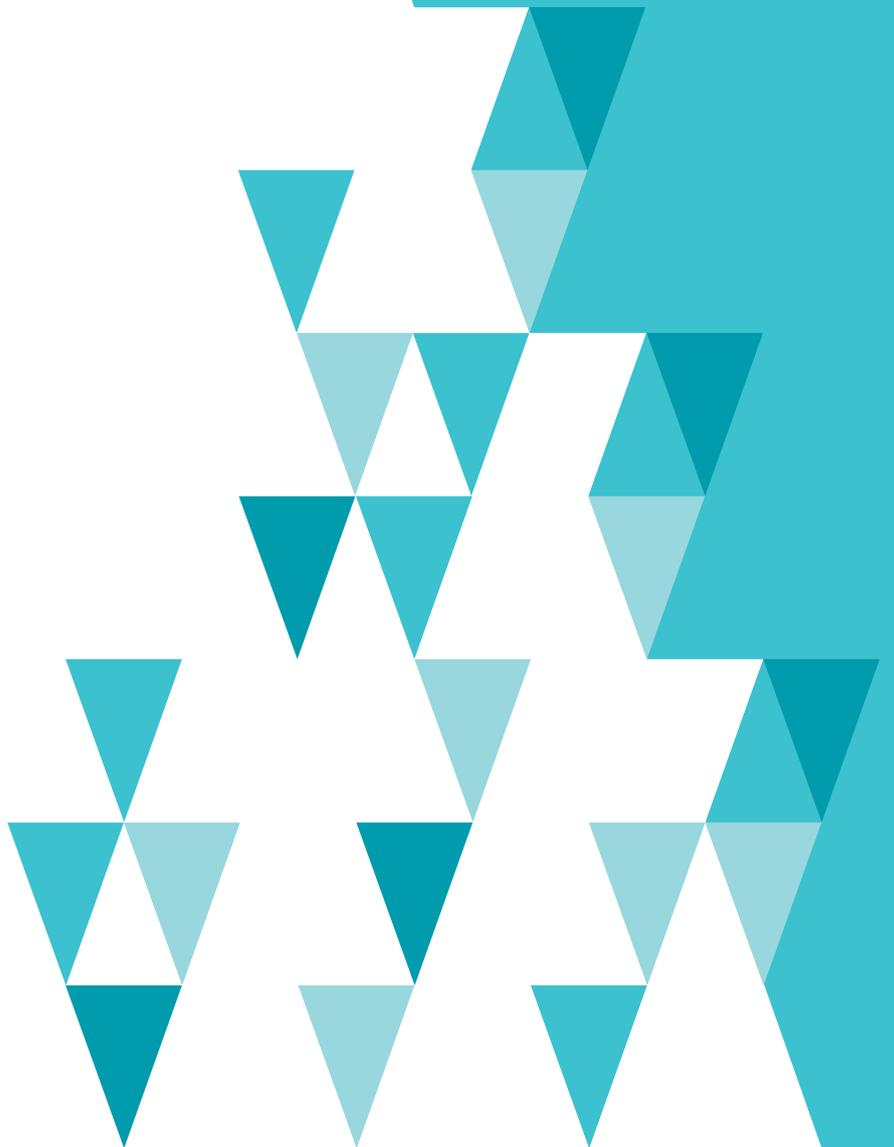


GCSE



**Chief Examiner's and
Principal Moderator Report
English Language**

January Series 2020



Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of this specification for the January 2020 series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's section on our website at www.ccea.org.uk.

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GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Chief Examiner's Report

Subject Overview

In this series, both units of the revised specification were available, GEN41 for the second time and it was clear that, overall, the candidature successfully managed the challenges of both GEN11 and GEN41. Despite the relative newness of this specification, there was evidence that effective teaching and learning is taking place in schools and that past papers, mark schemes and Specimen Assessment Materials (SAMs) were well utilised to help prepare candidates for both papers.

In general both question papers seemed to facilitate a wide range in the quality of candidates' responses. The standard of answering was again evidence of some very good teaching. Candidates of all abilities seemed able to answer in a way that showed their respective ability.

Very few examination papers were unfinished which suggests the candidates used their time effectively. It was noted that, in the few instances where candidates had any issue with timing, it was usually down to spending too much time on the writing tasks, though this appeared to be more evident in GEN41. It is important to emphasise that the top Competence Levels are accessible for concise responses in all sections. Some candidates seem determined to use additional pages for each response but, particularly in writing tasks, this can lead to repetition and critically a loss of focus.

It would be worth stressing the importance of writing with legibility to candidates preparing for these two examinations; although examiners do not expect perfect handwriting under examination conditions, what cannot be read, cannot be credited. In fact, it is always heartening to see self-correcting/editing in evidence so amending mistakes and making improvements to responses is to be encouraged.

Assessment Unit 1 Writing for Purpose and Audience and Reading to Access Non- Fiction and Media Texts

Task 1

Overall the Examining Team felt that there was a positive response to Task 1 as it gave candidates an opportunity to explore a range of issues that worry young people today, including bullying, body image, choice of clothes, exam/school pressure, hobbies and peer pressure. Almost all candidates were able to express an opinion in a lively and engaging manner - many wishing that young people would be more self-confident, with a smaller number arguing that they don't worry about such issues. The vast majority of candidates employed interesting openings and clear conclusions. In most responses there was logical progression with conscious control and the use of a variety of sentences indicating there is clearly a focus on this within classrooms.

Whilst candidates were able to employ an appropriate style, tone and structure, relevant for a magazine article for their peers, occasionally candidates introduced or concluded their response in a manner more characteristic of a speech. Candidates were able to bring in other sub-topics that were connected to the central issues and this allowed for further exploration and expression of their opinions. There was also strong evidence of candidates using a range of literary devices for effect.

A few candidates found it difficult to focus on specific and relevant arguments, often resorting to repeating questions they had presumably written about previously (for example, body image, school uniform, celebrity role models, etc.). Worryingly, there was increased evidence of candidates rote learning introductory, and to a lesser extent, concluding paragraphs. It is worth emphasising that such over-direction will ultimately limit a candidate's ability to demonstrate writing for purpose and will restrict their imaginative and creative expression.

Unfortunately, there was also evidence that a few candidates chose to ignore the title and format and instead wrote about something entirely unrelated or which they may have prepared beforehand. Some clearly able candidates took this self-limiting decision. It should be stressed that candidates' marks will undoubtedly be restricted in these cases under the 'Audience and Purpose' strand.

Most candidates responded positively to this task but the following issues were highlighted by examiners and would be useful to discuss with prospective candidates:

- The audience for a school magazine doesn't just comprise of fellow classmates; its wider reach wasn't always recognized.
- The importance of quality over quantity and of taking time to plan and then review their responses.
- Candidates seemed driven to include far-fetched examples from 'research' and implausible 'facts' and on occasions these did little to support their arguments. Well-crafted viewpoints and personal anecdotes worked more successfully.
- Filling the space on the booklet is not mandatory. At times candidates had brought their piece to a natural, unforced conclusion but then seemed determined to continue, often repeating points and losing momentum as a result.
- Whilst there is validity in candidates being taught to include linguistic devices, occasionally an overuse of these techniques, such as alliteration and rhetorical questions, detracted from the response.
- The usual culprits of inappropriately joined up words were still evident, for example: 'everyday'; 'alot'; 'eachother'; 'infront'; 'incase'; 'infact'; 'aswell'.
- Use of accurate punctuation and effective paragraphing need to be given consideration as well as greater clarity on the use of tenses.

Task 2

The article about love of photography enabled candidates to identify and comment on a range of techniques deployed by the writer, notably his use of listing and use of alliteration. Overall, the candidates understood the requirements of the task and, unlike last year, very few offered their personal opinions on the subject.

The Competence Level strand requiring candidates to read and understand text and select appropriate material tends to be where candidates perform best. The vast majority could identify relevant material and support this with some attempt to provide valid insights. The more able candidates were much more precise and focused in their selection and able to 'home in' on specific words and phrases, providing analysis and evaluation of, for example, the use of the word 'cauldron' in the extended metaphor relating to the witches.

However, the examiners felt that this task was more challenging than Task 4. Frequently candidates struggled with identifying exactly how the writer showed his love of photography. Most candidates did attempt to identify and comment on the language but sometimes the connection to the writer's purpose was not made or understood. As a result, those who struggled with the subject of the extract misinterpreted the intentions of the writer – seeing it as a promotional brochure for Essex - and therefore their analysis was limited; many also failed to complete any type of evaluation on the effectiveness of their chosen technique and or/choice of evidence.

It would appear that often the candidates did not read the questions or the text with insight and instead included a series of learned techniques which they chose to write about, irrespective of the question or text. There were frequent problems with the misidentification of techniques and parts of speech. Whilst candidates cannot be credited when such errors are made, all examiners have been instructed to award marks for any supporting examples and explanations. It is worth reinforcing the importance of close reading of both the question and the extract.

There were many instances where candidates performed at a lower level in this task than elsewhere in the paper and a few responses included a theoretical understanding of techniques and their purpose, but with no reference made to the article whatsoever.

Last year's Chief Examiner's report included helpful pointers for teachers in relation to this task and Task 4 – these are still relevant and worth sharing with future candidates.

Task 3

Most candidates were well prepared for this task and were able to identify, from each paragraph, a reason the writer gave to explain why we feel scared, attempted to explain this in their own words and retrieved two relevant pieces of evidence. A few candidates misread the question and presented their own ideas on why people are afraid of dark places. In addition there were a few instances of candidates offering a critique of the literary devices.

Candidates who copied unselectively from the text or who relied too heavily on the words in the question, with no attempt to explain or use their own words, were not able to access the higher marks.

Some went to tortuous lengths to ensure that their answer was, to the letter, in their own words, with one candidate substituting 'arboretum' for 'forest'.

It is worth reminding candidates that for Tasks 3(b) and 3(d) only straightforward quotations from the text are required as their supporting evidence. 'In your own words' is only relevant for Tasks 3(a) and 3(c).

Task 4

Task 4 was generally handled quite well and examiners felt that the text enabled candidates from a wide range of ability to respond appropriately. The candidates were clear about the writer's intentions and were able to make effective and purposeful comments on why 'Listen to the Moon' would be an exciting book to read. Many were also able to attempt some evaluation and began to analyse the effect on the reader. The use of the rule of three 'injured, thirsty, lost' and the concluding ellipses were popular choices for comments.

The checklist provided in last year's report for Task 2 also pertains to this task and may be worth revisiting. Perhaps the most significant recommendation from this year is to encourage candidates to review their responses and consider to what extent reference has been made to language used i.e. actual words and phrases. In a small number of cases there was no discussion of any language used by the writer. Examples of rich vocabulary such as 'the glimmers of the girl' and 'World War One is raging' were often sidelined by references to the writer's use of questions, dashes and ellipses. The latter are certainly worthy of inclusion in any response, but not to the exclusion of the interrogation of language itself.

Task 5

This task has been designed to ensure accessibility to all and the majority of candidates followed instructions and managed to respond successfully. Most candidates noted the ship and understood the significance of this in indicating the tense atmosphere for this novel.

However, there were still candidates who didn't understand that they needed to be specific with the presentational device selected. A significant proportion of candidates simply stated 'colour' or 'image' and could not receive credit for this. Most, however, went on to achieve well in their explanations.

On occasions explanations also didn't focus enough on the effect on the reader and were more related to a general overview of what the feature might suggest. Similarly some chose to comment on features about which they had little to say. Other candidates tried to analyse too many features which meant their response lacked the depth required for full marks.

Traditionally discussion around layout can prove challenging for candidates but pleasingly in this series those who commented on a specific aspect of the layout seemed to be able to comment quite effectively.

Some, as has been noted in the last series, tried to cover their options in Questions 5(b) and 5(d) by offering analysis of a range of examples, for example, the use of the images of the girl, the boy, the horse, the moon, the clouds and the ship. Inevitably this limited what could be said about any specific image. When a 'multiple' approach like this is used, examiners are always instructed to underline and credit the best explanation offered for one example.

As in previous examination series there were a couple of instances when, having identified an appropriate feature, the candidate inexplicably went on to comment on something totally unrelated. Again, examiners are required to mark both parts of the question in relation to each other. The most important point to reinforce with candidates is the judicious choice of presentational feature which will not be too self-limiting.

Principal Moderator's Report

Assessment Unit 2 Speaking and Listening

Overview

The candidature for the January Series of moderation consisted mainly of candidates who were re-sitting Unit 2. Centres had tried to ensure that these candidates had been offered a range of opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. In a minority of centres, the range of tasks was limited due to lack of scheduled class time.

The administrative procedures had been generally completed accurately and efficiently. The front cover of the Centre Moderation Record Sheet had been used to record cases where centres had experienced exceptional circumstances such as candidate non-attendance or staffing changes. This is a useful way of providing moderators with information that may affect the outcome of moderation. The following may serve as a helpful checklist for lead teachers in future series:

- All marks are entered via the eCRS but centres should note that hard copies for the moderated candidates must be printed off and made available to the moderator on the day of moderation.
- The TAC2 form is also completed online.
- A rank order for each moderated group must be presented for the moderator's scrutiny.
- The Centre Moderation Record Sheet must be available and should contain information on any 'Exceptional Circumstances' experienced by the centre.
- Formative records for all teaching groups must be available.

In some centres, moderators witnessed diligent group discussions, where the role of Chairperson had been clearly understood and the group had developed effective group dynamics. However, in others, it became quickly evident that the group did not know each other very well which resulted in limited interaction and produced stilted discussions or discussions lacking in spontaneity. Centres should note that the Chairperson has responsibility for the timing of the discussion which should last for 20 minutes. After this time, the Chairperson must bring the discussion to its conclusion.

Where discrepancies in marking did occur, they tended to occur for candidates assessed at Level 4. Teachers must be confident that these candidates satisfy most of the Assessment Criteria for this Level. In particular, teachers should note that candidates are required to, '... **challenge**, develop and respond to what they hear in thoughtful and considerate ways, seeking clarification through apt questions.'

Moderators felt that rather than **challenging** other members of the group, many candidates assessed at Level 4 were, at best, only able to 'engage with others' ideas'. There was evidence of discussions which took the form of a dialogue between the Chairperson and individual members of the group.

Internal Standardisation continues to be a crucial mechanism for ensuring that marking is accurate and consistent. Teachers are urged to make use of the resources on the CCEA website as they engage with this prerequisite. Other methods are suggested in the '*Instructions to Teachers Booklet*'.

Once again, teachers are to be praised for their hard work and diligence in delivering Unit 2 and candidates for their interesting and well informed discussions.

Assessment Unit 3 Studying Spoken and Written Language

Overview

The members of the CCEA English Language Moderation Team agreed that, with some exceptions, the majority of centres set suitable task titles, complied with CCEA's instructions on annotation and accurately assessed the work of their candidates. Almost all task titles were appropriately theme-related and clearly satisfied the CCEA rubric requirements. Moreover, candidates in many centres benefitted from the provision of appropriate support structures in the form of a series of **assessment-criterion-referenced bullet points**. Stimulus material, for both Task 1 and Task 2 was carefully selected to match the interests and abilities of most candidates. Where carefully planned and designed, task titles enabled candidates of different levels of ability to respond successfully. Despite the changes to the marking of controlled assessment pieces in the revised specification, teachers in most centres interpreted and applied the CCEA Assessment Criteria accurately across the two tasks and across the mark range in their centre. It was obvious that effective Internal Standardisation had been carried out in most centres.

Administration Procedures

Whilst the process of uploading marks to the electronic moderation system continues to be a success, teachers should take note of the following points:

- It is important to transfer the marks accurately from the candidates' work to the electronic system.
- The folder of the candidate at the top of the rank order must be submitted.
- The folder of the candidate at the bottom of the rank order (if the folder is complete) must be submitted.
- Incomplete folders should not be submitted – the adjacent folder (by Candidate numerical order) should be substituted.
- Sample folders should be placed in rank order with the summative mark recorded on the outside of each folder.
- Each candidate's work should be placed in an individual folder.
- The Competence Level for each strand as well as the mark awarded must be recorded on each response.
- Every page of each candidate's Controlled Assessment should be clearly identified with the Centre Number and Candidate Number.

As in recent years, administration in most centres was excellent and helpful to the moderation process.

Task 1 (The Study of Spoken Language: 10%)

To satisfy the CCEA rubric requirements for Task 1, candidates must respond to ‘real spoken language’ texts, that is, texts which involve real people (living or dead) in real situations. Teachers in almost all centres took great care to select appropriate Eulogies as their spoken language texts. There was a wide and varied range of Eulogies including those delivered by: Bill Clinton, George Bush, Barack Obama, Snoop Dog, Matt Damon, Brooke Shields, Oprah Winfrey and Kevin Costner. It was pleasing to see a lot of new and topical material and the enthusiasm evident in the responses of many candidates. Most centres had made a conscious effort to ensure that these Eulogies were relevant and engaging for their candidates and included ample opportunity for meaningful cross-referencing. While the majority of centres selected stimulus material which appealed to their candidates, some centres could have been more judicious in their selection. The stimulus materials worked well when there was a range of linguistic and delivery techniques for candidates to explain, analyse and evaluate. However, on occasion, the material selected, did not contain the depth nor breadth of material to facilitate analytical or evaluative responses. Whilst candidates were not required to compare and contrast, teachers in most centres appropriately based the task title on two texts which were linked in some way. Candidates in a very small number of centres were asked to respond to two quite lengthy spoken language texts which made it difficult for them to explain, analyse or evaluate specific details related to the speakers’ use of language, rhetorical devices and delivery techniques. However, teachers in a significant number of centres set task titles based upon a short and carefully chosen extract from each of the two texts, appropriate for the 60-minute time limit. This approach was beneficial to candidates of different levels of ability as it enabled them to focus on specific and relevant details of language, rhetorical devices and delivery techniques.

Task titles were generally assessment-criterion-referenced which helped to focus candidates on the demands of the task title though it was obvious that candidates in their responses were more familiar with discussion of linguistic techniques than delivery techniques. As assessment is competence-based, it is important that candidates are explicitly taught how to explain, analyse and evaluate language choice and effect, linguistic techniques and their effects and delivery techniques and effects. There was evidence that delivery techniques had been marginalised or overlooked by many candidates. Moreover, candidates in some centres still included too much unnecessary biographical detail and contextual information that was not meaningful or relevant.

Whilst many centres applied the Assessment Criteria accurately, there was generally a tendency towards leniency, especially at the top end of achievement. The Moderation Team identified a few common errors:

- Some responses were rewarded for simply referring to the speakers’ language, linguistic techniques and delivery techniques.
- Some responses were awarded CL555 when there was no evidence of evaluation.
- Some responses quoted the speaker’s choice of language and commented on it in a general way but did not analyse the language, the linguistic or delivery technique being used in terms of the impact on the listener or audience.
- There was often relatively little evaluation of the speaker’s linguistic or delivery techniques. In some centres, references to the audience being inspired, were inappropriately interpreted as evaluation and rewarded accordingly.

As always, candidates should be taught at as early a stage as possible, the differences between explanation, analysis and evaluation. Candidates need to better understand the terms ‘appropriate explanation’, ‘purposeful analysis’ and ‘clearly focused evaluation’. This is the key to achieving success for all candidates.

Candidates in a small number of centres were rewarded for the inclusion of comments related to written language features such as the effectiveness of specific punctuation devices (e.g. ellipsis and exclamation mark). This is not appropriate as the focus of Task 1 is 'Spoken Language'.

In a few centres, moreover, there was evidence of an overly-led teacher approach to Task 1. In some teaching groups or centres, this resulted in the production of formulaic responses. In such cases, candidates used the same paragraph-by-paragraph structure and selected the same textual details and quotations to support or introduce very similar points. At Competence Level 4, candidates are expected to include: 'a good selection of language choices and some analysis of their intended effects'; 'purposeful analysis of linguistic techniques and their intended effects' and 'analysis of delivery techniques and their purpose'. At Competence Level 5, candidates are expected to include: 'an excellent selection of language choices with confident analysis of their intended effects'; 'clearly focused evaluation of linguistic techniques and their intended effects' and 'confident evaluation of delivery techniques and their purpose'. To satisfy these Assessment Criteria, and the controls for controlled assessment task, candidates should be encouraged and enabled to build an individual and critical response. It is therefore essential that they independently select and examine appropriate textual details of their own choice.

Teachers are reminded that secretarial errors made in Task 1 responses should neither be highlighted nor penalised.

Most centres included copies of the stimulus material for Task 1 for each of the sampled candidates.

Please note that it is a requirement to forward to CCEA all photocopied materials that each sampled candidate has had access to during the timed assessment.

The CCEA Unit 3 Clarification Document, available on the GCSE English Language section of the CCEA website, includes contextualised examples of candidate responses for Task 1 across all five Competence Levels.

Task 2 (The Study of Written Language: 10%)

This year's theme **Strengths and/or Weaknesses** afforded many opportunities for teachers to plan and design appropriate task titles based upon a range of texts across the three literary genres. 'Of Mice and Men', predictably, was the most popular text for Task 2. This text enabled some candidates to produce confident, analytical, perceptive and evaluative responses. However, some responses to the novella, became narrative in nature, explaining what had happened to George, Lennie and other characters, rather than analysing and evaluating the various aspects clearly outlined in the Assessment Criteria. Another popular choice of novel was 'Animal Farm'. Some centres also used the short story 'Lamb to the Slaughter' by Roald Dahl. Teachers in some centres set task titles based upon poetry such as that of Seamus Heaney and Wilfred Owen. These successfully enabled candidates to analyse and evaluate to a greater extent.

In most cases, task titles were carefully planned and designed. In many centres, appropriate scaffolding, in the form of a series of **assessment-criterion-referenced bullet points**, was provided. Most candidates had selected and analysed appropriate detail in relation to the character or theme and maintained a clear focus on the terms of the question. Candidates also demonstrated that they had thought carefully about the writer's craft, intentions and effect on the reader. In the higher Competence Levels, there was some very deft and sophisticated use of embedded quotations which enabled candidates to comment on language in a subtle and discriminating way. Less successful responses were characterised by a tendency to retell the story. Many of the candidates' responses demonstrated an enthusiasm for what they had read and a clear willingness to express their opinions. However, there were some task titles which were less enabling. These titles tended to be too general, requiring candidates to focus on the entire novel, often resulting in responses that were largely narrative.

Again, those centres which had included assessment-criterion-referenced support structures in their task titles provided the candidates with a much clearer focus on the Assessment Objectives.

Most centres which used poetry, short stories or extracts from longer texts, included copies of the stimulus material for Task 2 for each of the sampled candidates.

Please note that it is a requirement to forward to CCEA all photocopied materials that sampled candidates have access to during the timed assessment. In cases where a full text is used as the stimulus, and candidates are not permitted to write on these during their assessment, there is no requirement to forward these to CCEA.

In a small number of centres, there was evidence of an overly-led teacher approach to Task 2. In some teaching groups or centres, this resulted in the production of formulaic responses. In such cases, many candidates used the same paragraph-by-paragraph structure and selected the same textual details and quotations to support or introduce very similar points. At Competence Level 4, candidates are expected to offer: 'a clearly engaged analytical response' with 'a sustained interpretation' and 'purposeful analysis of the writer's techniques'. At Competence Level 5 candidates are expected to offer: 'a confident evaluative response' with 'assured evaluation of the writer's techniques'.

To satisfy these Assessment Criteria, candidates should be encouraged and enabled to build an individual and critical response. It is therefore essential that they independently select and examine appropriate textual details of their own choice.

Teachers are reminded that secretarial errors made in Task 2 should neither be highlighted nor penalised.

The CCEA Unit 3 Clarification Document, available on the GCSE English Language section of the CCEA website, includes contextualised examples of candidate responses for Task 2 across all five Competence Levels.

Overall, the members of the CCEA GCSE English Language Moderation Team were pleased with the range and standard of work produced by candidates of different levels of ability in centres across Northern Ireland. The candidates had obviously worked extremely hard and clearly benefitted from the expertise of their teachers. Task titles were clearly defined, enabling and appropriate. While the new Competence Levels have proved challenging, many teachers interpreted and applied the CCEA Assessment Criteria accurately. Furthermore, in most cases, there was clear evidence of effective Internal Standardisation, resulting in candidates being awarded the appropriate overall Unit 3 mark.

Chief Examiner's Report

Assessment Unit 4 Personal or Creative Writing and Reading Literary and Non-fiction Texts

Overview

The Examining Team was in agreement that this question paper offered scope to the full range of ability levels and that most candidates had been very well prepared to meet its requirements. Examiners were impressed with the positive approach taken by all candidates across the range of ability levels. The candidates had, on the whole, been well equipped, giving them the confidence to tackle each task.

Most candidates utilised their time better than in the Summer 2019 Series. Teachers had clearly identified the need to inform candidates of the importance of appropriate time allocation to tasks.

In the Writing Section, Creative Writing was a much more popular choice in this series compared to the Summer 2019 Series. To the credit of candidates, most adhered to the rubric of using the stimulus as an integral part that underpinned the response. There were, on occasions, a few responses that had spurious links to the stimulus; this had a negative impact on whether the candidate could fulfil his or her potential in the task.

The Personal Writing option also proved to be popular in this series, and there were many engaging examples of experiences that became positive for the candidates.

In Section B, the language used in the stimulus texts was thought to be accessible to all ability levels while still providing top candidates the opportunity to access the higher Competence Levels. There were still issues with feature spotting and retelling rather than analysing/evaluating the writer's intention in the text/s.

Task 2 continues to present a challenge to candidates given its demands for comparison and contrast. The examiners were in agreement that the skills of understanding, analysing and evaluating the two writers' craft in this task were areas in which candidates needed to be better equipped.

Task 1

Task 1 appeared to suit all candidates, of varying abilities, with some very entertaining and interesting responses to both the Personal and Creative Writing tasks. Quality teaching was clearly evident with candidates at all ability levels using effective structuring, rhetorical techniques, varied sentence types/lengths and punctuation to engage in a positive and lively way.

In terms of the Creative Writing task, several candidates opted to write appropriately, in response to the stimulus material, but, on occasions there was evidence of the candidates risking rubric violation by trying to 'shoe-horn' preconceived ideas in an effort to satisfy the task. The majority of Personal Writing responses achieved Competence Level 3, with some achieving CL4 and CL5 and only a few in CL2. The writing responses were, on the whole, of a higher quality than the responses to reading.

Several examiners also commented on the lack of paragraphing in some of the responses they marked. Most candidates were able to navigate the writing section of the booklet and correctly completed their Task 1 response in the allocated space. Candidates who wrote their responses in the wrong space were not penalised for doing so and many, realising their error, clearly labelled their responses accordingly. A small number made the mistake of writing a response to both tasks and this often resulted in those candidates running out of time.

It is essential that teachers discourage candidates from offering a pre-prepared writing task for the exam. In many cases this is very obvious to the examiner and will result in a rubric violation. This will hinder the candidate's ability to achieve to his or her full potential.

Task 2

Task 2 was tackled, for the most part, in an appropriate way with evidence of cross-referencing from both texts. Again, quality teaching is evident; however, most answers fell short of the evaluative process, with few candidates able to explore the effectiveness of the writer's craft. This limited the number of responses achieving Competence Level 5 in this task. The examiners believe this is an area that teachers may wish to focus on as the award of 32 marks for this task can have a major influence on the total mark achieved by the candidate.

The two stimulus texts were well received and it was felt they were accessible for the whole ability range. Most candidates were able to make solid cross-references (citing appropriate evidence) on the differences between the texts. However, a consideration of how mystery was developed in each piece regarding techniques or language employed by the writer, was not always fully developed. There was also a clear indication that candidates were still utilising the list of techniques memorised via mnemonics, and this was to their detriment. A focused and precise analysis of the writers' use of language would have been more beneficial to the candidates. There is still a tendency to spend too long on this task and many candidates used additional answer pages, when this was not necessary. The old adage '*quality over quantity*' should apply.

Tasks 3 & 4

Most candidates were clearly able to demonstrate their ability to identify and comment appropriately on the non-fiction text/s.

Task 3 appeared problematic for some candidates, whereby responses tended to rely heavily on the key terms of the question, i.e. 'the writer gains and holds the interest of the reader by ...' omitting to comment on the intended effect. Most were able to comment appropriately on a range of ways the writer gained, and then held, the interest of the reader at the beginning of her article. A great number of candidates, however, did not pick up on the intended shock of the reader at the reveal of the 6-year-old fitness fanatic. This meant that they misread the list of gyms as a positive promotion for parents as opposed to the fact they may have been acting immorally.

Top quality, assured responses presented judicious and precisely selected evidence. The reporting of the text and/or giving opinions about whether or not the writer succeeded in engaging the reader's interest was evident in the weaker responses from the candidature.

Task 4 appeared more enabling than Task 3; there was a clearer, 'valid understanding' with candidates' efforts firmly focused on the question. There was, however, continued discussion of techniques in general and not in the context of the article. Many candidates tended to summarise in this task rather than offer an attempt to analyse or evaluate.

The following have been noted in previous Chief Examiner's Reports, yet still featured in candidates' responses in both Task 3 & 4 this series:

- Feature spotting with no attempt to explain how this was achieved.
- Ignoring the focus of the task and, instead, writing a discursive piece on the subject matter of the stimulus text, not worthy of credit.
- The offering of personal opinions within the body of their responses, again, not worthy of credit.
- A rewriting of the task which cannot be rewarded.

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