GCSE English Anthology*, which will be made available in a booklet in the examination if it is a longer extract or will be in the Question Paper in the case of a poem.

Candidates will answer the question in this section and 30 marks are available. There are three bullet points to prompt the response and the third bullet always asks candidates to consider language and structure.

Section B - Imaginative Writing: explore and develop imaginative writing skills.

Candidates are advised to allocate 45 minutes to Section B. There are three writing tasks, to some extent linked by theme to the reading prose extract or

poem. Candidates pick one question to respond to and the response is worth 30 marks. The format of the tasks remains the same for each series - Question 1 follows the format 'Write about a time when you, or someone you know...', Question 2 follows the format 'Write a story with the title...' and Question 3 offers two images as a prompt for a response which is always 'Write a story that begins...' or 'Write a story that ends...'.

The Assessment Objectives for this paper are:

Section A: Reading

A01:

- read and understand a variety of texts, selecting and interpreting information, ideas and perspectives

A02:

- understand and analyse how writers use linguistic and structural devices to achieve their effects.

Section B: Writing

A04:

- communicate effectively and imaginatively, adapting form, tone and register of writing for specific purposes and audiences

A05:

- write clearly, using a range of vocabulary and sentence structures, with appropriate paragraphing and accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation.

It was clear that candidates were all able to respond to the poem from the Anthology in the examination, and that most had studied it before. Some candidates had been taught the context of and background to the poem and the poet.

Throughout the qualification, overall candidates had been prepared well and all had, at different levels, developed the skills required to answer the questions.

It was also clear that candidates used what they had studied in their reading to feed into their imaginative writing, which inspired them. As the specification identifies, the main aims for our candidates in this paper are:

- read critically and use knowledge gained from wide reading to inform and improve their own writing
- write effectively and coherently using Standard English appropriately
- use grammar correctly, punctuate and spell accurately
- acquire and apply a wide vocabulary alongside knowledge and understanding of grammatical terminology, and linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language.

Candidates had, pleasingly, been given the opportunity to practise their writing techniques and planning and proofreading skills.

While there were few responses given the size of entry, the responses of candidates had positive features. Examiners were impressed by:

- evidence that many candidates had understood and engaged with the content of and ideas in the poem
- the clear focus on the question and use of the bullet points to help structure answers
- coverage of the assessment objectives required for this paper
- the range of ideas and creativity for AO4
- the range of vocabulary used
- the attempt to vary vocabulary and punctuation for AO5
- writing that showed at least appropriate tone, style and register for audience and purpose
- the structure of writing responses where these were organised and succinct.

Less successful responses:

- demonstrated a lack of knowledge of the poem and/or lack of awareness of the ideas in the poem relevant to the question
- failed to reference the question, with candidates simply writing something about the poem or writer very broadly
- rigidly followed the bullet points in the question so that language and structure points were almost an 'add-on' at the end
- had an insecure grasp of language and structure with a lack of understanding of how language and structure were used, feature-spotting or confusion of terms
- had limited comment on language and structure and relied heavily on description of the poem or paraphrasing of it for Question 1
- failed to support points using appropriate textual evidence or used over-long quotations
- lacked organisation in their writing
- used inappropriate language in writing
- lacked accurate spelling and secure control of punctuation and grammar, for example verb tenses.

It was clear that candidates had been able to find at least some information about how the writer presented the war and could comment on language and structural features. Imaginative writing, even with a small entry, was often interesting, engaging and enthusiastic and had a clear sense of purpose and audience in the voice and ideas used.

Question 1

A01

The first two bullet points in the mark scheme relate to A01 - read and understand a variety of texts, selecting and interpreting information, ideas and perspectives. The level of understanding of the text from the Anthology is assessed in the first bullet point, and the selection and interpretation of information, ideas and

perspectives in the text in the second bullet point. Overall, candidates clearly engaged with the poem and there was a full range of marks used this series.

It was very clear that the candidates were familiar with the poem and had been taught to focus on a number of key elements, emphasising the harsh, brutal, racially-fuelled war.

At the very basic level candidates tended to comment very broadly on what was being said in the poem. They were able to show some understanding of the poem, but the understanding and focus was uneven in terms of the idea of how war was presented. There was often limited selection and interpretation of information and ideas. Lower end responses tended to use the bullet points as headings and then had chunks of the poem copied out with limited comment.

Candidates at the Grade 4 borderline were at least able to identify some of the key areas of the poem linked to the presentation of war, although at this borderline grade there was often an imbalance where the focus was on identifying basic/valid ideas and information from the poem that had some connection to war (for example, the contrast between behaviours of young people and the other people in Sarajevo) rather than being appropriate, apt or persuasive for the higher levels. For example, candidates at this borderline grade often had not considered more than broad ideas. There was a lack of 'drilling down' into the poem to examine the more nuanced ideas that were considered by candidates achieving higher marks.

Candidates at borderline Grade 7 were more direct in approach, as they were able to select the relevant ideas from the poem relating to the presentation of war in a detailed but succinct manner. Candidates at this borderline tended to cover the full poem and offered detailed points. There were many perceptive comments on the idea of 'dark shapes', emphasising that it was impossible to tell whether they were Muslim, Serb or Croat, thus making a total nonsense of the reasons for the war in the first place. In fact, many argued that the situation forced unity on people of different races and faiths. The young people have accepted that this is their life and no longer worry about ideology: 'Darkness cancels the barriers between religions, languages and nationalities.' The fact that the 'boy shape' takes the hand of the 'girl shape' was felt to show the young prioritise love, creating a sense of unity and hope, in spite of the indications of war all around them, a symbol of hope for the future against the damaged setting and innocence versus horror. One candidate commented that 'the elaborate choreography of courtship is coupled with the ominous use of language to create irony'.

Another successful focus was on the contrast between day and night, light and dark, with the surprise element that the young came out at night; discrimination cannot happen in the dark and the young have not lost hope for a brighter future. Most responses recognised that of course, while the young people are finding love, there are reminders of the horrors of war such as 'the death- deep, death-dark wells/splashed on the pavement by the mortar shells.'

A02

The third bullet point in the mark scheme relates to A02 - understand and analyse how writers use linguistic and structural devices to achieve their effects. There needs to be understanding of the language and structure used in the text, and the level of skill is also a discriminator. *Explain* is a mid-level skill, *comment* a lower-level skill and *explore/analyse* higher-level skills, which gives candidates opportunities to achieve across the range.

At the lowest levels candidates often made reference to language and structure as a brief add-on at the end of the answer. Candidates here often identified and named devices, but did not demonstrate the skill or understanding to discuss their use, and did not link these to the question. At this level responses were characterised by writing without any explanations - candidates here were good at finding both language and structure features, but not as confident at explaining them. The responses were much more at a descriptive level, with limited and underdeveloped evidence.

Candidates at the Grade 4 borderline were at least commenting on both language and structure. At this borderline grade candidates were commenting on and explaining language and structure, with appropriate and relevant references. Candidates at Grade 4 borderline were able to pick out features in the poem, but often there was little developed explanation of the effect of these features. The majority at the borderline grade were able to comment clearly on, for example, images of violence, simile, metaphor, vivid imagery, rhyme. Some explanations at this borderline grade were non-specific and unrelated to the question: 'The writer uses language and structure to engage the reader.' There was much focus on word-level explanation which was done to varying degrees of success. At the beginning of the poem, many responses looked at the use of 'pram', to present an idea of safety, easily obtainable by us but 'dangerously deadly for them.' The importance of food was explored through the references to 'grams' and 'precious', while the massacre of the bread queue was emphasised, along with the struggles up flights of stairs, with the dangers of snipers and the 'bomber's eye' identified. In terms of structure, many candidates identified the varying lengths of the sections, but sometimes with limited comment to say why the points selected were important in terms of the focus of the question. Many candidates pointed out the use of rhyme, giving examples, again without comment - it was felt that candidates were less confident with the effects of rhyme. The less successful responses selected appropriate material but failed to comment effectively.

Candidates at the Grade 7 borderline were commenting on both language and structure consistently, confidently and succinctly. At this borderline grade candidates were exploring and analysing language and structure, with detailed and discriminating references. At the higher levels candidates were able to explore less obvious features, such as symbolism, irony, the tone of the poem and the poet's perspective, alongside the features of borderline Grade 4. The examples of language and structure used at this borderline grade were much more considered and selected than at borderline Grade 4, showing a perceptive understanding of the way the poet presents the war and the effect of details selected on the readers, for example references to tone. The analysis of structure was thoughtful

here: 'The ending shows the reader even at the darkest times we should always find hope and move on because life always goes on and doesn't stay for you.'

The final bullet point in the mark scheme relates to selection and use of references from the text which has been studied for both AO1 and AO2. This is a very useful discriminator in this question. Examiners noted that some responses were extremely long, with little understanding of some/most of the material included and often a heavy reliance on quotations. Many of the most effective responses integrated quotations throughout, exploring and supporting the ideas expressed; however, those which dealt with language and structure separately were often equally successful.

Example 1

In these poem the writer tells about the life of Sarajevo and the people now they live over there and behave. The Sarajevo is located at the top of the mountain and it is a very small and it is very old over there. The writer tells about In the first paragraphs the writer tells about the Sarajevo and people he describes how the people live over there how they behave and he also explains about Sarajevo how it tells over there

and many more things about their life etc. In The writer also says about the young people how they ~~her~~ behave to others. The writer ^{mentions} tells about the Muslims people over there. The writer tells about some boy's and girl's story. The ~~p~~ writer mentions about 'nation' what they give at it nation and how people take it and the nation what is given in the nation.

* The writer tells about "when a girl's dark shape is banished by a boy's" in these line the writer describes about the boy's and girl's what they do in which condition they are. "Match a lighter to cigarette" in these line he tries to match something. He is matching matching the people as comparing the people if the people possessed of rat. "Now full of water from the rains day that's poured down the half the day" in these line he tries to explain how that there was rain and some the parts areas were full of water and

also the water was blowing down
Narrow half of the day. The water
is not stored in some areas and as
else the water blough it is not does
not remains the water go to goes.

leaving the sarajevo star filled - evening
sky ideally bright and clean the boy bomber's
eye." In these line the writer
tells about the night view in the
sarajevo and it was amazing that he
was watching it. In sarajevo the
night in the sarajevo is amazing
the "sky and stars" look amazing that
people look with bomber's eye.

x "The dark boy shape leads dark girls shape
away to share one coffee" - In these
line the writer tells about the
boy. The boy was trying to share
one coffee with girl in
a "andellite cafe" the before the
curfew and the boy was also

at the last the boy holds the girl

hand behind the AID blows sacks. - In
the sarajevo some of boy's and
girl's love each other as the
writer said. The young people also
gets in love with the girls. - In the
last two paragraphs the writer only
tells about the boy and girl's
story. He How the shared the coffee
and they hold hands. "I see the
a pair who've certainly progressed beyond
the lone of voice and match plain
rest and he's about, I think to take her
hand" In these line the writer is
trying to express what the boy
felt for the girls the boy is trying
to hold the hand of the girl. The
writer expressess what the boy and
girl's felt for each other - "To
check in her eyes if he's progress
yet. In these poem it the
writer tells about the life of
the sarajevo people and now how
it fell in sarajevo and now the boy's
and girl's talk and meet with each other.

Examiner Comments

This answer opens with some repetition of the question, and some broad context which is not really relevant to the focus. There is quite a lot of description of the content of the poem, but there is some selection that is relevant to the bullet points of the question. The second page of the answer has some attempt to move towards comment but is not really secure in understanding. The third page does not convince us that the candidate understands the poem. The point about the night sky looking 'amazing' could be comment but is not linked to the evidence or the question.

There is evidence of some basic understanding of the text (Level 1/2), and there is some selection and interpretation of information which is valid (for example, the feelings of love). It could be connected more to the question. There is no focus on language and structure, although the idea of the last stanzas moving to the boy and girl could be interpreted as a structural point. There are some valid references, and given the attempt to cover the whole poem the 'best-fit' for this response is just into Level 2 with a mark of 7.

Example 2

The poem "The Bright lights of Sarajevo" gives a feeling of mysterious and captures reader's attention by its title. The use of 'Bright Lights' gives the title a magical feeling and a colourful vision.

The poem starts with reference to time "After the hours" gives an idea to the reader about Sarajevans pass their time by "queuing with empty canisters of gas". The first stanza mostly consist conjunction at the beginning of all sentences. Furthermore, the writer Tony Harrison uses a rhythm in a well poetry tone and plays with words of rhythm to attract readers interest and attention, and it it written in [AABCCDD] pattern, 'pass', 'gas', 'prams',

"grams" etc. The line "but tonight in Sarajevo that's just not the case" - a tension created by the writer to give an idea to the readers that something different from day-to-day timetable has changed is going to happen. As he uses hyphen in the end of the stanza to indicate something compound is coming up next. ~~the star~~ and ~~it was~~ makes the sen-

There is no use of full stop in the sentences of first stanza, the writer had described ~~the~~ about the mysterious night in one stanza without any stop. From the beginning "After the hours that Sarajevans pass" to "but tonight in Sarajevo that's not the case -" gives an aroma of impact of war in Sarajevo.

See in addition second stanza describes about the different types of such as "muslim" etc.

"All take the evening air with stroller's stride... when a girl's dark shape is foisted by a boy's." describes the situation of the girl going through. The adjective "dark" shape and "black" describes the skin tone of the people in Sarajevo.

"Then the tender nod of the tone of voice... he's made progress yet." this is in this lines

the writer tells the reader how the girl agreed with boy and how a tone of romance is created in that harsh and ~~in~~ situation of war.

In stanza four the writer writes "And I see a pair who've certainly progressed beyond the tone of voice and match-flare test... and lead her away from where they stand?" emphasizes the vision and the use of first person pronoun "I" gives the reader a personal experience of watching the reader and he creates an image to give vivid description of situation. The use of hyphen "match-flare" shows the connection between the words as both can be considered as independent.

Tony Harrison also uses rule of three which can also be taken as listing as it uses comma " and she's about, I think, to take her hand" this includes that the writer is not sure about what is happening exactly over there in reader's mind which is proven by the words "I think". Stanza four also has use of violent words like "blood", "dead" etc.

The writer Tony Harrison uses many language features such as ethos, pathos, emotive language and figurative languages like alliteration "shredded bread", Symbolism - "92" etc. He also uses punctuation like comma for listing, apostrophe to show possession, full stop for the readers to take a break and hyphen to show compound words. The correct use of language features and punctuation shows the writer is well-aware grammar and brings out interest and attract the reader's towards the poem.

The poem is also descriptive as well as informative as it gives an image of the surrounding and the situation of Sarajevo. The poem also has irregular length of stanzas as some are long and some short. He describes the situation that Harrison has written the poem ironically.

The last two stanzas tell about how the boy and the dark shape shared the coffee in a 'candlelit café'. And it also has a description of support by the boy "he holds her hand" as the war started. The poet ends the poem with "behind AID flour

sacks refilled with sand."

Examiner Comments

This answer has a general introduction which could link more to the focus of the question. There is immediate focus on language and structure - sentence starters, rhythm, rhyme, but this is more identified than commented on. The second page moves more into comment with the idea of something going to happen, although not explicitly linked to the war. Points such as 'gives an aroma of impact of war in Sarajevo' are made but not developed or in some cases even commented on. The comment on how romance is created in a harsh environment shows some understanding, and there is relevant comment on language with the personal pronoun (almost trying to explain here). The comment on uncertainty is relevant, as is the point about the boy offering support to the girl in war.

There is 'some understanding of the text' here, Level 2. The selection and interpretation of information is valid, but not always developed or linked to the question. There is a lot of focus on language and structure and lots of features are identified, however these in some cases do not go further than identification, with

some not adding much to the overall response to the question (hyphens used to show compound words, for example). There are a couple of AO2 points which are commented on, however, and references are valid, but not always developed further.

The candidate meets the first two bullet points from the mark scheme in Level 2, although more connection to the question is needed. The third bullet point is met in Level 1 and does move into Level 2 with some comment, however it is a shame the candidate does not do more with the language/structure points. The final bullet point is met in Level 2 - references are valid, but not developed or linked to the points/question. A mark at the higher end of Level 2 is appropriate, and 11 is awarded.

Example 3

The Bright Lights of Sarajevo is about the war at Sarajevo and how the citizens spend their days during a time of violence and death. The writer of "The Bright Lights of Sarajevo" presents the idea of war by telling or showing the readers the impact of war, the way young people behave, and the use of language and structure to further explain the text's details. First, the writer mentions the impact of war on Sarajevo and its people. This is first explained in the beginning of the text where it said "queuing with empty canister of gas... or queuing for the precious meagre grams." This explains the usual daily lives of the citizens of Sarajevo which is queuing for supply of gas, food, and water. But at the same time, the citizens "often dodge snipers on the way." This shows the dangers and death rate of living in this sort of lifestyle which is that you can get shot at any moment if you aren't careful. However, not everyone is having a bad time. At night,

the young people would go to together for romance, which brings us to the next point which is the ways young people behave in the text, the writer who is presented as the narrator mentioned that he saw "a pair who've certainly progressed." "He's about to take her hand and lead her away from where they stand." This shows how the young people are not going to have war disrupt their romantic relationships. They are willing to risk their lives to go out at night in the middle of a war just to spend time with their partner. Next, the author uses language and structure to further explain what's going on in the text. First, he uses symbolism in the title "The Bright Light of Sarajevo." The "Bright Light" refer to the young couple's love as a bright light during a time of war. "Bright light" is a symbol for hope to all the citizens of Sarajevo. The writer also used hyperbole in "dodging snipers on the way." This helps to build up suspense as anyone could be killed in this text. Next the writer uses metaphor to describe how the young people walk. This is evident in "the young go walking at a stroller's pace." This shows how cautious the young people are when going outside because they have to walk slowly or else they will be shot.

Examiner Comments

This is a response that opens clearly with some repetition of the bullet points of the question, which helps them to 'find their stride'. There is some comment on the dangers of life in Sarajevo, and some understanding in the point about how not all Sarajevans are having 'a bad time'. The second page of the response shows more sound and clear understanding, for example how the young people will not let the war impact on their romance. Language used in the poem is explained at the end: the idea of symbolism, hyperbole, descriptive language. While this is not detailed, it is clearly explained.

The response shows some sound understanding of the poem and links to the question (Level 2/3), although the brevity of the response (even with the small handwriting) prevents really secure understanding being evidenced. Selection and interpretation of information and ideas is clear and linked to the question (Level 3). For AO2 there is some clear understanding and explanation of language and structure techniques, so AO2 is securely achieved in Level 2 with some features of Level 3. References are appropriate to the points being made, although there could be more development. The response meets all of Level 2, and the touches of Level 3 move it into this level with a mark of 14 - it becomes clearer as it moves on.

Example 4

"The Bright Lights of Sarajevo" is a moving, wartime poem that speaks on the various light of a city and the struggling the Sarajevans had to endure. The title of the poem "Bright Light" is ironic as it symbolises the positive needs and hope for future.

The poem starts with the poet addressing the hardships of life in Sarajevo. The poem is divided into rhymic couplets: "After the hours that... of gas" - it appears as though this horror has become a regular way of life. The people used to having of queue to get their basic needs and there is a regularity that has been accepted. Throughout the poem, vocabulary has been used to give the readers a clear picture of the point of view that Harris Morrison can see: "precious meagre... they're rationed" - there is a desperate lack of food in the area. The phrase "grams of bread" suggests that

bread was treated like gold (as gold is often weighed in grams). The use of verbs: "queuing"; "dodging"; "struggling" add emphasis to the situation being portrayed.

Fearful, gentle language is used to demonstrate a contrast between the people of Sarajevo and the young people. The poet ^{shows} the young people are ~~not~~ relaxed at night as they "go walking at a stroller's pace" with "stroller's stride". The repetition of "stroller" describes the walker's gait. There is a sibilance created dominantly by the alliteration of "s" in the phrase "stroller's stride" which increases the ~~formal~~ ^{formal} formality of the phrase and makes the movement sound more confident which is in contrast with the previous "stroller's pace". The night helps to create equality among the young people as darkness makes it "impossible to... in such dark". It also shows the poet sense of equality for people and unity of race, religion and language. The use of word "flibustious" along with "fancied" exploits voiceless ~~of~~ ^{of} fricative alliteration which gives a light airy tone which we don't see in the previous lines. This marks the introduction of romance in the poem.

The act of carousel, which is an elaborate choreography coupled with the ominous use of language: "black shapes"; "tender vicar" shows that the poet is aware of the story at play. After the romantic, the poet uses detailed, graphic language to reinforce the tragedy that took place by bringing attention to the least innocent civilians who lost their life while waiting for their food: "blood-dunked crusts... the bodies dead" - the poet effectively calls out the villainous of the

perpetrator emphasizing the horror in this massacre. The setting is seen to be damaged and weather beaten with "holes made by the mortar" and "rain that's poured down half the day". But the relationship is almost presented as a symbol of hope as when the boy meets the girl - "now even the ... away". The innocence of the relationship is juxtaposed with the horror of the massacre. Utilizing the use of alliteration in the forby first line, the poet describes the wells as "death-deep, death-dark wells" shows that death is repeated ~~as~~ almost almost repeated itself as if it is inevitable.

The poem ends on its shortest stanza which paints a picture of tenderness and love. The repeated alliteration in the line "coffee in a candlelit café" along with the use of word "share" and phrase "holds her hand" bring to mind the connotations of traditional romance. There is a feeling of romance and intimacy in "one coffee" although it is ironic as it links back to the people of Sarajevo having little. The final line of poem ~~also~~ demonstrates that people cannot do what they do alone and the threat of violence is still there as they have "AID flour in sacks refilled with sand".

The poem concludes ~~or~~ concludes with the poet bolstering the overall mood of the poem and alluding to hope, human happiness and companionship. The boy and the girl hold each other hand and enjoy one another's company amongst the symbol of hope - war and struggle.

Examiner Comments

This response starts out with clear understanding and explanation, and then moves more into exploration as it goes.

The response shows sustained understanding of the poem, and there is a real attempt to respond to the question and material. There are a number of ideas examined - hardship for people in Sarajevo, lack of food, the contrast between everyday life and the lives of the young people, equality, courtship, hope contrasted with negativity of war. The focus on the question is sustained throughout the response and the contrast between romance and the horror of war is well explored, as is the intimacy at the end of the poem.

For AO2 there is definite clear understanding and explanation of language and structure and how these are used by writers to achieve effects (the use of verbs, peaceful language, alliteration, ominous/violent language). There are some touches of quite thorough understanding, but this is not explored enough - for example the 'elaborate choreography', the emphasis on horror, the connotations in the description towards the end. The selection of references is appropriate and is relevant to the points being made. Bullet point 1 of the mark scheme is met in Level 4. Selection and interpretation of information is appropriate, detailed and

fully supports the points being made. AO2 is definitely met in Level 3, and there are some points that show exploration (Level 3/4). The references are quite detailed, but not always, so a mixture of Level 3 and 4 is achieved here. On balance, and using the 'best-fit' principle, a mark of 23 towards the top of Level 4 is awarded.

Example 5

The writer writes about how the war on Sarajevo has made many Sarajevans struggle to live. They can't even enjoy food. As stated in "After the hours... / queuing with empty canisters...", Sarajevans have to line up and wait their turn for basic necessities. The lack of resources caused due to the war is further highlighted in "precious meagre grams / of bread they're rationed each day." Sarajevans can hardly survive due to the war; ~~but~~ they have practically no food to the point ~~where~~ ^{of only being} able to eat a few grams of bread. They're unable to get their food peacefully, however. "often dodging snipers on the way" just shows how chaotic ~~the~~ Sarajevo has become. People can't walk in broad daylight without the possibility of getting killed by snipers participating in the war. Life is hard for the Sarajevans. It's accentuated by "or struggling up sometimes eleven flights" where it's shown that Sarajevans have to be wary in each step they take. Walking up stairs

is risky; they're stained with blood, and exposes the Sarajevans to danger. They have to be extremely careful during the day. At night, ~~however~~, is a however, Sarajevo is a different story. The war has ruined Sarajevo's landscapes. "Serb shells destroyed" many streets. The sight of Sarajevo would make one think the night would be dull in Sarajevo, but it's the opposite.

At night, young Sarajevans become lively. No one can tell what the other person is at night. This is shown in "black shapes impossible to mark / as Muslim, Serb or Croat..." as — young Sarajevans freely waste the night away because discrimination can't happen due to the dark; it doesn't allow others to discern the religion of another person, therefore lessening the danger.

Sarajevans can relax at night. "The young go walking at a stroller's pace" highlights how young Sarajevans can walk around Sarajevo more leisurely at night than in the morning. The young people spend their time at night flirting. "...flirtatious plays / when a girl... is fancied by a boy..." highlights how the youth of Sarajevo have fun at night by searching for love, for happiness. Some of them have gone past the shy flirting stage. It's hard to see, but some of the youth have found love and continued on dating each other at night. "I see a pair who've certainly progressed /..." accentuates how some young Sarajevans have found a significant other. Even in trying times, the youth haven't lost their happiness and hope for a brighter future. However, they're not completely ignorant of their country's demise. "The boy sees / fragments of splintered Pleiades /..." suggests that even though he was with his significant other, he ~~is~~ still couldn't shake off the situation ^{his} ~~his~~ country is in. He can't run away from the truth that Sarajevo is still dangerous, and has brought many deaths. Still, the boy wants to spend time with the girl until the very last second. "The... boy... leads... girl... away* /

to... a candlelit café" shows how the boy ~~is~~ still wants to persevere through these hopeless nights in Sarajevo. He wants to spend more time joyful, happy, and with his significant other. Until the very last second, he's still determined to survive with his lover. "... he holds her hand/ behind AID flour sacks filled with sand" highlights how the boy hasn't given up — he wants to live ~~with~~ and survive with the girl, ~~protecting~~ ^{hence why} they sought shelter and protection from the flour sacks. They'll live and survive, and they'll do that together. The youths of Sarajevo are hopeful even as their country is drenched in war.

Moving on, the writer uses several language devices to further explain and present the Sarajevo war. The use of the em dash in "but tonight in Sarajevo that's not the case —" makes the reader anticipate the next part of the poem. It highlights how Sarajevo, contrary to what one may believe, isn't lifeless at night. No conflict happens at night — this is inferred by "no torches guide them but they don't collide." ~~The line symbolizes~~ ~~The "torches" symbolize~~ In such dim light, without discrimination being able to happen, no conflicts happen. It's peaceful. ^{Everyone walks with a "spider's stride" — relaxed.} Nights in Sarajevo are peaceful, more relaxed. The alliteration in "Then the tender radar of the tone of voice" adds to the atmosphere of the poem that's been switched from negative and gloomy to a ~~more~~ ^{happier} atmosphere. Romance buds at night. Some couples have formed, as shown by "I see a pair who've certainly progressed / beyond the tone of voice and match-flare test." The metaphor of the last line shows that ^{some of} the youth of Sarajevo have found love with one another. The imagery used in the next few lines almost dispels the comforting and light atmosphere completely, however. "... two shell ~~scars~~ scars, where in '92..." highlights

how although the youth are full of hope and happiness at night, their joy will never be able to erase ^{about} the war has caused. Strong verbs such as "massacred" are used to highlight the ruin of Sarajevo. The war mercilessly killed many innocent people to the point of it being a massacre. The descriptions of what the war has caused — "blood-dusted crusts" from people who were just trying to get food for their survival — show that Sarajevo's war has been a nightmare for every Sarajevan. Even the youth cannot escape it. The remnants of the war are still here at night. "broken dead" ^{symbolizes} ~~shows how~~ how the victims of the war, even in death, haven't been liberated. Even the youth can't escape the war ^{even} at night. "at their feet in holes..." includes imagery ^{that shows} ~~in~~ how the young couple in the poem, although happy ~~with~~ with each other, ~~can't~~ can't erase the traces of war. They're still painfully aware of the conflict in their country. The blood on the pavements have ~~of~~ disappeared. They were washed away by the "water / from the rain that's poured down half the day." The "rain that's poured down half the day" is a ^{metaphor and symbolism} ~~symbolism~~ used as a ~~symbolism~~ ^{metaphor and symbolism} about how, save for the night, ^{the} a day in Sarajevo is gloomy, full of grief — everything rainy clouds ~~symbolize~~ ^{symbolize}. Then, in "now even the smallest clouds have cleared away," the writer uses the line to symbolize how, at night, people are happier and more hopeful. However, there's an irony in the line such that in the entire poem, dim lights signify ^{safety} ~~peace~~ while bright lights are an invitation for snipers, bombers, and more. ~~At~~ "Ideally bright and clear for bomber's eyes" shows the irony of having light of having hope. Being able to be seen would subject a Sarajevan to the war once more. Death can get them if there's light. The ^{peaceful} ~~peaceful~~ and beautiful description of the "star-filled evening sky" is ~~deceptively~~ ^{deceptively}. There is hardly any time for Sarajevans to take a break from the war, nights always ^{last so short} ~~and~~ ^{quickly} compared to mornings. The repetition in "death-deep, death dark"

highlights how Sarajevo ^{practically} is "always" dangerous. Anyone can get killed — death is a common thing in Sarajevo ever since the war started. Still, the Sarajevan youth don't lose hope for brighter days. The "candle lit cafe" the young couple go into symbolize how they still have hope, however ~~weak~~ it may be. The dim light from the candles symbolize that. Additionally, the youth are hopeful for not only their own survival, but hopeful for their whole country's future as well. ~~he holds her hands~~ They want to survive together, as evident in the emotional language used in "... and he holds her hand." The youth of Sarajevo haven't given up on love, happiness, or a better future.

Examiner Comments

This is an extremely confident, assured response which shows a personal and independent response to the poem. There are many examples which show perceptive understanding of the poem: lack of resources, difficulties, chaos, wariness, the change in the setting due to war, the contrast between day and night, lack of discrimination at night, development of relationships, the sense of hope for the future even with the sense of war, the deceptive night - no words are wasted. This selection is also apt and very persuasive in clarifying the points the candidate is making.

For AO2, there is perceptive understanding and analysis of language and structure and how these are used by writers to achieve effects, including use of vocabulary, sentence structure and other language features. There is a huge range covered in this response, and real understanding and thought about effects. Language and structure features covered include unusual devices such as em dash and inference alongside imagery, verbs, symbolism, irony and repetition. The selection of references is discriminating and clarifies the points being made - the candidate has covered the poem confidently and chosen their examples in a discriminating way, covering a huge amount in their answer. A mark of 30 is deserved: all of the bullet points in Level 5 are met.

Examiner Comments

Writing

It is worth noting that examiners always enjoy reading the writing responses and that there was a full range of marks awarded across the small entry marked.

At the lowest grade boundary candidates tended to offer a basic response. They always had straightforward use of tone, style and register, with audience and purpose not always clear. At this level candidates tended to express but not always connect ideas and information, with limited use of structural and grammatical features and paragraphing. Pleasingly, there were few responses that only achieved Level 1 and where they did this was mostly because these candidates hardly wrote anything, offering a basic response, or the sentences did not make sense at all.

At the Grade 4 borderline candidates tended to at least have straightforward and at best appropriate use of tone, style and register, selecting material and stylistic or rhetorical devices to suit audience and purpose. At this borderline level candidates tended to connect, but not always develop, ideas and information, with some structural and grammatical features and paragraphing. There was a tendency in the majority of responses marked at this borderline grade to set out a stronger description in the start and then focus more on plot towards the end where planning had let the candidates down. In some cases, the writing lacked development to move higher into the mark scheme for AO4. At this borderline grade the use of vocabulary and syntax tended to be appropriate but repetitive and at times limited to vague simile/metaphor, use of short sentences, questions and exclamations for effect. The level of AO6 at this borderline was appropriate but overall formulaic, where it appeared that candidates had been advised to

include plenty of adjectives, adverbs, or similes in their writing without considering their purpose.

In the best responses, candidates tended to have subtle use of tone, style and register, managing ideas and stylistic or rhetorical devices to suit audience and purpose. At this borderline level candidates tended to manage, but not always manipulate, ideas and information, with a range of structural and grammatical features and paragraphing. Responses at this level had some creative ideas and conscious, successful crafting. The Grade 7 boundary tended to have some selective vocabulary used for specific effect rather than just to demonstrate knowledge of particular multi-syllabic words.

The assessment objectives for these tasks effectively discriminated the quality of responses. Advice to centres would be to encourage candidates to avoid thinking they need to write a whole novel or even short extract in the time available - they need to have a clear organisation and direction in mind, and to perhaps not 'over-season' the pieces with vocabulary and syntax.

The main areas that discriminated these responses were:

- whether candidates could meet both parts of the first part of bullet one in the mark scheme for AO5 - for example they often expressed ideas to achieve in Level 2, but these ideas lacked the order for the second part of that bullet. In Level 3, they may have connected ideas but not developed them.
- the success of tone, style and register in AO4.
- the spelling of basic vocabulary in AO5.
- the accuracy of punctuation and use of varied punctuation in AO5.
- security of verb tenses and expression for AO5
- the use of a range of sentence structures for AO5.

Varying sentence structure and punctuation were areas centres had focussed on: varying the way sentences begin; more use of subordinate clauses to begin complex sentences; effective use of one-word sentences and one-sentence paragraphs to demonstrate conscious crafting. Some candidates attempted to use ambitious vocabulary while some seemed to steer away from ambitious vocabulary in order to maintain accuracy. A key message to centres is to focus on crafting and organisation whatever the nature of the task. This was a common weakness running through all but the very best answers - some took too long getting to the point of the narrative. The more 'pedestrian' answers were formulaic, showing a lack of organisation and often demonstrated a lack of planning and direction. Be ambitious in the structure, vocabulary and range of ideas and try to be creative and original. There was some excellent description and evidence of crafting at all levels. The least successful responses were far too long, with no sense of organisation or direction.

In terms of register it was clear that the majority of the candidates knew how to write an imaginative piece, however there were a few that produced responses more like an essay. Examiners noted that lack of control could let candidates down and that control of expression was also a problem at times.

Question 2: Write about a time when you, or someone you know, had an exciting experience.

The numbers of each writing response were small given the small entry, but this question proved most popular. Examiners noted a wide range of responses to this question being offered which allowed the full range of marks to be applied, since all candidates were able to offer ideas about a time that they or someone else had an exciting experience.

There were quite a few successful responses to this question, with probably the best based firmly on personal experiences, such as a birthday celebration, a concert, a first bicycle, a camping trip or hike with friends, a family holiday and, perhaps the most popular, a school trip.

The experience provided a useful structure, such as the school trip which visited three places, each of which was described in turn. A first experience of skydiving used some effective description: 'I could feel my mouth being pulled in all directions, like driving a superfast car...feeling like an agent on a mission to save the world.' Some responses followed the invitation to use imagination, such as the girl who became an assistant manager to a famous singer, just for the day, and 'like Cinderella, returned to my normal life.' One candidate wanted to become a 'famous, brown-skinned actress from Asia', with the school play providing a suitable opportunity.

In some instances, responses spent too long getting to the point, having breakfast, getting ready, packing, taking the bus/train/plane, leaving insufficient time to describe the exciting experience.

Example 1



It was one of the day exciting and memorable day for us. We had a plan to go out the morning and come back home at night. We took ~~our~~ permission from our parents and they allowed us to go. In the next morning we started our journey. ~~first~~ At first ~~we~~ we had our breakfast and started the journey we ~~had~~ wanted to go to an hilly area. We took some snacks, had for us. To have a while we are travelling. We started ~~but~~ journey we stopped ~~many~~ in many places we saw many things over there and started the journey again after travelling we ~~can~~ went to have our lunch at a restaurant hotel. We finished ~~the~~ our lunch and started the journey again and we did not want

we stop anywhere because it might be
 late for us. So after some time
 we went to our destination
 and the place where was such
 a nice and beautiful place. we
 set up we took a place and
 set up our tent in a
 place and then we changed many
 things. and it was becoming evening
 by the time we did
 the BBQ for the night and it
 was very cold at the night
 so we put fire at the night
 because it was very cold that
 time. At the night we made
 tea for us and the weather
 and sky was so beautiful and
 amazing for we were just looking
 at it. our time also

Examiner Comments

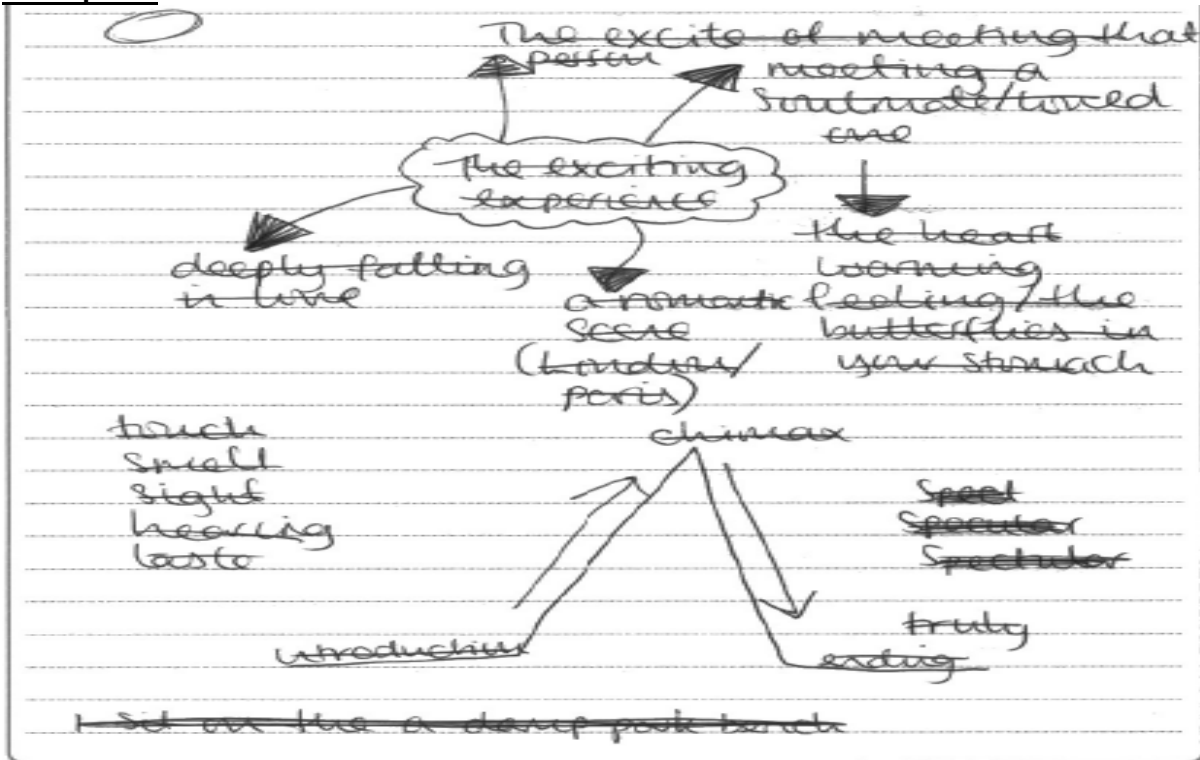
It is always important to remember how difficult it can be to write a response to a question never seen before in 45 minutes, writing creatively and effectively. There is not a lot that happens in this story, but it is more than basic.

The candidate communicates in a broadly appropriate way. There is an opening, some basic development and a conclusion - being allowed to go on a trip, the journey, the excitement of eating out, setting up a tent, enjoying the sights. The candidate therefore shows some grasp of the purpose and of the intended reader. The use of form, tone and register is quite basic, but some touches of description (like the beautiful sky) move it to being more straightforward.

In this response there is evidence of full Level 1 achievement in AO4, and the candidate just moves into the middle of Level 2 with a mark of 6. AO5 is not quite as secure into Level 2. The candidate definitely expresses and orders information and ideas, but there are no paragraphs and nothing to suggest a range of structural and grammatical features. There is some correctly spelt vocabulary, for example *permission*, *journey*, *travelling*. There is a lack of control of punctuation, so the third bullet point is met in Level 1: uses punctuation with basic control, creating undeveloped, often repetitive, sentence structures.

6+3 = 9

Example 2



The exciting experience

I sat on a damp park bench, looking out towards ~~at~~ the dark and dull London. I sat there lonely, wondering if I'll ever meet that special someone, that person that brings excitement and happiness into your life.

I wandered home, ^{with} the cold winter breeze hitting me, ^{and} the ~~leaf~~ leaves catching onto my feet. I quickly stopped at a near by coffee shop couple streets down from my flat. ~~A tall, brown haired male~~ ^{And a} brown haired male stood tall over the till waiting to take my order, I felt like I knew him before, like I've been around his presence. A connection like a spark was already between us. I left with ^{my coffee and} many questions, I kept asking myself.

I continued returning to the same coffee shop, it was the most exciting part of my day, the connection grew stronger and stronger, ^{and} we got to know each other more. Butterflies filled my stomach my ^{heart} felt warm. Had I met the one?

We wandered out of the wicker shop sometimes, taking night time strolls across the paths of London. Christmas time was arriving ~~soon~~, the fairy lights started to boom, the Christmas tree making a spectacular ^{return} the smell of ginger bread ~~and~~ ^{ing} the streets. I ~~could~~ ^{couldn't} of been happier I was spending it with someone that brought ~~that~~ ^{excitement} into my life. I was ~~falling~~ ^{slowly} ~~falling~~ ^{falling} alone with ~~him~~.

With Christmas ~~day~~ ~~starting~~ in ~~two~~ ^{two} days. we set out to find the perfect Christmas tree together, the crisp smell of the freshly chopped trees ~~covered~~ the field hitting you with every gust of wind we picked the perfect one and I couldn't wait to decorate it when ~~we got~~ ^{we got} home. ~~Some~~ lights, ball-balls, tinsel covered the tree. It lit up the room. ~~The~~ ~~smile~~ ~~on~~ ~~my~~ ~~face~~ ~~was~~ ~~my~~ ~~smile~~ took over my face, my cheeks started to hurt, I had ~~truly~~ ^{truly} met the one.

Till one day, Christmas was over the dullness of London set again. People went

back to work, moods changed, everyone was sad again. I did the usual ~~and~~ ^{and} sat on the dompered bench in an old park of ~~London~~ ^{London} and ~~grabbed~~ ^{grabbed} a coffee on the way back to realise...

He wasn't there, ~~his~~ ^{his} tall figure ~~didn't~~ ^{didn't} welcome me in like it normally did. Where had he gone? I asked his co-workers. I also grew to know them better as I went in ~~there~~ ^{there} so often. At first they hesitated to tell me, they didn't want to break ~~the~~ ^{the} heartbreaking news ~~through~~ ^{through} ~~me~~. Anger came upon ^{me} I wanted to know, ~~but~~ ~~they~~ ~~didn't~~ ~~say~~ ~~anything~~ ~~but~~

They stuttered.

After time one told me ^{they said} "he left." My heart dropped, questions running through my head had it been something I've done? they quickly reassured me that it was an emergency and they didn't get told ~~me~~ either, he just had to leave.

So many emotions ran through my head.

the ^{heart} warm^{ing} feeling had gone, the butterflies had slowly disappeared. The excitement in my life had left me. I was left lonely once again cold and heartless. I wondered ^{in my head} replaying old memories, ^{slowly} my heart sparked like a match but nothing can compare to the exciting ^{and} loving feeling I once had.

* across the streets

Examiner Comments

This response has some planning on the first page, which is always helpful for candidates to shape their response. The candidate is really striving for effect in the opening, with the alliteration helping the creation of the depressing setting to reflect the mood of the narrator.

There is secure realisation of purpose and the expectations and requirements of the intended reader. There is effective use of form, tone and register despite some elements of cliché - the repeated ending of paragraphs with the feelings the narrator has about the mystery man helps to create a feeling of unease about the relationship, whether deliberate or not. The structure is well-handled, for example the questions to create doubt in the reader, 'had I met the one?'

There is successful communication and therefore a mark at the top of Level 4, 15, is appropriate for AO4. All of Level 4 is met, but there is no evidence of subtlety/sophistication for Level 5.

For AO5 information and ideas are managed, and deliberate effects are created, for example with the use of short sentences. Vocabulary is varied and quite wide in places, for example *presence*, *spectacular*, *hesitated*, *heartbreaking*. There are occasional spelling errors. Punctuation is accurate and there is some (although not much) variation, for example question marks. Syntax is managed for deliberate effect, for example the single line paragraph. A mark of 9 credits the positives in this response.

$$15+9 = 24$$

Question 3: Write a story with the title 'The Dark City'.

This question was completed by very few candidates for this series, but did give the opportunity for some wide-ranging and creative ideas. The dark city appeared in many different guises, often as science fiction: 'It's not a bar I was in, it's Lucifer's playground.' Less successful responses made little sense, for example monsters called nightmares/Big Ben 'frozening'/'appocelipes'. Examiners noticed a real variety here, for example one was an account of a football match where the lights went off part way through and the hero absorbed the attributes of Ronaldo! Another response explained a move from 'Innerfield', where everyone was happy,

to 'Outerfield', where all were sad, with a portal to get back to the former. One examiner picked out: 'One, however unlikely, followed the path of a man who murdered a policeman, buried, appropriately, under the newly constructed police station! Curses, monsters, murders...certainly dark.'

The range of ideas shows the creativity of candidates, which should be credited.

Example 1

The Dark city

No people, no light, no life, no hope; this was the Dark City, Erna ~~had~~^{lived} a great life with her parents in yoshmer, (~~old~~ this was the real name of the city) friends, family and money, what more can you want, however it was all taken away after that incident, the disease that killed 98% of the world's population!

After the ~~death~~ outbreak of Acin (the disease), infected people would die in a matter of hours, ~~where the~~ ~~for~~ Acin took less than a ~~or~~ month to kill the world, but in yoshmer there was one survivor, Erna, her body proved to be immune to the virus, but before this information was announced to the world, ~~yosh~~ yoshmer was already done.

Erna; who is 21 at the moment, lived in her old house, ~~where~~ the site of it could scare anyone to death, ^{the} walls were a moment away from collapsing, bugs were surrounding the house, the smell of blood and decay filled the air, this wasn't happening in her house ^{alone}, this was affecting the whole city, the disease was transmitted by air, it creates a

dark fog and ~~never around~~ ^{spreads}, therefore yashmir was now the Dark city.

Emma always felt empty, alone and was always suffering, but she realised that enough is enough, it was time for her to move out, to find other survivors, to save the world.

But to where?

~~But~~ She gathered ~~what~~ everything she thought was edible, all the water she ~~could~~ ^{could} find, put on her mask and moved, she took the main road that led to the biggest city nearby, the road was ~~done for~~ ^{done for}, animal remainings, destroyed cars and dead bodies could be found alongside the road, Emma feared what might be ~~ahead~~ ahead but with cheer determination she moved on, as the survivor, as the saviour.

~~Days, weeks~~ Days turned into weeks and weeks into months, she had left the city Dark city long ago, moving from one city to another, scavaging for supplies, hoping to find someone, anyone to ~~talk~~ talk to. Slowly ~~the~~ the determination decreased, her body weakened, the disease didn't affect her.

But the acidity was eating her skin, hope was all what was left.

~~Food ran out, water ran out~~ Food ran out, water ran out, all she could do now was think of the old times, the times with her friends and family, fancy dinners and expensive gifts, all she has now is food for one more meal, ~~and~~ she wasn't scared of death, she has already seen enough to face death ~~in the eye~~ directly. Emma knew it would soon be over, while singing her mother's favourite song, ~~the~~ Asin has eaten the last bit of skin on ~~Emma's~~ Emma's body, she lost feeling in her limbs, her body can no longer move, Emma knew that it was done, strangely a ray of sunlight ~~is~~ creaked through the dark gloomy clouds and penetrated the dark fog, the butter-gold ray of sun danced on ~~Emma's~~ Emma's face, ~~her~~ she felt happy for the first time in years, ~~and~~ with her last breath she said with tears in her eyes that wasn't as soon as they came out, "there will always be hope".

Examiner Comments

This is a secure example of Level 3 achievement for AO4, and there are some effective touches which just move it into Level 4. The response communicates clearly the ideas of the disease and the impact of it, although the direction of the story could be more effectively and securely managed (for example the reasoning for leaving when the population is wiped out and the ending). The opening is quite effectively organised and quite dramatic in tone, but the following sections are not so well-controlled. Some phrases have some touches of effectiveness, for example, 'But to where?', 'as the survivor, as the saviour'. However, there are lapses in control, seen in sentences which are too long and some varied use of tense.

For AO4 the response meets Level 3 securely. It communicates clearly, with a clear sense of purpose and understanding of the intended reader. There is appropriate use of form, tone and register. The touches of effective description and crafting just move AO4 into Level 4 with a mark of 12.

For AO5 the candidate connects appropriate information and ideas, and these ideas have some development. The candidate attempts to use structural and grammatical features and paragraphing make the meaning clear, but there are lapses in control, for example verb tense. There is some varied vocabulary, for example *disease*, *population*, *surrounding*, *transmitted*, *determination*, *scavenging*. There is mostly accurate spelling. The use of punctuation is not very secure, but the candidate does attempt to adapt sentence structures as appropriate. For AO5 the candidate meets the middle of Level 3 and achieves a mark of 6.

12+6 = 18

Example 2

The Dark City

The city I woke up to is bright. Lines — rows and rows of lit apartment windows ~~are~~ ^{were} splayed all over the skyline. I ~~stayed~~ ^{stayed} in my bed, unmoving. Even with a city so bright and vivid in the night before my eyes, to me, it was dark.

My eyes flickered to the pavement below. The concrete was drenched, the flood from the previous morning nearly disappearing completely. A few meters above, the apartment I ~~was~~ was in ~~the~~ wasn't lit up.

At my side, my phone screen lit up, as though mocking me. My mood soured, lamenting why I couldn't have been as bright as the city lights, as beautiful as the scenery in front of me. Sighing, I begrudgingly grabbed my phone and pressed the green telephone button, accepting a call.

"Hi," I greeted. "Who is this?"

I hadn't bothered looking at the caller's ID, too caught up in my lonesome sorrow. New years was depressing for me — lonely and gloomy.

"Hey!" a cheerful voice chimed back. I felt my eyes widen upon recognition.

"Kei?" I questioned, surprised. She was one of my longest friends, but I hadn't been keeping in touch with her recently.

Kei laughed slightly at my questioning, unsure call of her name. "Yep," she said. "I didn't know that you'd pick up. I thought I was dreaming when my call went through."

"Sorry," I apologized, then sighed. My gaze trailed to the deep shadows in my room. They reminded me of how my life had been for the past few days—no, months. After a long pause, I said, "I was kind of depressed and all over the place. I wasn't mentally stable enough to keep in touch."

Kei hummed. "It's okay," she reassured me. Then after a moment's hesitation, Kei blurted out, "I'm here for you."

"What?"

"I—" Kei sighed. "I'm here for you," she repeated. "If you're having a hard time, I'm here for you. Lean on me. Tell me your worries."

I was silent for a while.

Kei then spoke again, my silence inviting ~~her words~~, "I called because I wanted to wish you a happy new year."

A small puff of breath, falling just short of a laugh, left my mouth.

"You called me just for that?" I teased but warmth surged throughout my chest at the revelation.

"Hey! Don't laugh!" Kei ~~explained~~ exclaimed. "Even though we haven't talked in a while, you're still one of my closest friends. Of course I'd call you to wish you a happy new year!"

I laughed, this time voluntarily. I threw my head back as I did, joy completely taking over my body. Another silence soon descended.

"... Hey," I called out after a moment. "Thanks. For calling, I mean. Thank you, Kei."

"No problem." I could hear the grin in her voice. "Take care, yeah? I miss you."

I hummed. "Yeah, ^{you too} ~~you too~~."

The call soon ended, and I looked out my window.

The city wasn't so dark anymore.

Examiner Comments

This is a competent, high-quality and compelling response which presents complex ideas about mental health in a simple, yet very effective and touching way. The opening is effective, and the whole piece is perceptive and subtle. It is perceptive in its creation of an ordinary telephone conversation which is extraordinary - the simple impact of calling and asking after a friend, wishing them a happy new year is very effectively handled. The task is sharply focused on purpose and the expectations of the intended reader. There is sophisticated use of form, tone and register, with subtle simplicity which shows how the mood changes for the narrator because of one simple, short call. There is full achievement of Level 5, and possibly beyond.

For AO5 the candidate manipulates complex ideas, utilising a range of structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion. The response demonstrates that a simple presentation of an idea can have incredible depth and complexity. The style of language, for example verb use, shows some strategic use of vocabulary (they very clearly reflect the complex feelings). The vocabulary may not be as extensive as other full mark answers could be, but it is definitely wide and selective, for example *flickered, lamenting, begrudgingly, recognition, revelation, voluntarily, hesitation*. There are rare spelling errors which do not detract from overall meaning. A range of techniques are employed with subtlety and sophistication, for example dialogue (which is extremely well-managed and assured), single line paragraph for effect, sentence starters, and pathetic fallacy. Punctuation is accurate and well-controlled to aid emphasis and precision, and a range of sentence structures is used accurately and selectively to achieve particular effects. Very well-deserved full marks of 18+12 are awarded.

18+12 = 30

Question 4: Look at the images provided. Write a story that starts ‘Was it really him?’

This question was attempted by fewer candidates than Questions 2 and 3. Even with the few responses seen, examiners felt that the images provided proved thought-provoking for candidates and were used creatively. The lead-in question offered much scope for mystery and most stories had a beginning, middle and end, although some had little real sense of direction. Some recognised the figure as a family member, others used the idea of a photograph album to provide a basis, while a few went for a ghostly effect. It was felt that: ‘For some reason, many Q4s were incomplete, although they didn’t seem any longer than Qs 2 and 3. Perhaps candidates found it more difficult and couldn’t sustain their ideas.’

There were some strange and certainly creative moments, for example, the girl who burnt her hair cooking a fried egg for her brother/Ben Jones, the detective hunting Tim Cruise/Kate, following her ‘father’ down the corridor/the rich man, Mr Donald, killed by his nurse. There were some effective moments, for example: ‘Dread dripped along my spine. I was looking for an exit, an answer. A faint sound. A familiar one. It was the laugh of nightmares, a satanic chuckle that echoed along the alleyway.’

This section shows that many candidates had been encouraged to write for effect, using single word or short sentences for drama and effect.

Example 1

Was it really him?

~~One day I decided to go somewhere somewhere~~
~~after I found something~~

Takagi is a nice and powerful policeman, he never gives up his work or leave something uncomplete. One day he decided to travel somewhere so he took on ~~to~~ two days holiday from his work but nobody knew where he was going, even ~~to~~ his girlfriend who was working in the ~~to~~ same police station.

In the way, he kept looking to a ~~photo~~ girl photo in his police notebook then ~~started~~ crying. When he arrived the place he wanted to go he saw an old man coming to his way then suddenly everything got black.

When he waked up he found himself on top of a bench between two bridges and his hand, ~~mouth and 2~~ legs were tightened up so if ~~to~~ he move just a little bit he would fall and die.

On the other hand, one of his team mates in the police station found an ipad from an unknown sender in front of the police station. When they opened the ipad they found Takagi on the screen where he was on a bench between two bridges so a camera where there following him. The ~~to~~ ipad was made only to access Takagi on screen and if the police opened the ipad to know for who is it they will lose the chance to see ~~to~~ Takagi again.

They started discovering who could be the person who did that to Takagi but could not find anything because he was a nice man that never did something bad to others.

After looking in Takagi's house they found a photo for a girl that killed herself before two months ago so they suggested that ~~was~~ ~~the~~ kidnapper was someone related to ~~the~~ girl. So they found only one person related to ~~her~~ her, he was her teacher for 13 years in school.

Examiner Comments

This story can be difficult to follow, but it is evident that the candidate has clear understanding of this type of writing with its plot twists and turns. There is evidence of full Level 2 achievement in AO4, and the candidate just moves into Level 3. The response communicates in a broadly appropriate way, with some appropriate ideas (Level 3). The narrative is a little too complicated in its design, and therefore lacks what would be needed to be clear or effective, as it ends up with the reader having to do a lot of work to understand that Takagi was best friends with another Takagi, who was killed and whose girlfriend committed suicide as a result of the grief, and the teacher who then kidnapped the living Takagi believed him to be the cause of her death. There is some grasp of the purpose and the intended reader, and the use of form, tone and register is a mixture of straightforward and appropriate (not always securely 'appropriate').

In AO5 the response shows expression and an ordering of information and ideas, and there is use of paragraphs and a range of structural and grammatical features. There is some correctly spelt vocabulary, for example *somewhere*, *suddenly*, *discovering*, *kidnapper*, *girlfriend*. There are some lapses in punctuation and the sentence structures can lack control and be fairly repetitive, so this bullet point in the mark scheme is more achieved in Level 1. 'Best-fit' places the response at the top of Level 2 for AO5, with a mark of 4.

8+4 = 12

Summary

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

- Ensure you have studied the poetry and prose texts in the Anthology fully and use the examination time to remind yourself of the text, not re-read it.
- Read the question carefully and make sure you are answering **this** question, not telling the examiner what you know about the text you have studied. The selection needs to be relevant to the question you are being asked, in this case how the writer presents war.
- For AO2 (language and structure), make sure you are offering ideas about how language and structure are used. Many of you were able to give examples, but sometimes you did not offer points about how the examples were used.
- For AO2 try to cover points on both language and structure, commenting on the different techniques that have been used by the writer and how they link to the overall topic of the question, in this case how the writer presents war.
- When you are writing, always think about your reader, what information and ideas you want to develop and how you want the reader to react at different parts of your writing; then choose the best words, phrases or techniques available to you to achieve those effects.
- Think carefully about how you will begin to write so that it is engaging for your reader from the very start. Make sure your response has clear organisation, internal or paragraphs.
- As you begin to write, know where you will end. This will help you to write in a manner that is cohesive and coherent for your reader.

- Take care throughout with accuracy: spelling, punctuation and grammar
- In writing, focus on crafting and organisation, whatever the nature of the task.
- Avoid using inappropriate language
- Be ambitious in your structure, vocabulary and range of ideas and try to be creative and original. We are often incredibly impressed with your creativity and ability to write in such an imaginative way in the time given.

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