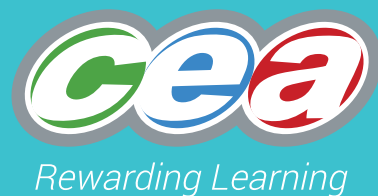


GCSE



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

November Series 2023



Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of this specification for the November 2023 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.

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GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Chief Examiner's Report

Subject Overview

In the November 2023 series most candidates successfully accomplished the completion of all tasks in both Unit 1 and Unit 4. Examiners confirmed there was sound evidence of preparation for the requirements within these examination papers, demonstrated by many candidates' approaches in answering the questions and responding to the stimuli throughout the papers. Focused use of past papers, mark schemes and Specimen Assessment Materials (SAMs) has been made to help prepare candidates. In brief, candidates seemed more familiar with the requirements of specific tasks in comparison with previous series.

Candidates should be reminded of the importance of using the planning space for Task 1, the fifteen minutes for thinking and planning is time well-spent and examiners noted, when used, it allowed for more logical and structured responses. Where additional pages have been included these should be clearly labelled to allow examiners to award appropriate credit.

Legibility continues to pose problems for examiners who found it difficult, on occasions, to decipher candidates' handwriting. Centres should reinforce the importance of clear handwriting to all candidates as examiners can only credit what they can read.

Where candidates have used a scribe, a completed scribe cover sheet is required and this will indicate the option which accurately reflects how the approved application for a scribe was used. An increasing number of candidates used a word processor and, here also, the centre must indicate, through the scribe sheet, whether the spell and grammar check were disabled or not. If this information is missing, the marking process will be delayed as the centre will be asked for clarification to confirm the relevant scribe option; only **one option** per candidate should be selected. As spelling, punctuation and grammar are discretely assessed in Section A of GCSE English Language (Units 1 and 4) through Assessment Objective 4 (iii), the inclusion of a spelling list, applicable to some other GCSE subjects, is not permissible evidence for this qualification. Please see the CCEA Circular S/IF/36/19 (issued in May 2019 to all centres) for further clarification.

The stimuli in both units were deemed to be accessible and enabled candidates of all abilities to respond appropriately. As observed in previous reports, the skills of analysing, and evaluating the writer's craft are areas where candidates would benefit from additional focus during their preparation period for these two papers.

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

Overview

Feedback from Examiners indicated that this paper provided all candidates with the opportunity to showcase their knowledge, understanding and skills and it was evident that there had been effective planning for, and teaching of, this specification. The responses further confirmed that the tasks were fair and accessible, enabling candidates across a wide range of abilities.

The writing task facilitated a range of varied and engaging responses. Most candidates were able to write persuasively and articulate their views with confidence and enthusiasm.

The reading materials in Section B were also favourable for the entire ability range. However, the Examining Team would welcome improved demonstration of both analysis and evaluation in Task 2.

Overall, centres should reinforce the importance of candidates reading the questions carefully. In comparison to previous series, there were fewer incomplete papers in GEN11; evidence, perhaps, that candidates are managing their time more effectively.

Section A: Writing for Purpose and Audience

Task 1

On the topic of “Education will lead us to the future we want”, examiners encountered many perceptive and coherent responses to Task 1, where credible views, both for and against education, were offered, allowing candidates to demonstrate their skills and knowledge with conviction. Disappointingly, the ‘anti-education’ approach was, in the main, handled superficially with the candidates having limited points to offer and tending towards repetition. Credibility was damaged when allusions were made to their ‘best friend Elon Musk’ or their ‘cousin who was CEO of Disney’ – both of whom, along with well-known media influencers, had left school, allegedly illiterate.

Generally, candidates handled this task well, employing effective paragraphing and producing a well-structured school/college magazine article which recognised and adhered to the specified form, audience and purpose as well as the demands of the Assessment Objective. A number of candidates, however, included too many markers associated with speech writing, suggesting they had not read the question with sufficient care.

Effective use of carefully selected and precise vocabulary, now assessed separately from spelling, was commended by many examiners, although issues persist with basic spelling and punctuation. ‘Education’, ‘future’ (both of which formed part of the task as set out in the question paper) and ‘benefits’ ranked highly among commonly misspelt words.

There were very few examples of misreading the question although a few chose to eulogise over a dream future and omitted to mention education. Likewise, a small minority of candidates elected to write on an entirely unrelated subject.

Most responses included some valid development with clearly delineated introductions and conclusions. It was extremely encouraging to see how candidates actively established a rapport to engage their readers. As one candidate observed: “Don’t panic! Excelling after education isn’t all about entering Einstein’s brain. We all learn more non-academic, but valuable, lessons that don’t revolve around photosynthesis, source analysis or linear equations. Phew!”

Section B: Reading Non-Fiction and Media Texts

Task 2

The article, based on an extract from a book about climate change, proved accessible for the candidates. The vast majority noted the use of direct address and the writer’s inclusion of the simile — “That’s like seeing a sumo wrestler jumping on a trampoline and deciding that gravity doesn’t exist” — to inject humour.

As noted in previous reports, the Competence Level strand “read and understand the text/ select material” tends to be where candidates perform best. Most could identify relevant examples and support this with an attempt to offer valid insights.

Examiners reported that there was strong evidence that candidates had been well prepared for this task with some particularly notable responses, characterised by their sophisticated analysis and precise evaluation. Pleasingly, only a very small number of candidates chose to provide their own views on climate change and ignored that they should have been demonstrating their reading skills in this section.

Overall, too many candidates relied on broad, generic statements, such as ‘...engages the reader’ and ‘...makes you want to read on’ thereby significantly diminishing the quality of the interpretation. Centres may consider that it is worth reinforcing that access to the higher Competence Levels will be limited without evidence of analysis and evaluation. Evidence from the response booklets (namely the annotation of the stimulus material by candidates) points to the continued fascination for identifying features and providing examples, with little demonstration of understanding of either the writer’s intentions or the elements of the writer’s craft.

One noteworthy response concluded: “The writer uses this simile to illustrate how absurd it is that people deny global warming. The simplicity the author is using to spread the message reassures the reader that he is knowledgeable on the topic as he is capable of condensing the information into manageable chunks, thereby effectively reinforcing the severity of the issue.”

Task 3

In this part of the text, the writer was explaining some of the differences between weather and climate. Candidates were required, using their own words, to write down two differences the writer identified between weather and climate. Marks were necessarily limited where mention was made of only weather or climate.

Most candidates appeared to have practised similar exercises in class and were able to find a difference from at least one paragraph, then explain this in their own words and select two relevant pieces of evidence. Examiners were pleased to note that Question 3(b) and Question 3(d) were very accessible for most candidates, with many gaining full marks.

A few candidates attempted to discuss climate change rather than climate and centres should remind their students of the importance of reading the question carefully. ‘In your own words’ is only relevant for Tasks 3(a) and 3(c) and where there is no attempt to explain or use their own words, there will not be access to the higher marks. Candidates should be advised that Task 3(a) and Task 3(c) demands that they extract relevant information and not necessarily provide a summary.

Task 4

This task was managed successfully, with examiners reporting that the game cover of ‘Ratchet and Clank: Rift Apart’ enabled most candidates to provide appropriate responses about the writer’s use of language. Overall, they showed understanding of the writer’s intentions and provided effective and purposeful comments on why this would be an exciting game to play. One examiner commented: “Candidates were able to identify a range of phrases that the writer had used to make the game seem exciting by being set in space/ action-packed/thrilling.” Whist another examiner remarked: “The video game cover was superb and the promotional writing offered lots of opportunities for candidates across the ability range — this material was very well suited to GCSE candidates.”

Some candidates were also able to concisely analyse and evaluate the effect on the reader. The selection of appropriate textual material continues to be a strength for many candidates. The use of single-word exclamatory sentences and compound adjectives “action-filled” and “gadget-fuelled” were popular choices for discussion, with most candidates identifying the use of imperatives throughout.

A pleasing number picked up on the use of triple: “fresher, deeper, richer” to highlight the extensive improvements in this newly, updated version of the game.

It was also pleasing to note that there were fewer instances where candidates summarised the blurb and failed to discuss language use. The previous advice remains valid: candidates should be encouraged to select relevant textual material, consider what the writer was attempting to do with this and comment on its overall success. This will help ensure there is, as a minimum, some purposeful examination of the language.

Task 5

As previously reported, this task has been designed to provide an accessible question and most candidates responded enthusiastically to the cover of the ‘Ratchet and Clank: Rift Apart’ game. Many highlighted the striking rift which divided the image in two and were enabled to discuss some aspect of the vibrant colours, the characters/avatars or the weapons.

Centres should advise candidates that they need to be specific with the selection of their presentational device; examiners will not award marks where the terms ‘colour’ or ‘image’ or ‘layout’ are used without specific, supporting detail. Similarly, candidates should be made aware of making judicious choices when selecting a presentational feature — some attempted to comment and provide explanation about minutiae, possibly aliens, in the background and this was usually restricting. One examiner remarked: “Noticeably students often selected a presentational feature e.g. colour but, in their explanation, digressed into discussing other elements. Presentational devices chosen were often not supportable e.g. purple suggests evil.”

In the main, candidates’ explanations did focus on the effect on the reader although some responses were limited to a general overview of what the feature might suggest. Repeating that this game was appealing was not deemed to be creditworthy as this statement already formed part of the stem of the question.

There were fewer examples where candidates attempted commentary on multiple presentational devices, and we are pleased that this advice has been taken on board.

Principal Moderator's Report

Assessment Unit 2 Speaking and Listening

Internal Assessment Overview

The moderators noted that some centres are still using a range of formats to collate formative records for Speaking and Listening. Centres should be aware that it is compulsory to use the CCEA proforma (available to download from the CCEA website) which was designed to make this process efficient for teachers. Some formative records were also filled in partially. Once again, it is compulsory that the formative records provide a clear overview of all the tasks offered during the course.

Of the tasks provided for Moderation, the general response from centres was that these were accessible for all candidates. The two most popular tasks related to junk food and social media.

Moderators reported the choice of Chairperson still proved problematic. Some candidates found it difficult to assume this role whilst also making valuable contributions to the discussion. It is important for centres to recognise that the top candidate does not necessarily need to be the Chairperson.

Once again, marks awarded in Level 5 tended to cause the most disparity when compared to the moderator's marks. The Assessment Criteria are clear that candidates assessed at the level, must demonstrate the ability to 'interrogate' points made by others.

Overall, it was clear that the majority of centres had developed positive and robust Speaking and Listening practices. Teachers had effectively taught the skills required for group discussions. It was, as always, pleasing to note the courtesy with which moderators were received by candidates.

Assessment Unit 3 Studying Spoken and Written Language

Internal Assessment Overview

The members of the CCEA English Language Moderation Team agreed that task titles were appropriately theme-related and 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. When provided, such support structures proved to be enabling to candidates, making candidates less likely to marginalise or omit an Assessment Objective.

Guidance on annotation, as contained in the Specification, was followed by most centres. It was noted, however, that a small number of centres recorded formative comments on the responses. Comments of this type are unnecessary as students must not have access to their responses after the 60-minute write-up time.

Internal Standardisation is a requirement for this unit. While there was evidence that practically all centres engaged in robust Internal Standardisation (even when only one teacher was responsible for the assessment of the responses), there was also evidence in this series that it was not always successful. It is crucial that centres engage meaningfully in Internal Standardisation, challenging and interrogating the marks awarded, to ensure their marking represents a common departmental understanding of the CCEA standard. To assist in this process centres are advised to make use of the support materials available on the English Language section of the CCEA website and to access the Agreement Trial presentation and exemplar work which is issued each Autumn.

Administration Procedures

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

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 commentaries were relevant and engaging for candidates and included ample opportunity for meaningful cross-referencing. Candidates responded to commentaries from a range of commentators such as Snoop Dog, David Attenborough, Steve Irwin, Eamon Dunphy, Joe Brolly, Peter Drury and David Dimbleby. The stimulus materials were effective when there was a range of linguistic and delivery techniques for candidates to explain, analyse and evaluate. 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. 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. In such cases, the likelihood of an adjustment which exceeds the agreed tolerance for the unit is increased.

Whilst most centres applied the Assessment Criteria accurately, there was a tendency towards leniency in a small number of centres. Some candidates were rewarded for simply referring to the speakers' language, linguistic techniques, and delivery techniques. Some responses awarded Competence Level 4 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. As always, candidates should be taught at as early a stage as possible the differences between explanation, analysis, and evaluation. There was evidence of an overly-led teacher approach to Task 1 in a small number of centres. 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 Competence Level 4, candidates are expected to include: 'analysis of a range of purposefully selected language choices and their intended effects', 'analysis of a range of purposefully selected linguistic techniques and their intended effects' and 'analysis of a range of purposefully selected delivery techniques and their purpose'. In order 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.

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.

Task 2 The Study of Written Language

In most cases, task titles were carefully planned and designed. However, some titles were not clearly assessment-criterion-referenced. Most candidates had selected and analysed appropriate details in relation to the character or theme and maintained a clear focus on the terms of the question. Again, there was some 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 Competence Level 4, candidates are expected to show: 'good understanding demonstrated through purposeful comments on the text(s)', 'a sustained interpretation of key elements of writer's techniques with analysis of their intended effects' and 'purposefully selected material from within and/or across the text(s) used to develop a coherent response'. In order 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.

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.

Chief Examiner's Report

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

Overview

The Examining Team felt that this question 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.

On the whole, candidates utilised their time well; however, there was some evidence that candidates ran out of time. Teachers may wish to discuss the importance of time allocation with their students.

The language used in the stimulus texts was felt to be accessible to all ability levels while still providing opportunities to access the higher Competence Levels. Successful candidates were more considered in analysing specific language effects attributed to the correct techniques. Overall, the Examining Team agreed that the skills of analysing and evaluating the writer's craft are areas in which candidates could improve.

Section A: Personal or Creative Writing

Task 1

Responses to Task 1 were mainly successful, with the Personal Writing being very popular. There were a few instances of candidates writing in a persuasive manner for the Personal Writing response as well as those who offered pre-planned responses which did not match the purpose of the task. This was self-limiting and deemed a breach of rubric. Some candidates also wrote about a memorable experience, rather than their best weekend. It is important that candidates read the question carefully and tailor their ideas accordingly.

For those candidates who chose the Personal Writing option there were many engaging weekend experiences described. There were also some unique and unexpected responses to this task. Some candidates chose to write about a memorable weekend spent with grandparents. For those candidates who chose the Creative Writing option, some focused only on a child with a grandparent, with no reference to amusements/fairground/bumper cars. Whilst examiners were instructed to take a broad view of what constituted an amusement centre, no reference meant that such responses had ignored part of the stimulus image. Teachers may wish to reiterate the importance of utilising the stimulus material, provided for this task, including its setting.

Clearly candidates were well prepared. 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 structure was generally secure, and many candidates appeared confident in using a wider range of punctuation and effective paragraphing. However, it is worth reinforcing that a competent use of punctuation is as important as extending the range. This is an area that teachers may wish to focus on as colons and semi-colons were used indiscriminately by candidates in the mid-to-upper ability range.

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

Quality teaching was evident. Candidates engaged well with the two texts and were able to make different inferences about characters' actions as well as interpreting details of the setting and how this created a sense of threat. 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 – in particular, marginal references to narrative stance, sentence structure and the use of parenthesis but without an attempt to illustrate the writers' intentions with reference to the clear focus of the question. There was also a degree of misinterpretation of techniques evident.

Many competently synthesised ideas and evidence from both texts to produce clear comparisons. For example, many candidates effectively compared the threat of the water and made reference to the use of personification to heighten this sense of threat in both texts. 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 a sense of threat had been developed was not always fully investigated. This limited the number of responses achieving Competence Level 5.

The Examining Team believes this is an area that teachers may wish to focus on to help candidates fulfil their potential.

Task 3

The stimulus text was well received, and it was felt it was relatable for the full ability range, with many candidates noting the writer's frustrated tone. Most candidates could identify the writer's use of short sentences, exclamations, triples and exaggeration, whilst more successful candidates were able to correctly pinpoint techniques such as self-deprecating humour: "I have enough self-doubt without my phone adding more..." to further develop the rapport with the reader.

Occasionally, inaccurate claims were made about the writer's intentions and the effect of these techniques. Some candidates chose to focus on techniques such as parenthesis, dashes and colons, which was self-limiting. There was also a degree of misinterpretation of techniques evident. For example, some candidates noted the use of dialogue in the phrase: "Just check your phone for the important stuff," I declare." Again, this was restrictive for these candidates.

Many candidates were less successful in this task than Task 4. Attention should be drawn to how the writer gains and holds the reader's interest throughout the extract. The Examining Team felt that many candidates did not make any reference to writer's craft in response to this task.

Task 4

As with Task 3, the stimulus text was well received. It was relevant for the full ability range, with many candidates noting the writer's blunt and disapproving tone in relation to phone notifications. Most candidates could identify the writer's use of questions and hyperbole, whilst more successful candidates were able to correctly identify the use of a mocking tone and emotive language to strengthen the writer's disapproval of phone notifications. A few candidates misunderstood the writer's intentions and interpreted the extract as negativity about the use of mobile phones in general.

There were occasionally inaccurate claims made about the writer's intentions and the effect of these techniques. As with Task 3, some candidates chose to focus on techniques such as alliteration in the phrase: "The temptation of the ticks is too strong", which did not always lend itself well to an evaluative response. There was also a degree of misinterpretation of techniques evident. For example, some candidates noted the use of dialogue in the phrase: "But they've seen that I've seen it now." Again, this was self-limiting for these candidates.

As with Task 3, the Examining Team noted that many candidates did not make any reference to writer's craft, and so, this may be a useful area for teachers to target their efforts when preparing future students for this section of the examination.

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