

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2014

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

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## Introduction

The texts were accessible across the full range of abilities and enabled candidates to respond appropriately. Examiners commented that the two extracts about schools clearly interested students and encouraged strong opinions. 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. 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 film plots.

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 some evidence of good teaching and learning in the responses to this exam.

## 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, 3, 5 & 6 generally produced successful responses however some candidates did not select their points from the appropriate part of the text when given line references. Candidates should be reminded that line references are there to ensure they focus on the correct part of the text in their response. For Question 3 some candidates offered 'no compulsion to attend' and 'lessons are optional' as two separate points, when they are the same point. In response to Question 5 quite a number of candidates did not respond using the line references and so made points that were elsewhere in the text e.g. 'using iPads as books' instead of 'pupils having iPads'. The text given in the line references does not say anything about how the iPads are used. Others over interpreted the points e.g. 'can attend class virtually' when the text says students 'can attend the class virtually from their sickbed'. Examiners commented that responses to questions requiring candidates to use their own words (2, 4, 7 & 9) sometimes had direct lifting from the passage and this seemed to be more evident in

responses to question 9. Centres need to work with candidates to develop their vocabulary and ensure that they realise they must attempt to produce responses to these questions using their own words.

Question 8 produced a variety of responses with most candidates able to provide positive points about technology but not all were successful in offering valid support for them. Some examiners commented that the layout of this question clearly helped students understand what was required. A few candidates did not expand their points sufficiently to be given credit – some giving a single word e.g. 'laptop'. There was also a significant amount of confusion over the separation between the point being made and the evidence needed to support the point. The advice to give the point 'in your own words' was meant to help candidates to respond in the correct manner to this question, however this has not always been the case with a number of candidates simply using quotations for both parts of the response. There were a few candidates who took examples from other areas of the text (not specifically from lines 32-45). Centres need to ensure that candidates do not respond to the first part of this question by copying from the passage but by making the point in their own words and then supporting it with reference to the passage.

Question 10 provided varied responses with most candidates able to make some sort of choice but only the more able were able to provide developed ideas and close reference to the texts that the task required. There were some candidates who only responded on their chosen text which limited their achievement. The majority discussed the attractiveness of certain features of the schools referred to by the writers. Strong opinions were expressed regarding the freedom afforded Summerhill students – some positive, some negative - while the innovative nature of the Avenues curriculum and methods drew similarly forceful views. A few candidates took the opportunity to criticise their own schools and so missed the focus of the question. Examiners commented that responses were often content based rather than analysing the impact of the texts or how persuasive they were. Some candidates made their choice based on their like or dislike of the schools discussed in the extracts which was not a successful approach. 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'. 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 some 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 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.

Most candidates understood the requirement of the task however not all were able to use the appropriate register for a speech. More successful responses were striking in both their focus on the texts and their ability to write a convincing speech. Most candidates made some attempt to write a speech but often this was limited to a greeting and thank you at the end. Examiners commented that a number of candidates had problems sustaining the required register for a speech throughout their response and some candidates did not really attempt an appropriate register. 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. Less successful responses described education or school in general without reference to the bullet points. 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. 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 produced a few well written responses with ambitious vocabulary and clear and developed arguments. Better responses developed their ideas often supporting them with apt anecdotes. Some candidates offered good arguments and many included the lack of responsibility and freedom to make mistakes as a benefit of school. Some wrote with considerable warmth about their school experience. Most considered the joys of having few responsibilities and making life-long friendships as well as appreciating the skills and pastoral care of their teachers. Some went on to develop these ideas by comparing school days with their future working lives – almost universally with dread! Weaker responses tended to be descriptions of their school or what their school day was like. Some of the responses seem to have been rather limited suggesting candidates had not chosen well. 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. Typical subjects were lack of freedom due to restrictive parents, being imprisoned, being kidnapped or being a slave. Most responded in a fairly predictable way with triumphant escapees savouring their freedom in the final lines. Most limited the action, controlling the plot to a manageable length. Some students wrote evocatively of the terror and trials of captivity whilst a few displayed some skill in describing their prisons in whatever form. Better responses were able to create tension and use effective description and dialogue with good technical accuracy. These responses showed a good control of plot and an ability to write evocatively. Weaker responses had narratives that were unrealistic or illogical. Weaker responses had poor language controls and limited and underdeveloped ideas. One examiner commented on re-workings of well known books and films being used. 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 an untidy place. Better responses were detailed effectively using imagery to create a vivid picture with good vocabulary choices and evidence of crafting. Examiners commented that many responses were

pedestrian listing items out of place and the predictable piles of clothing strewn on floors. Fewer, but livelier, descriptions added the shocked reactions of others to the mess or evoked the examiner's disgust through the use of vivid vocabulary and figurative language. There was some good use of imagery such as a pile of dirty laundry being 'a volcano ready to erupt'. Weaker candidates tended to list features in responses that lacked detail or were brief and undeveloped. Most candidates were able to select an appropriate place to describe, most commonly a bedroom. Better responses had full control of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Weaker candidates had poor language controls and weak paragraphing. 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.

There was evidence of good spelling and reasonably accurate punctuation but most examiners commented on candidates who had problems with grammar/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, from the appropriate part of the text, 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
- did not 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 the original texts



- 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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