



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In English Language B (4EB1) Paper 01R

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Introduction

Examiners commented that there was evidence of some good teaching and learning in preparation for this examination in the responses seen and examiners commented that many candidates seemed well prepared on the whole.

Examiners commented that the texts about empowering students were accessible across the full range of abilities and candidates were able to engage with the tasks and respond appropriately.

Stronger candidates were able to engage fully with both texts and respond thoughtfully and articulately. Their writing responses were often engaging and effective and were well controlled and accurate. Less able candidates sometimes struggled to understand the passages and the questions. Their writing was often pedestrian or lacked coherence and had weak language controls.

There were a few candidates who copied out all, or considerable chunks, of the extracts in response to Question 8. This can never be a successful way to respond as the candidate is required to produce their own work and show the ability to adapt the original texts for a different audience and purpose.

Section A (Questions 1-7)

This consists of two short retrieval questions and a question on the writer's use of language and structure to create effects on each text and a question requiring candidates to compare the two texts.

Question 1

This is a straightforward retrieval question on Text One, which does not require candidates to use their own words.

The majority of candidates correctly identified one of the given names within the line references. Occasional spelling errors did not detract from the responses. A few candidates wasted time copying down too much.

Question 2

This is a straightforward retrieval question on Text One, which does not require candidates to use their own words.

Most candidates successfully identified a relevant point, commonly 'bring in real-world events' or 'demonstrate connections'. Those who chose to use their own words sometimes produced responses that lacked clarity and so

could not achieve the mark. Other candidates included several points, which was not required. Occasionally candidates used the wrong line references.

Candidates must ensure they read the question carefully.

Question 3

The question asks the candidate how the writer presents her advice to teachers.

Responses to this question were on the whole encouraging. Examiners commented that most candidates demonstrated at least some understanding of the text and awareness of the devices used to present ideas. Most candidates were able to explain the language and structure and identify features and support them with a relevant quotation from the text, but they did not always explain how these features helped the writer to achieve her effects. Stronger candidates were able to engage with the significance of language using a variety of examples. Language terms were frequently used, often correctly. References were regularly made to the use of direct address, the use of questions, the use of the word 'inspiring' and the metaphor 'in a bubble'. There was an understanding of the structure of the piece with regular references to the subtitles and how the content of the text had developed.

Some candidates offered an explanation of the language used, but the points made did not always link to the task of how the writer presents her advice to teachers and simply identified every language device used regardless of its relevance to the title. Some candidates covered all sections of the text and so, although there were many quotations used, sometimes these supported a content-based response rather than focusing on the writer's techniques. Sometimes candidates made generic comments such as 'it makes it more interesting' or 'this makes the reader want to read on' which do not clearly explain how the writer has achieved her effects. There was also evidence of 'feature spotting' where candidates identify (correctly) particular language features but do not explain them.

Less successful candidates produced responses that were content based without much focus on 'how the writer presents her advice'. These tended to focus on 'what' the writer said rather than 'how' the writer presented the advice to teachers. Some of the weakest responses were simply summaries of the text.

Centres need to remind candidates that this question asks how the writer achieves his/her effects, and not what he/she says.

Question 4

This is a straightforward retrieval question on Text Two, which does not require candidates to use their own words.

Most candidates answered correctly with 'it is about the reputation of young people, and 'young people have the opportunity to show they can do really positive things'. A common error was selecting 'recognises and supports young people' without any comments on them doing positive things.

There were more attempts at using own words in response to this question but these responses often lacked clarity.

Candidates need to make sure they have read the question carefully.

Question 5

This is a straightforward retrieval question on Text Two, which does not require candidates to use their own words.

Common correct responses included 'don't be scared', 'you have a lot more power than you realise', 'having courage' and 'don't stop screaming until they hear you'. When candidates attempted to use their own words it was mostly clear, e.g. 'having courage' re-worded as 'be brave'.

Less successful candidates sometimes selected random words that made no sense out of context, e.g. 'scared', 'power' or 'effort'.

Candidates need to make sure they have read the question carefully.

Question 6

The question asks the candidate how the writer conveys her belief that young people can make a difference. Examiners commented that candidates' responses had similar qualities to the responses to Question 3 although some observed that this question was answered more successfully.

Successful candidates were able to explore the writer's use of language and structure using a variety of examples. There were references to the use of pronouns, repetition, the inspirational language and short sentence structures. Candidates were able to explore the metaphor 'shine a spotlight'. They appreciated the format of the speech and the positive tone. Most candidates were able to identify and explain what the writer is saying and the language used to express this although there was often a tendency to describe what the chosen examples said rather than how the language was used for effect. A few candidates did not focus on the task and simply went through the text, identifying the techniques used but not addressing

how these helped the writer to convey her belief that young people can make a difference.

Less successful candidates produced responses that were content based without much focus on 'how the writer presents her ideas'. Some candidates wrote a summary of the text but did not offer any comments on language or structure. Sometimes candidates made generic comments such as 'it makes it more interesting' or 'this makes the reader want to read on' which do not clearly explain how the writer has achieved her effects. There was also evidence of 'feature spotting' where candidates identify (correctly) particular language features but do not explain them.

Less able candidates were confused about what was written and how it was expressed. They lacked focus on the question and included the negative views about young people.

As with Question 3, centres need to remind candidates that this question asks how the writer achieves his/her effects, and not what he/she says.

Question 7

This question requires candidates to compare how the writers present their ideas and perspectives on why it is important for young people to be involved in social change. Examiners commented that the majority of candidates were able to identify and discuss basic differences at a minimum, and some produced well-thought out comparisons of the extracts.

Candidates attempted to deal with both passages and they were able to make appropriate links and connections. Some chose to do this separately text by text with a comparative section at the end whereas others made points of comparison linking the passages throughout. The latter approach tended to produce more successful responses.

Successful candidates focused on the question and developed a balanced approach in comparing the texts. They developed a wide range of comparisons and explored the writers' ideas and perspectives. Most candidates understood that Text One was aimed at teachers whereas Text Two was aimed at young people and that both texts consider the importance of empowering young people. There were references to tone and levels of formality with some candidates commenting on the more formal style of Text One showing that it was more serious, and therefore, more meaningful.

Sometimes candidates commented on comparisons and supported them appropriately but did not develop their explanations. There were a few candidates who offered a number of comparisons but did not provide any kind of support or references to the texts.

Some candidates compared the language of the texts, so there was possibly some repetition of points that might have been made in response to Questions 3 and 6. However, there were some candidates who compared the language without giving examples.

Less able candidates often compared the content. Some candidates wrote paragraphs which summarised the content of the two extracts but did not compare them. Less successful candidates sometimes wrote about one text and then added some undeveloped points about the other text at the end. The least successful candidates wrote very little.

Occasionally candidates answered this question as if it was Question 10 on the legacy specification. This is not a successful approach as it does not allow the candidate to fully compare the texts.

Centres will need to continue to work with candidates to make sure they have a clear understanding of valid ways of responding to texts in Section A. This should include how to analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve their effects and how to write comparative responses.

Section B (Question 8)

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

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. The most successful responses had a strong sense of audience and purpose and included personal touches and rhetorical language to engage the audience. Many candidates were able to adopt an appropriate register and there was some clear evidence of an understanding of the purpose, audience and format required although a few candidates struggled adopt an appropriate register.

AO1

Most candidates referred to the three bullet points and managed to cover a reasonable number of points. Some candidates failed to address the first bullet point (different types of organisations or campaigns) and it was occasionally treated quite superficially although stronger candidates were able to integrate their own examples such as local charities, the Red Cross and UNICEF showing personal engagement.

The second bullet point, concerning how to take part, was sometimes not covered in sufficient detail, but points ranged from the practical 'fill a form in on the internet' to more abstract comments about making decisions and developing independence and resilience.

In responding to the third bullet point candidates commented on the negative perception of young people and how participation in such campaigns was character building. They commented that it was necessary to prove that young people were responsible individuals in their own right.

Less able candidates wrote about just one bullet point, or only commented briefly on the second and/or third. Some lifted information directly from the texts or only considered only one text.

AO4

Examiners commented that most candidates were able to produce a successful letter to a friend encouraging him or her to join an organisation or campaign to make a positive difference to society using form, tone and register appropriately. There was clear evidence of an understanding of the purpose, audience and format required.

Stronger candidates used rhetorical and persuasive techniques and established a sense of the friendly relationship with the recipient. Many candidates used an introductory paragraph devoted to establishing that this was a letter and most candidates sustained an appropriate register for a letter. Sometimes the letters were too formal given the audience was a friend.

Some candidates only acknowledged the register at the beginning and ending of their response, rather than maintaining it through the whole response. Less successful candidates had problems sustaining the required register throughout their response. Some responses were more like recruitment leaflets or articles than a personal letter. There were some quite brief responses.

A05

Most candidates were able to write with clarity and spell a range of vocabulary correctly. Successful candidates had full control of sentence structures and used them for effect. They were able to use some impressive and sophisticated vocabulary. Paragraphing was generally handled well. Some candidates had problems with grammar, despite good spelling and punctuation.

Common errors were: missing out definite and indefinite articles; missing out parts of verbs; incorrect subject/verb agreement; comma splicing; lack of capital letters, especially for 'I' and sometimes at the start of sentences.

Centres should continue to work to ensure candidates have a clear idea of how to adapt ideas from texts and how to write appropriately for different audiences and purposes. They should also be able to write with accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Section C (Question 9, 10 and 11)

Question 10 was the most popular question.

There was evidence of some good preparation and teaching in this section. There was evidence of planning, 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 9

A04

The title was approached in a range of ways – quite a few concentrated on historical and contemporary figures who had made a difference such as Steve Jobs, Malala and Martin Luther King. Others included examples closer to their own experiences, e.g. how a friend or family member made a positive difference to their own life.

Most candidates were able to present an argument with a consideration of both sides. Some used rhetoric to make this sound more like an article with 'you' and rhetorical questions. Stronger candidates gave specific examples,

usually of named people, to demonstrate their points. Some responses were philosophical, and the response was often about the nature of how people can make a difference by joining organisations, fund raising, inspiring others and generally their attitude to life and their overall positivity. Less successful candidates presented muddled ideas or were very brief. Some of these candidates offered points that were quite predictable and found it difficult to sustain an argument, often leading to repetition.

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 10

A04

Some examiners commented positively on the quality of some of the responses to the title 'The Challenge'. There were some well-written narratives with engaging plots.

There were many varied responses to 'The Challenge'. Challenges were both physical and mental. There were challenges about exams, fantasy or military quests, starting a business, parents with cancer, many sports-based responses and mountain climbing, travelling up the Amazon, surviving on a desert island or in a haunted forest. Some narratives were positive and highlighted the importance of succeeding in the challenge and the positive benefits of this achievement. Others ended tragically in that characters became obsessed with their challenge, and then suffered accidents because they became too arrogant to take basic precautions in their quest such as mountain climbing or hiking. Some plots were quite dark. These unpleasant plots sometimes struggled to maintain focus on the title.

Most candidates were able to write a narrative with some sense of plot. Stronger candidates planned their ideas well, focused on developing characters as well as plot, selected (and omitted) details to create pace and sometimes tension. Responses which explored the reasons for the challenge and what the consequences meant in terms of a life change were often more effective. Sometimes narratives had too much direct speech and this impeded the development of the plot.

Less able candidates lacked development of ideas or the ability to maintain a narrative. They struggled at times with clarity, with muddled storylines and weak endings that were not closely related to the events that had

unfolded. Some of the weaker responses showed evidence of prepared essays with little adaptation or memorised descriptive paragraphs.

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

Question 11

A04

Candidates produced some well written responses that were fully focused on the task of describing a time when they felt nervous.

One examiner commented positively on these responses because there was a wide range of interpretations of the task. These included exam nerves, a new school, speaking in public performances on the stage, participation in sporting fixtures, job interviews and first dates. Sometimes these specific times came from childhood memories, and candidates made the comment that they had grown as a result of having experienced these occasions and were now less likely to be nervous if confronted with a similar situation again. Some of these responses could have become sentimental, but that rarely happened and candidates spoke honestly about situations and how they had reacted to them. A few discussed how nerves affect the body with no context. Sometimes the responses were too narrative losing the descriptive focus of the task.

Most candidates were able to express nervousness to some degree. Successful candidates described in detail how it felt to be nervous. They used very effective imagery and gave perceptive descriptions of tension, using structural features as well as vocabulary to build tension. Less successful candidates tended to produce responses that were pedestrian, used a limited range of vocabulary and lacked detail.

Centres need to ensure candidates are aware of the techniques they can use in descriptive writing and also ensure candidates develop a varied vocabulary which they can use appropriately.

A05 Comments across Questions 9, 10 and 11

Spelling, punctuation and grammar were generally sound in many responses. Better responses had full control of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Weaker responses had poor language controls and weak

paragraphing. There was evidence of good spelling and reasonably accurate punctuation, but 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.

Common errors were: problems with homophones; missing out definite and indefinite articles; not maintaining the correct verb tense; incorrect subject/verb agreement; comma splicing; lack of capital letters, especially for 'I' and sometimes at the start of sentences.

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;
- were able to explore language and structure and show how these are used by writers to achieve effects in response to Questions 3 and 6;
- were able to select a wide range of comparisons and explore the writers' ideas and perspectives in response to Question 7;
- were able to select and adapt relevant information for Question 8;
- wrote clearly with a good sense of audience and purpose in an appropriate register in response to Question 8;
- engaged the reader with creative writing that was clearly expressed, well developed and controlled (Questions 9, 10 and 11);
- 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 identify language and structure or made little comment on how these are used by writers to achieve effects in response to Questions 3 and 6;
- were not able to compare the texts or offered very limited comparisons in response to Question 7;
- sometimes narrated or copied the texts in response to Questions 3, 6 and 7;
- did not write in an appropriate register in response to Question 8;
- were not able to select and adapt relevant information for Question 8;
- sometimes copied from the original texts in response to Question 8;
- were not able to sustain and develop ideas clearly in response to Section C (Questions 9, 10 and 11);
- did not demonstrate accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

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