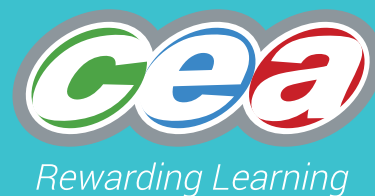


GCSE



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

November Series 2021





## Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of this specification for the November 2021 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 microsite on our website at [www.ccea.org.uk](http://www.ccea.org.uk).



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# GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

## Chief Examiner's Report

### Subject Overview

In this November series it was evident that, in general, the candidates successfully handled the tasks in both GEN11 and GEN41. This was testimony to the effective teaching and learning in centres and clearly past papers, mark schemes and Specimen Assessment Materials (SAMs) have been used purposefully to help prepare candidates for both papers.

Overall, the examination papers seemed accessible to a wide range of abilities. The standard of answering was evidence of the preparedness of the candidates, by their teachers, where candidates, of all abilities, were able to answer in a way that demonstrated their respective ability.

A small number of candidates did not complete the papers, possibly indicating that they did not manage their time effectively and this tended to result in the final task being unanswered. It is important to emphasise that the top Competence Levels are accessible for accurate and concise responses in all sections of the papers. A high percentage of candidates used additional pages often resulting in repetition and crucially a loss of focus.

Several examiners commented on the fact that candidates who did make use of the recommended planning time for Task 1 produced more organised and crafted responses. It would be useful to remind candidates that the advice to spend fifteen minutes thinking and planning their response would work to their benefit.

Whilst the front cover of the examination paper draws attention to the importance of legibility it is worth reinforcing this message to candidates in preparation for these two units. Under examination conditions perfect handwriting is not expected, however, examiners can only credit what they are able to read.

Where candidates have made use of a scribe it is crucial that a scribe cover sheet is completed by the centre and submitted with the script, clearly indicating the option which accurately reflects how the approved application for a scribe was used. If this is not originally indicated, the marking process will be delayed as the centre must confirm the relevant scribe option. Since spelling, punctuation and grammar are discretely assessed in Section A of GCSE English Language (Units 1 & 4) through Assessment Objective 4(iii) the inclusion of a spelling list, applicable to some other GCSE subjects, is neither valid nor required. Please see the CCEA Circular S/IF/36/19 issued in May 2019 to all centres for further details.

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

## Overview

The Examining Team felt that this paper provided all candidates with an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills and there was wide-ranging evidence of effective teaching and preparation.

Planning their time did not cause too many issues and it was significant that many noted the time allocation at the start of each task along with the scheduled finishing time. This may be a useful suggestion for those candidates struggling with time management.

The writing task facilitated a range of varied and engaging responses. Most were able to write persuasively and argue their position with self-belief and confidence. Many were able to comment with genuine conviction about the difficult times experienced by young people over the last couple of years.

The reading materials in Section B were also facilitative, pleasingly, for the entire ability range. The Examining Team would welcome increased demonstration of analysis and evaluation in Task 2. On some occasions candidates listed the devices as part of the introduction and then repeated this in the main explanation – the listing, if disconnected from examples found within the stimulus, was not credited, and unnecessarily encroached on their time.

Overall, it is important to remind candidates to read the questions carefully. My report will pick up on this in greater detail under each task, but it was most apparent in Task 3 (Why a lack of sleep may be damaging) and in Task 5(b) and 5(d) where the focus should have been on the effect on the reader.

## Section A: Writing for Purpose and Audience

### Task 1

Overall, the Examining Team saw many positive responses to Task 1 as it provided candidates with an opportunity to explore a range of areas around which they argued praise should be given. Many examiners commented on the impressive confidence and knowledge demonstrated by candidates covering such topics as volunteering, environmental concern and expertise in technology. Greta Thunberg, the 19-year-old Swedish environmental activist, unsurprisingly featured heavily, and those candidates who attempted an analysis of why praise was lacking provided an insightful angle. Almost all candidates were able to express an opinion in a lively and engaging manner — many agreeing with the statement and a few taking a stand against young people. In most responses there was logical progression and candidates deployed interesting openings and clearly defined conclusions, indicating that this is an area of focus within many classrooms.

Candidates were able to apply the appropriate style, tone and structure, relevant for a speech and there was also evidence of effective use of a range of linguistic and structural techniques – these were most successful when understated and subtle.

As has been previously noted there were a few candidates, including some clearly very able ones, who ignored the title and format choosing to write about something entirely unrelated or which they may have prepared beforehand. It should be stressed that candidates' marks were unquestionably constrained by this self-limiting decision.



Candidates too frequently included implausible opinions from ‘experts’ (Peppa Pig was cited) and improbable ‘statistics’ which often detracted from their arguments and diminished engagement. Carefully considered perspectives and personal anecdotes were more effective and teachers would be advised to highlight to prospective candidates the judicious use of incorporating higher authority sources into their responses.

Effective use of accurate punctuation and tenses was noted by many examiners, although a few voiced concerns about the apparent lack of paragraphing

## **Section B: Reading Non-Fiction and Media Texts**

### **Task 2**

The article about young people not having enough sleep resonated with many candidates and enabled them to identify and comment on a range of techniques deployed by the writer – the vast majority noted the introductory question to hook the reader. It is evident that candidates have been given plenty of opportunities to attempt similar reading activities in preparation for the examination series. More frequently than in previous years, a few candidates attempted to persuade and expressed their opinion on the importance of sleep.

The competence level strand relating to reading and understanding the text and selecting appropriate material tends to be where candidates perform best. Most could identify relevant material and support this with an attempt to offer valid insights. The more able candidates were much more precise and focused on their selection and were able to ‘home in’ on the effectiveness of specific words and phrases, providing analysis and evaluation of, for example, the use of the words ‘forced’, ‘trailing’ and ‘unacceptable’. Candidates would be well advised to consider using shorter quotations and ensure they are able to explain how they found the extract engaging.

Most did attempt to identify and comment on the language and did seem to appreciate the humour of the ‘conspiracy theory’ but occasionally the connection to the writer’s purpose was not made or understood.

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 scant reference to the stimulus itself.

### **Task 3**

Most candidates were well prepared for this task and were able to find a reason from each paragraph, explain this in their own words and select two relevant pieces of evidence. Too many candidates, however, attempted to summarise the paragraph and failed to answer the question — including references to technology and the causes of lack of sleep rather than why a lack of sleep may be damaging.

It is worth reminding candidates of the importance of reading the question carefully and that for Tasks 3(b) and 3(d) direct quotations from the text are sufficient as their supporting evidence. ‘In your own words’ is only relevant for Tasks 3(a) and 3(c) and with no attempt to explain or use their own words, there will not be access to the higher marks.

## Task 4

This was generally handled quite well, and examiners felt that the text enabled candidates of a wide range of ability levels to respond appropriately. The candidates were clear about the writer's intentions and were able to make effective and purposeful comments on why 'Storm Glass' would be interesting and exciting to read. Many were also able to attempt some evaluation and began to analyse the effect on the reader. The use of the contrast between the privileged and the poor and the simile 'Like birds flying free' were popular choices for comments.

The most significant recommendation this year, again, 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 minority of cases candidates retold the story and there was limited discussion of language used by the writer. Examples of rich vocabulary such as 'follow the flight paths of their own choosing' and 'an orphan doomed' were ignored resulting in a lack of meaningful interrogation of the language itself. Candidates should be reminded to select relevant textual material, consider what the writer was attempting to do with this and its effectiveness.

## 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 waterfall and castle with many also identifying the optical illusion.

However, there were still candidates who didn't understand that they needed to be specific with the presentational device selected. Centres are reminded that simply identifying 'colour' or 'image' is not creditworthy (the colour blue, green, etc. can be rewarded). Most, however, went on to achieve well in their explanations.

On occasions the explanations did not focus sufficiently 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 higher marks.

Some, as has been noted previously, tried to cover their options in 5(b) and 5(d) by offering analysis of several features, for example, the use of the images of the waterfall, the faces, the castle and the sky. Predictably this limited what could be said about any specific image. When a 'multiple' approach like this is used, examiners will credit the best explanation offered for one example.

The most important point to reinforce with candidates is the judicious choice of presentational feature which will not be too self-limiting. Candidates should consider if they will be able to comment in a meaningful way about the feature they have selected and its effect on the reader.

# Principal Moderator's Report

## Assessment Unit 2 Speaking and Listening

### Overview

A small number of centres entered candidates for the November Series. Centres had made every effort to ensure that candidates had been offered a range of opportunities to develop their Speaking and Listening skills and to explore new ideas.

The administrative procedures had generally been completed accurately and efficiently. Indeed some exemplary documentation was made available to moderators.

While the front cover of the Centre Moderation Record Sheet (Ead63b) had been widely used to record extenuating circumstances regarding candidates and/or staffing issues, lead teachers are urged to make full use of this document to inform moderators of any exceptional circumstances which may impact on candidates' progress/performance.

Formative records were mostly helpful and informative, and almost all centres were using the CCEA proforma (available to download from the CCEA website). Centres are reminded that it is compulsory to use this document for record keeping. Moderators were impressed by the diligence shown by most centres in the completion of candidate records.

The role of Chairperson was in most cases clearly understood and the group displayed effective group dynamics. However, on occasions there was evidence that the Chairperson had not been appointed in advance of moderation, resulting in confusion and a delay in starting the discussion. Centres should note that this is an important role. This candidate is expected to manage both the discussion and the timing aspect and it is essential that the appointed candidate should be prepared.

In the majority of centres, moderators witnessed diligent group discussions. It was pleasing to listen to interesting spontaneous discussions where candidates were engaged and often challenging of one another's ideas. However, in a minority of centres, candidates were underprepared. Moderators witnessed discussions which took the form of question/answer sessions between the Chairperson and individual group members. The Speaking and Listening skills required for effective group discussion cannot be underestimated. In the best cases, these skills have been introduced at KS3, built upon and honed throughout KS4 resulting in smooth running, effective group discussions.

Internal Standardisation continues to be a crucial mechanism for ensuring that marking is accurate and consistent. Centres are reminded that this is a compulsory element of the course. There are useful resources on the CCEA website to assist with this task.

Overall, it is pleasing to report that centre assessments were generally sound. Teachers are to be praised for their continued diligence in delivering Unit 2 and candidates to be commended 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 the centres that submitted Controlled Assessment for this series set suitable task titles. Almost all task titles were appropriately theme-related and clearly satisfied the CCEA rubric requirements. However, candidates in some centres would have 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 selected to match the interests and abilities of most candidates.

### Administration Procedures

The Moderation team found that sampling on the mark helped facilitate the moderation process. However, centres are reminded that:

- 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.

### 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. It was felt that a conscious effort had been made to ensure that the selected speeches were relevant and engaging for candidates and included ample opportunity for meaningful cross-referencing. The stimulus materials worked well when there was a range of linguistic and delivery techniques for candidates to explain, analyse and evaluate. Whilst candidates were not required to compare and contrast, teachers did base the task title on two texts which were linked in some way. Centres are still reminded of the need to set task titles based upon short and carefully chosen extracts from each of the two texts, appropriate for the 60-minute time limit. This approach is beneficial to candidates of different levels of ability as it enables them to focus on specific and relevant details of language, linguistic techniques, 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 some candidates. Centres are also reminded that body language is not part of the Assessment Criteria for this task and such references cannot be credited. Candidates in some teaching groups are still being rewarded for references to facial expression and body language which cannot be supported at moderation.

Whilst some centres applied the Assessment Criteria accurately, there was generally a tendency towards leniency, especially at the top end of achievement. Some candidates were rewarded for simply referring to the speakers' language, linguistic techniques and delivery techniques. Some responses awarded CL 4 or CL 5 quoted the speaker's choice of language and commented on it in a general way but did not analyse or evaluate the language, the linguistic or delivery technique being used in terms of the impact on the listener or audience. As always, candidates should be taught at as early a stage as possible, the differences between explanation, analysis and evaluation. It would be beneficial for candidates if they better understood the terms 'appropriate explanation', 'purposeful analysis' and 'clearly focused evaluation'.

There was evidence of an overly-led teacher approach to Task 1. In some teaching groups 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 CL 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 CL 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, 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 candidates have 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%)**

In some cases, task titles were carefully planned and designed. However, some titles were not clearly assessment-criterion-referenced. 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. Again, there was evidence of an overly-led teacher approach to Task 2. In some teaching groups, 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 CL 4, candidates are expected to offer: 'a clearly engaged analytical response' with 'a sustained interpretation' and 'purposeful analysis of the writer's techniques'. At CL 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. Please note that it is a requirement to forward to CCEA all photocopied materials that 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.

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.

For themes which can be submitted for Summer 2022 series centres should refer to Circular S/IF/12/21.

## Chief Examiner's Report

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

#### Overview

The Examining Team felt that this paper offered scope to the wide range of ability levels and commented that most candidates were well prepared to meet its requirements and confidently approach each task.

Most candidates utilised their time well and there was little evidence that candidates ran out of time. Responses to Task 2 had varying levels of success. The Examining Team agreed that the skills of understanding, analysing and evaluating the writer's craft are areas in which candidates could improve.

The language used in the stimulus texts was considered to be accessible to all ability levels while still providing top candidates the opportunity to access the higher Competence Levels. Successful candidates were more considered in analysing specific language effects attributed to the correct techniques. However, there were too many instances where candidates simply identified techniques rather than referencing the writer's intention in the texts.

#### Section A: Personal or Creative Writing

##### Task 1

While there was evidence of a slight preference towards Personal Writing, there is a continued increase in candidates choosing to respond to the Creative Writing option.

Use of the stimulus for the Creative Writing option elicited a range of responses and most candidates, who chose this task, took a literal interpretation of the image and used the countryside as the setting for their story or as a conduit for a physical journey. Interestingly, a number of candidates selected to use the image as a stimulus for a metaphorical journey.

For those candidates who chose the Personal Writing option there were many engrossing responses that encompassed, in some cases, unique pieces of advice for the examiner. Clearly candidates were well prepared for this task.

Successful responses were written in a lively way that showed an effective grasp of the appropriate register together with the ability to engage well with the intended audience. Less successful responses were underdeveloped or failed to sustain ideas in an engaging manner.

Sentence demarcation was generally secure, and many candidates appeared confident in using a wider range of punctuation. However, it is worth reinforcing that a proficient use of punctuation is more important than extending the range. This is an area that teachers may wish to focus on as colons and semi-colons were occasionally used indiscriminately by candidates in the mid- to upper-ability range.

There were fewer rubric breaches and only a small number of candidates composed an answer for both writing responses. Most candidates were able to navigate the writing section of the booklet and correctly completed their Task 1 response in the allocated space.



## Section B: Reading Literary and Non-Fiction Texts

### Task 2

Candidates engaged well with the two texts and were able to make different inferences about characters' feelings as well as interpreting details of the setting. Many competently synthesised ideas and evidence from both texts to produce clear comparisons. Again, quality teaching is evident; however, while many candidates were able to select suitable material, the cross-referencing was not always appropriate and many responses fell short of the evaluative process, with disappointingly few candidates able to explore the effectiveness of the writer's craft. Consideration of how the tense atmosphere had been developed was not always fully explored. This limited the number of responses achieving Competence Level 5. Candidates were most successful when they provided focused and precise comparisons. The examiners believe this is an area that teachers may wish to focus on to help candidates fulfil their potential.

### Tasks 3 and 4

The two stimulus texts were well received, and it was felt they were relatable for the full ability range, with many candidates noting the writer's incredulous and exaggerated tone. Most candidates could identify the writer's use of short sentences, alliteration and lists, although occasionally, inaccurate claims were made about the writer's intentions and the effect of these techniques. For example, the use of a list 'fried chicken, burgers, chips and pizzas' showed the foods the writer liked instead of illustrating the wide range of available foods and their availability and proximity to the school.

It is important that candidates demonstrate an awareness of what the writer was attempting to achieve – some responses showed limited understanding that an author had penned the words and occasionally candidates chose to include their own view on fast food. Candidates would also be well advised to refrain from repeating the stem of the question in each point made.

It may also be worthwhile to emphasise to candidates that although Tasks 3 and 4 are two extracts from one article, the two tasks are discrete and have different demands. In this instance, for Task 3 the candidates needed to concentrate on how the writer gained and held the reader's interest, whereas in Task 4 the focus should have been on how the writer developed her negative view of unhealthy food.



## Contact details

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