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In English Language B (4EB1)
Paper 1R

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Introduction

Examiners saw a relatively small number of responses this series.

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

The texts about friendship were accessible across the full range of abilities and candidates were able to engage with the tasks and respond appropriately.

More able 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 ways that friends are essential. The most popular points were: 'they are closer than family members', 'they are a shoulder to cry on' and 'they are cushioning when the world is against you'. A few candidates wasted time copying down too much.

Candidates must ensure they read the text and the question carefully.

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 'it allows societies to function', 'it enables formal unions' or 'it keeps the world going'. Those who chose to use their own words (which is not required) sometimes produced responses that lacked clarity and so could not achieve the mark. Other candidates included several points, which was not required.

Candidates must ensure they read the question carefully.

Question 3

The question asks the candidate how the writer shows the reader that friendship is important. Responses to this question were on the whole encouraging.

Examiners commented that most candidates demonstrated at least some understanding of the text and some awareness of the devices used to present ideas. Most candidates were able to select examples of language use, make relevant points and provide some appropriate references, but they did not always explain how these features helped the writer to achieve her effects. Candidates commented on the use of informal language, the use of metaphors, lists and questions. A number of candidates, who were knowledgeable about the features of the text, selected references that were not entirely appropriate for the points that were being made.

More able candidates were able to engage with the significance of language using a variety of examples. They made a thorough analysis of the text, picking out excellent points e.g. the link between 'pooh-pooh' and 'Winnie the Pooh' and using quotations carefully. The best thoughtfully embedded quotations and probed the language in detail.

Less able candidates produced responses that were content based without much focus on the writer's techniques. These tended to focus on 'what' the writer said rather than 'how' the writer showed friendship is important. In some responses many quotations were used but 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. Some of the weakest responses were simply summaries of the text. There were some who merely copied out huge chunks of text.

Centres need to remind candidates that this question asks **how** the writer achieves his/her effects 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 this correctly. Popular points identified were: 'he was an ancient Greek philosopher', 'he studied at the Platonic Academy' and 'he was a promising student'.

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.

The majority of candidates answered this correctly. Common correct responses included 'it is based on mutual appreciation', 'it is long-lasting', 'it is pleasurable' and 'it is beneficial'. Some candidates copied phrases from the text which did not fit the question, showing a lack of understanding.

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

Question 6

The question asks the candidate how the writer presents what Aristotle said about friendship.

Examiners commented that candidates' responses had similar qualities to the responses to Question 3 although some observed that this question was answered less successfully.

Most candidates were able to identify and explain what the writer was 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. They were able to comment on the use of sub-headings and the effect they had. Personal address was also recognised by most. Many made valid points about the relative formality of the text.

More able candidates were able to explore the writer's use of language and structure using a variety of examples. They commented on the use of positive language, the use of the metaphor 'blossom', the effect of the use of personal address and on how the writer used Aristotle to give authority to his words.

Less successful candidates produced responses that were content based without much focus on the writer's techniques. Some candidates wrote a summary of the text but did not offer any comments on language or structure. Some candidates simply re-stated their chosen quotations. 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.

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

Question 7

This question requires candidates to compare how the writers present their ideas and perspectives about friendship. Examiners commented that the majority of candidates were able to identify and discuss basic comparisons at a minimum, and some produced well-thought out comparisons of the extracts.

Most candidates were able to discuss clearly the differences between the articles and draw some comparisons. They commented on the formality of the texts, the positivity shown and the descriptions of friendships.

More able candidates developed a balanced approach in comparing the texts. They developed a wide range of comparisons and explored the writers' ideas and perspectives. They were able to analyse the differences and compare the language as well as the content. However, it was noted that a number of candidates made effective comparisons but limited their comments to the features of the texts instead of exploring ideas and perspectives.

Some candidates wrote about each text separately with a comparative section at the end. More successful responses made points of comparison linking the passages throughout. There were a few candidates who offered a number of comparisons but did not provide any kind of support or references to the texts.

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 able 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.

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.

AO1

Most candidates referred to the three bullet points and managed to cover a reasonable number of points. Examiners commented that most were able to cover all three points securely, using the extracts to good effect. Many answers were quite similar to one another, emphasising the point that they had followed the guidance in the question appropriately.

More able candidates used a systematic approach and fully developed the ideas from the texts. They offered a good number of relevant points and made well-focused comments about friendship. Some added their own feelings, opinions and experiences, which enhanced their responses.

Less able candidates directly lifted much material from the source texts.

AO4

Most candidates understood the requirement of the task and were able to use the appropriate register for an article for a school or college website and there was some clear evidence of an understanding of the purpose, audience and format required although a few candidates struggled to adopt an appropriate register.

More able candidates used a range of rhetorical techniques confidently, demonstrating a secure sense of purpose and the intended audience. These responses were lively and engaging.

Less able candidates had problems sustaining the required register throughout their response. There were some quite brief responses.

AO5

Most candidates were able to write with clarity and spell a range of vocabulary correctly.

More able candidates had full control of sentence structures and used them for effect. They were able to use a wide range of vocabulary and punctuation. 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; 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

Examiners only saw a small number of responses to this question.

AO4

The majority of the responses agreed with the statement 'People need each other'. Ideas covered included that you cannot be successful on your own, we need the support of others and that we need friendship and love.

Most candidates were able to present an argument with a consideration of both sides.

More able candidates produced well organised responses with a range of well-developed ideas. They used a range of techniques successfully to add interest and variety to their writing.

Less able candidates offered points that were quite predictable and found it difficult to sustain an argument, often leading to repetition. These candidates also often presented muddled ideas or were very brief. Some wrote a story rather than a discursive response. A small number copied many of the ideas from the texts.

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

AO4

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

Different interpretations of the title were plentiful. A number of candidates focused on a promise they had made family members or friends before going off overseas to study. A number focused on a promise they had made to someone who had died. There were many reunions.

Most candidates were able to write a narrative with some sense of plot.

More able candidates planned their ideas well, focused on developing characters as well as plot, selecting details to create pace and sometimes tension.

Some narratives were rather long-winded and convoluted where candidates had developed over-ambitious plots. 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. Some candidates wrote responses that showed evidence of prepared essays or used plots from films, computer games or novels.

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

Examiners only saw a small number of responses to this question.

AO4

Candidates produced some well written responses that were fully focused on the task of describing a memorable person.

Commonly chosen memorable people were family members, notably grandparents, friends and teachers. A significant number chose people who were dead.

Most candidates were able to describe the chosen person effectively. Some produced a biographical piece which was not entirely focused on the task of describing the person.

More able candidates described the chosen person in detail. They used effective imagery and successfully described the effect the person has had on them and why they were significant. These responses were enthusiastic and fully focused.

Less able candidates tended to produce responses that were pedestrian, used a limited range of vocabulary and lacked detail. Some responses were too narrative losing the descriptive focus of the task.

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.

AO5 Comments across Questions 9, 10 and 11

Spelling, punctuation and grammar were generally sound in many responses.

Stronger responses had full control of a wide range of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Less able candidates had poor language controls and weak paragraphing. Some examiners commented on a lack of punctuation and many spelling errors.

There was evidence of reasonably accurate spelling and 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 able 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.

Less able 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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