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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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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 with the topic of social media and the Internet that the candidates showed.

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.

Examiners commented that a significant number of candidates did not use their own words in the questions that asked for them. It is essential that candidates should try to use their own words in order to be successful in responding to these questions.

There are still candidates who copy out all, or considerable parts, of the extracts in response to Question 11. This can never be a successful way to respond as candidates are required to produce their own work and show the ability to adapt the original texts for a different audience and purpose. Similarly responses to Question 12 should be original and not prepared essays.

Some responses to Questions 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 examination and some examiners commented that many candidates seemed well prepared on the whole.

Section A (Questions 1-10)

This section consists of mainly short answer questions that 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 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, 5, 6 & 7 generally produced successful responses. On Question 1 candidates lost marks because they had not read the question correctly or selected random incorrect phrases from the lines. A common incorrect response was 'social media didn't exist', whilst others talked about when she became a teenager rather than about her childhood. The responses to Question 2 were mostly successful, however examiners commented some candidates were able to score two marks by copying out large sections of the specified lines. This is not a recommended approach as sometimes unselective copying meant that the important words or phrases

were missed out. A common incorrect response was 'updated every minute'. The responses to Question 5 were mostly successful but some candidates incorrectly referred to cyber-bullying. Some of the responses to Question 6 showed some misunderstanding or misreading of the question. A number of candidates thought it was the children who lacked education, and approached this question from the wrong perspective. A common incorrect response referred to the 'explosion of technology' and how much time children spend online. A few responses took their answers from outside the lines, or invented their own answers rather than relying on the text. Question 7 was a very straightforward question to answer, with some candidates rephrasing the text when there was no need. A few candidates got confused and suggested that children were actually becoming addicted to drugs. Some responses used the wrong lines. Examiners also commented that candidates used their own words when these questions were simply retrieval questions.

Examiners commented that responses to the short questions requiring candidates to use their own words (Questions 3, 4 & 8) quite often had direct lifting from the texts. This seemed to be a continuing problem with some candidates using quotations from the texts in quotation marks. If candidates do not attempt to use their own words their responses to these questions will not be successful. In responding to Question 3 most candidates were able to identify the relevant points, but many struggled to express them in their own words or adapt the text sufficiently. Phrases that were commonly lifted included 'make your own judgement', 'voice my opinion openly', 'stand up to your family', 'overcame my shyness and anxiety' and 'participating more in family discussion'. A few candidates used the wrong lines to respond to the question. Question 4 also produced responses which had lifted material from the text. The most commonly lifted phrases were 'more social', 'in tune with world issues' and 'voice my (heavily backed-up) views'. Many candidates were able to grasp the idea of having more interesting conversation starters with new people. Examiners commented that there was lifting in the responses to Question 8 There were some responses where candidates were clearly able to use their own words, but very few could rework 'bringing offenders to justice'. Clearly this was vocabulary that challenged many of them.

Question 9 - Many candidates were able to identify relevant points in their own words and provide support for them in the form of quotations from the text. However a significant number of candidates did not use their own words for their points, despite the rubric and layout of the question, which meant they could not achieve any marks. A number of candidates produced paraphrases of their chosen support as their point – often too close to the text to be rewarded. Many candidates struggled to replace 'communication', 'face-to-face conversation', 'talking openly' and 'open discussion' and therefore lost marks. The most common correct response was for the fifth point on the mark scheme where candidates were able to rework the idea of parents keeping devices away from children at night. There were still a few candidates who do not seem to know what to do on this question and wrote random single words on each line.

Centres need to work with candidates to develop their vocabulary.

Question 10 provided varied responses with most candidates able to make some sort of choice but only the more able could provide the developed ideas and close reference to the texts that the task required. Better responses had clearly identified reasons and appropriate support for their choices. Pleasingly, most (but not all) candidates know how to approach this answer now. Some candidates wrote detailed responses but then failed to include a final piece of support to go with the reason why they did not choose the other text. There were some candidates who only responded on their chosen text which limited their achievement. There were a number of candidates who offered perfectly valid reasons, but no supporting evidence. Most were able to identify that Text Two was aimed at a more adult audience, with advice and statistics, whether they used these as reasons to choose that text or not. Weaker responses tended to paraphrase the texts, retelling the passages or produced content based responses. Some weaker candidates made their choice based on the difficulty of the vocabulary or that they thought one of the texts was boring or used generic reasons such as 'it was interesting'. Some responses were narrative, with at least a couple resorting to copying out large parts of the texts after an introductory sentence.

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. Plans should be in the answer booklet rather than on an additional sheet.

Most candidates covered all three bullet points but the third bullet point (advice for parents and teenagers) generally had the least coverage. Some used the bullet points as sub-headings. Most responses systematically worked their way through each of the bullet points to varying degrees. The most commonly cited disadvantage was cyber-bullying, followed by unsuitable games, with very few considering the parents' perspectives. Some responses used their own ideas to fit the bullet points, alongside ideas from the texts, and these generally tended to be successful, showing a good consideration of the issues. Some candidates clearly aimed their advice at parents and/or students, showing good audience awareness. These responses used rhetorical features quite successfully such as rhetorical questions and inclusive pronouns. Some responses read more as essays rather than having any particular audience appeal. Examiners did comment that this question seemed to be problematic for many candidates this year, as many resorted to lifting phrases from the texts with no attempt to rework. In some responses there was evidence that candidates had been taught how to set out a web page, and although their use of layout and features was highly impressive, unfortunately, the majority of responses presented this way consisted of 90-100% lifted material. Candidates should be taught that they must use their own words

in response to this question as directly lifted content from the original texts will affect 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. Examiners commented that many candidates seem unaware that 'internet' requires the definite article before the noun.

Centres should work to ensure candidates have a clear idea of how to write appropriately for different audiences and purposes and can select relevant material from the texts and adapt it for the task in their own words.

Section C (Question 12)

12b was the most popular.

There was evidence of some good preparation and teaching in this section. Examiners commented on how much they enjoyed reading the responses 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.

Question 12a produced a few well written responses clear and developed arguments. Candidates who chose this question were usually able to construct valid arguments, although some were quite short and not well developed. Paragraphing and organisation were not always well considered. Many candidates included personal experiences which they developed into arguments. The style was often as an argumentative essay, but some veered towards producing an article style response. Weaker candidates had problems with both maintaining a clear argument and structuring their responses. 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: The title 'The Turning Point' produced some original ideas with a wide range of interpretations of the title. A full range of responses was seen. Most candidates were able to incorporate the title of the story into their response, but with some it was extremely tenuous, as they reproduced planned stories without adapting them to fit the title. Familiar plots emerged of the friend addicted to drugs, the dying parent and the life of crime. However there were also some very touching stories which seemed to draw upon personal experience. Many were plot-driven at the expense of any crafting of description. Examiners commented that some of the ideas were a little far-fetched or covered rather unpleasant events.

Some of the narratives were fairly predictable and often pedestrian. 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.

Centres need to ensure candidates have a secure understanding of narrative techniques and the ability to develop a coherent personal response.

Question 12c produced a wide variety of responses. Examiners did comment that it was sometimes an interesting insight into where candidates live. A few candidates described a place rather than specifically a view from the window. Others became distracted by the contents of the room rather than what lay outside. Some candidates chose to describe the view from the examination room. The more successful responses utilised an evocative range of vocabulary, and considered features such as the weather and time of year to add depth to the description. Better responses were detailed and lively with fully developed ideas. Weaker candidates produced responses that tended to be pedestrian, narrative and lacked detail. Better responses had full control of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Weaker candidates had poor language controls and weak paragraphing.

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 some 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. Subject-verb agreement was often a problem. Capital letters were often not obvious and distinguishable and capital letters for proper nouns were often absent. Some candidates were using commas instead of full stops followed by a capital letter, indicating the start of a new sentence. Examiners commented that there is an increasing use of 'gonna'.

Responses to Question 12c had more sentence fragments or missing parts of verb constructions than the other question 12 choices.

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 form, audience and purpose in an appropriate register in response to Question 11
- selected and adapted relevant information for Question 11
- engaged the reader with creative writing that was clearly expressed, well developed and controlled (Question 12)
- used accurate paragraphing
- used ambitious vocabulary
- written 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 form or register in response to Question 11
- were not able to select and adapt relevant information for Question 11
- sometimes copied the original texts (Question 11)
- were not able to develop ideas clearly in response to Section C (Question 12)
- did not use paragraphs
- did not demonstrate accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

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