

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2014

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
in English Language B (4EB0)
Paper 01

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Introduction

The texts were accessible across the full range of abilities and enabled candidates to respond appropriately. Examiners commented on the engagement and possible familiarity with the topic of moving to another country that the candidates showed. Because the exam is untiered the full range of ability was seen in the responses.

Better candidates were able to engage fully with both texts and respond with sensitivity and fluency. In their writing they produced lively and confident responses which were well controlled and accurate. Weaker candidates sometimes struggled to understand the passages and their writing lacked coherence and the use of idiomatic English.

There are still candidates who copy out all or considerable chunks of the passages in response to Question 11. This can never be a successful way to respond as the candidate is required to produce their own work. Similarly responses to Question 12 should be original and not prepared essays or regurgitated plots from novels or films.

Some responses to Question 11 and 12 lacked paragraphing, not just the weaker ones. Candidates must understand that the lack of effective paragraphing will limit the success of the response.

There was evidence of some good teaching and learning in the responses to this exam and examiners commented that candidates seemed well prepared on the whole.

Section A (Questions 1-10)

Questions 1-9 are short answer questions which require candidates to locate and retrieve relevant information. Some questions required candidates to use their own words. Question 10 is longer requiring candidates to give a personal response and justify it with references to the text.

There were some very good answers to questions 1-9 but many candidates continued to have difficulty with the requirement for own words thus limiting their performance. Questions 1, 2, 4, 6 & 7 generally produced successful responses although examiners did observe that a number of candidates only scored 1 mark out of 2 for Q7. Some candidates try to use their own words for these basic retrieval questions when they are not required to. However examiners commented that responses to questions requiring candidates to use their own words (3, 5 & 9) quite often had direct lifting from the passage. Centres need to work with candidates to develop their vocabulary and reinforce that candidates must attempt to produce responses to these questions using their own words. Examiners also noted that candidates are giving too many points in response to some of these questions. Candidates should note the mark allocation for questions as a guide to how much information they need to find.

Question 8 produced a variety of responses with most candidates able to provide positive points but not all were successful in offering valid support for them. Examiners commented that candidates are still simply giving quotations from the

text as their point or tended to use very similar wording for the point and the development. Examiners commented that many candidates seemed not to understand how to use references from the text. Successful responses were those who made a point and supported it with a quotation that did not merely repeat the point made word for word. A number of examiners commented that responses to this question were often weak. Centres need to ensure that candidates do not respond to the first part of this question by copying from the extract but by making the point in their own words and then supporting it with an appropriate reference from the extract.

Question 10, there were clear responses to this task showing that candidates had been well prepared for this question and had a secure understanding of what is required. If candidates are able to offer two clear reasons why they have chosen a text and support them with two clear references (quotations or indirect references) and a clear reason for not picking the other text with appropriate support they will produce a successful response. Most candidates are able to make some sort of choice but only the more able could provide developed ideas and close reference to the texts that the task required. Better responses had clearly identified reasons and appropriate support for their choices. These responses sometimes commented on the effect of using first person as opposed to third person narrative and were often able to explain clearly and effectively why this was significant, the use of feelings or mainly facts and/or a detailed comparison of linguistic devices. There were some candidates who only responded on their chosen text which limited their achievement. Examiners commented that many responses were content based rather than analysing the impact of the texts and how effective they were. Weaker responses tended to paraphrase the texts, retelling the passages. There are still some candidates who provide rather weak reasons for their choices e.g. 'It is too difficult'; 'I don't understand it'; 'It has too many long words' or make very general points which could be written about any text e.g. 'the writer uses interesting language' 'it is a good read'. These problems suggest that some candidates have not been prepared for this task and unfortunately these problems limited candidates' achievement. Centres need to continue to work with candidates to make sure they have a clear understanding of valid ways of responding to texts.

Section B (Question 11)

There was evidence of good teaching and learning in the responses to this section.

There was some evidence of planning which was pleasing. The most useful plans were relatively short but allowed candidates to focus and organise their ideas effectively. Unfortunately long plans and re-drafting wasted time and often affected the final response as it was rushed. Plans should be in the answer booklet rather than on an additional sheet.

There were some lively and very effective responses. Most candidates understood the requirement of the task and were able to use the appropriate register for a letter to a friend. It was generally felt candidates engaged with this task and some produced lively and convincing responses. More successful responses used evidence from the texts and added their own ideas, then crafted it with an assured use of English and an insightful understanding of how to relate to their peers. The best responses were lively, entertaining and had a personal feel to them. Most candidates were able to write using a clear letter format (which does not need the addresses) and used an appropriate informal tone for a letter to a friend. Examiners commented that some weaker responses were too formal in style or were more like a speech. Some candidates had problems sustaining the required register throughout their response. There were some responses that did not use the ideas from the texts as a focus for their responses but better candidates were able to integrate ideas from the texts with their own points very effectively. Others did not cover the three bullet points or write about them in sufficient detail. In some cases there was no clear idea of the country to which the recipient was moving which led to rather vague comments e.g. 'it may be hot or cold'. There was enough relevant material in the two texts for candidates to use to address all three bullet points. Centres should remind candidates that they must try to cover all three bullet points otherwise their achievement for AO1 will be limited. The bullet points provided guidance for content and structure which was helpful for some candidates. Examiners commented that some candidates directly lifted content from the original texts which affected the overall quality of the response but it was felt that this was less than in previous series. Language controls were not always secure, especially grammar, and some responses lacked paragraphing. The three bullet points provide a rudimentary structure which should help students to use basic paragraphing. Centres need to remind candidates that lack of accurate paragraphing will limit their achievement.

Section C (Question 12)

12b was the most popular.

There was evidence of some good preparation and teaching in this section.

There was evidence of planning in this section which is to be encouraged. However the use of very long plans or draft essays is to be discouraged as they are not a good use of time. Candidates should be encouraged to plan their response in the answer booklet rather than on separate additional sheets.

Examiners commented on how much they enjoyed reading the responses in this section.

Question 12a:

Question 12a produced some well written responses with ambitious vocabulary and clear and developed arguments. Better responses included realistic and recognisable accounts of what “home” means and avoided clichés. These responses were fully controlled with accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. There were some engaging responses to this task, with most candidates choosing to focus on their own experience of home. A few candidates wrote about the concept of home and what it means to different people - these sometimes tended to be more successful. Weaker responses tended to be rather list like or used too many clichés and lacked detailed exploration of the topic. Some of the responses seem to have been rather limited suggesting candidates had not chosen well. Similarly, it was observed that some candidates had difficulty delivering a sustained argument. Better responses were fully controlled with accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar, however the weaker responses had poor language controls and weak paragraphing. Centres need to ensure that candidates who choose this option are well prepared in argumentative, discursive and rhetorical techniques and are able to develop their ideas effectively.

Question 12b produced some original ideas with a wide range of interpretations of the title. Some examiners commented on how lively and interesting the responses were. There were many different interpretations of the title: a family situation, a move to a new county, new friendships, a new school or some more unusual and imaginative ways of fitting ideas to the title. Many candidates handled this task with enthusiasm and the ability to develop a well-constructed short story was often very impressive. Better responses were able to create tension and use effective description and dialogue with good technical accuracy. Weaker responses lacked development of ideas or the ability to maintain a narrative together with poor language controls. There was some evidence of prepared essays although less than in previous series, which was pleasing. Centres need to ensure candidates have a secure understanding of narrative techniques and the ability to develop a coherent personal response.

Question 12c produced some well written responses that were fully focused on the task effectively describing a busy place. Better responses were detailed and lively with fully developed ideas. Most candidates were able to select a suitable place to describe: market places, airports, schools were common. Weaker candidates tended to list features in responses that tended to be pedestrian and

lacked detail. Better responses had full control of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Weaker candidates had poor language controls and weak paragraphing. There were some quite short responses suggesting these candidates did not have sufficient ideas. Centres need to ensure candidates are aware of the techniques they can use in descriptive writing and also ensure candidates develop a varied vocabulary.

Quality of Written Communication (QWC)

This is assessed in Questions 11 and 12.

Better responses were accurate using a wide range of grammatical constructions, punctuation and vocabulary.

As in previous series, there was evidence of good spelling and reasonably accurate punctuation but most examiners commented on candidates who had problems with grammar and expression. Some of this was unidiomatic English but there were also problems with tenses and sentence structure. These problems limited the effectiveness of the communication.

Centres need to focus on developing accurate and effective grammatical structuring and idiomatic English to enable candidates to express themselves clearly and access the higher mark bands.

Summary

Most successful candidates:

- read the texts with insight and engagement
- selected relevant points in response to the reading questions
- used their own words in response to questions that required them
- wrote clearly with a good sense of audience and purpose in an appropriate register in response to Question 11
- engaged the reader with creative writing that was well structured and developed (Question 12)
- used ambitious vocabulary
- wrote with accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Least successful candidates:

- did not engage fully with the texts
- were not able to find enough relevant points in response to the reading questions
- did not attempt to use their own words in response to questions that required them
- did not write in an appropriate register in response to Question 11
- were not able to select and adapt relevant information for Question 11
- sometimes copied from the original texts in response to Question 11
- were not able to sustain and develop ideas in response to Section C (Question 12)
- sometimes used prepared essays or copied plots from films and novels in response to Section C (Question 12)
- did not demonstrate accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

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