



GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE
GCSE**

SUMMER 2022

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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COMPONENT 1

General Comments

Section A

The reading material for this paper was taken from an early novel by Anne Cleeves but the passage was self-contained, and the narrative focused mainly on the relationship between the two principal characters. The narrative was not really difficult to follow but there were subtleties in the presentation of the relationship between Rachel and Peter. The passage seemed to provoke a response and most candidates seemed to be thoroughly engaged with it.

The questions followed a predictable pattern and, although some of them proved to be challenging as you would expect in an untiered paper, there were opportunities for all levels of ability to show what they could do. Time management continues to be an issue for a small minority of candidates who failed to attempt Q05.

Section B

As usual, there were four options in the writing section and the candidates could choose to write imaginatively or from personal experience. Most candidates produced work which had some substance and coherence, although some responses were very brief.

The more successful responses showed control of expression as well as content but some candidates' work is still often undermined by a lack of technical control.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q01

This type of question attempts to test the candidates' ability to identify implicit and explicit information and ideas.

This particular question focused on a relatively short section of text and, although it was possible to make inferences, there were a lot of surface details about Rachel which the candidates could use in their responses. Five marks were available for a clear selection and presentation of relevant, accurate details.

For example, Rachel was doing research at Durham University, which was when she met Peter Kemp. It is worth noting that those who split the information into two separate bullet points could gain two marks, although it was not true that she met him at the university. However, there were plenty of other points to make. For example, Rachel had a degree in Biology from Cambridge and she did not seem to be keen to live near her mother.

She had moved back to the north because she was passionate about the upland birds of the northern hills. She had started studying black grouse but transferred her interest to curlew and wagtail. She was trying to devise a system for counting birds and she used a cottage in Northumberland as the base for her studies. Most of this material could be split into separate bullet points and the overwhelming majority of candidates handled this question efficiently and thoroughly.

All that was required here was a concise list of bullet points but candidates should take care with presentation to make sure that their answers are clear and coherent.

I am pleased to report that most candidates were sensible in judging the length of their responses and did not waste time with answers which were too long.

Q02

This question asked for impressions of a hotel, the White Hart, based on reference to the language in the text. In practice, the most effective responses were quite concise, making the key impressions with a well-chosen range of language choice and supporting evidence. No more could reasonably be expected in a question worth only five marks and, although there was plenty of material for the candidates to use here, there was not so much that they were potentially overwhelmed by it or tempted into wasting time with answers which were unnecessarily lengthy. The sensible candidates do grasp the fact that the opening two questions need to be dealt with as efficiently as possible to leave enough time to devote to the more heavily weighted questions.

In detail, The White Hart appeared to be quite imposing. It was a 'solid' and 'stone built' building with a prominent location on the main street. The fact that it had once been 'the only place to eat' in the town suggested its former glory but its grandeur was fading as it had grown 'shabby'. On Fridays it was full of underage drinkers and could be 'rowdy' with 'petty skirmishes' attracting visits by the police. The rest of the week it had an atmosphere of 'genteel decay' and it was old-fashioned with elderly waitresses in black and white uniforms. The food was 'traditional', consisting of overcooked vegetables and thick gravy. There was a panic about Rachel's vegetarianism and the cheese omelette she was served eventually was 'leathery'.

Overall, the impression of the place was that it had once been impressive but was becoming rather rundown, clinging unsuccessfully to a former elegance and grandeur.

This question seemed to work well and it encouraged a lot of good responses.

Q03

This question was worth ten marks and focused on a section of the text which was relatively short. It was a two-part question and, although its primary aim was to test analysis of how writers use language to achieve effect (AO2), it allowed credit to be given for accurate comments about the character of Bob Hewlett. The issue of 'how' the writer showed Bob's character was often a matter of selecting the relevant evidence. The writer used carefully chosen language but also Rachel's thoughts about him and his actions to construct a rather unattractive and unflattering picture of the man.

It was made clear from the start of this section that Bob Hewlett was not universally liked. Rachel had met him and did not like him much as she suspected he was manipulative and selfish, wanting to use her work for his own advantage.

He was 'close' to the local farmers and eager to be accepted. He seemed to want to be popular and Rachel suggested he was 'too close' and 'too desperate' to be accepted. There was a clear suggestion that he did not do his job properly because he was so close to the locals, and perhaps even a hint of corruption. He lived locally which reinforced the suggestion that he was keen to integrate into the local community. He acted the role of the 'country landowner' and cultivated that image with his Land Rover and the labradors in the back. He seemed sociable, drinking with the local farmers, but Rachel's tone was cynical as she described them as 'all friends together'. He was presented as having some power and influence and Rachel knew it would be unwise to offend him. Some suggested that he was a vindictive man who bore grudges. He 'beamed' at Rachel when he mentioned Peter Kemp, again suggesting that he was apparently friendly and well-intentioned, but probably backing Rachel into a corner and presenting himself smugly as a fine chap who was very pleased with himself. The mention of drinking and driving suggested his irresponsibility. A lot of candidates noted that he liked a drink, although those who accused him of being an alcoholic were perhaps going too far. Some claimed, quite understandably, that he was rude to invite Peter Kemp without even asking Rachel and it was certainly true that Rachel found his 'interference' irritating. He was described as 'patronising' but only some candidates understood what that meant in the context of the passage.

The more successful candidates saw that the writer presented the character as sociable and friendly enough on the surface but much less pleasant in reality. They got the measure of the character and saw the way the writer undermined the surface impression of Bob Hewlett. This question was quite challenging as it required the ability to see the real person beneath the surface impressions, there was a gap between appearance and reality which proved to be too subtle for some candidates, but many did see it and responded accordingly.

Q04

To answer this question successfully the candidates had to engage with the character of Peter Kemp and analyse how the writer used language and structure to present his character.

Some candidates, admittedly a small minority, misread the opening of the text and claimed that he was 'clean' or 'neat and tidy' because he was 'hoovering in the doorway'. More accurately, most argued that the initial impression of the character was that he was an attractive man who exuded charm and self-confidence. Most noticed that he gave the waitress a 'lovely smile' and he also smiled 'charmingly' as he approached Bob and Rachel, who immediately sensed his confidence. The writer presented him as polite and perhaps rather formal as he shook hands with Bob. He immediately complimented Rachel on her work and the writer described him as 'earnest' but 'trying to please'. Rachel knew she was being 'worked on' by a flatterer. He was manipulative and hard to resist and, even though she knew he wanted something from her, she 'submitted' to his flattery and charm. The writer showed the success of his flattery as he got an invitation to the cottage. The writer showed him getting what he wanted and that included Rachel's 'passion' for him. The writer described her feelings as having the 'intensity of an adolescent crush' and much of the presentation of Peter Kemp was achieved through Rachel's response to him. She found his charm irresistible, despite having a fairly clear idea of what he was doing, and why.

The writer also used the response of Rachel's mother who took an instant dislike to him. He tried to charm her but she responded by glaring into her glass with unconcealed hostility. Even Rachel suggested that the charm seemed forced and false. She described him as 'trying too hard' and seeming 'insincere.' Rachel's mother described Peter Kemp as 'showy' and therefore untrustworthy but to Rachel he remained captivating.

He was presented as a romantic who 'made a fuss' of Rachel, dancing with her on the lawn and bringing flowers and champagne to the cottage.

Successful candidates saw the ambivalence in the presentation of the character. He was undoubtedly 'captivating' in Rachel's eyes and irresistibly charming. However, the writer undermined the surface qualities of the character, using both Rachel and her mother to suggest something false and merely 'showy' about him. Less successful responses never got beyond his charm but the 'one-dimensional' approach could make some progress. The challenge for the candidates was to stay focused on the issue of how Kemp was presented, but he certainly provoked a response.

Q05

This question focused on the events at the conclusion of the passage but also invited some reflection on the passage as a whole. As always with this type of evaluation question, the key to a successful critical response was the ability to create and sustain a coherent stance, supporting the argument with appropriate reference to the text.

Some ignored the first proposition in the question but most candidates agreed that Rachel was intelligent, at least in terms of her academic qualifications. She had a degree from Cambridge and worked as a researcher at Durham university. Some candidates also argued that she had some emotional/social intelligence too. She knew when she was being flattered and 'worked on'. It was possible to argue that she was usually a fairly shrewd judge of character. She saw through Bob Hewlett's insincerity and selfishness, and she was also sensible enough to realise that it was important for her career not to offend him. She even saw that Peter Kemp could try too hard to please and try too hard to use his charm on other people to win approval. All of these things suggested that Rachel was no fool.

However, most candidates also felt that she behaved foolishly in her relationship with Peter Kemp. She behaved like a teenager in the grip of an 'adolescent crush.' She understood that he made excuses to be with her but she was 'delighted'. Her mother warned her explicitly about men like Peter Kemp but it made no difference as she ignored her. She was 'captivated' and loved the attention and romantic gestures. She was clearly swept away, and very quickly, by the fact that he was making a fuss of her. She even began to make 'secret plans' involving marriage and children. Most candidates understood that her infatuation led her into what looked like serious folly. She allowed herself to be used and exploited in his business and was blind when the bottles of champagne disappeared. She accepted the excuse that money was tight and persuaded herself that any sign of affection or appreciation was significant. Some argued that she was a fool to throw away her promising academic career for a deceitful 'charmer'.

When Peter Kemp stole her ideas and used them to make his business successful, Rachel did not confront him as she was too proud to admit to being a fool. She even continued working for him. Most candidates argued that she was a self-deceived fool who was blinded by love and swept away by charm and attention. However, some were more sympathetic and saw her as a victim, at least to some extent. It was possible to argue that she was cruelly and cynically exploited and that his charm was not easy to resist. He used deceit to steal her ideas and the wedding invitation was as cruel as it was unexpected. Only a few candidates knew how to link the wedding invitation to the idea of Rachel's foolishness but I was impressed by the response which argued that it confirmed Rachel's foolishness in allowing romantic dreams to hinder her career.

There was some range of valid responses to Rachel and arguments were rewarded as long as they were coherent and supported by the text. For example, most candidates argued that Rachel was foolish but sometimes they accused her of being foolish when events were beyond her knowledge or control. She could scarcely be blamed for Kemp stealing her ideas. However, she did choose not to confront him and carried on working for him. That was a different matter.

The less successful answers really struggled to maintain a focus on the question and lost the issue of 'foolishness'. Some resorted to a general commentary on the story while others merely told the story. However, the better answers picked up both the question of her intelligence (some easy credit to be had there) and the question of her folly.

Section B

Q1.1 This section requires the ability to develop a narrative at some length and, although the titles on offer allowed for imaginative writing with many good examples seen, many approaches tended to work from personal experience.

As always, the more successful responses were coherent, using either first or third person, and the content showed a sense of direction and control. They used detail, dialogue and characterisation appropriately to keep the reader engaged and interested. As I have said before, responses do not have to be predictable but they should be relevant to the title and engage the reader's interest. Less successful narratives are often characterised by implausible plots or lack of substance.

All of the options attracted significant numbers of candidates.

- a) There were some awkward, unconvincing definitions of a visit but many were perfectly coherent and had the ring of authenticity. Visits to theme parks and zoos were popular and, more poignantly, hospital visits made frequent appearances.
- b) Many of the responses to this title seemed to be clearly based on personal experience but there were also some clearly 'imaginative' narratives. The better responses were often amusing and used detail and characterisation effectively. Some focused on the journey to the new job and the emotions felt by the narrator. That approach was acceptable and valid.
- c) Predictably, this was a popular choice and most candidates who chose it had plenty of material for their writing. Sometimes the events seemed rather exaggerated or far-fetched but there were plenty which were convincing and well-judged in content.
- d) Some candidates approached this title as a general narrative on the theme of disappointment (which a lot failed to spell accurately). However, the title asked for a narrative about a time when the 'you felt disappointed in yourself'. Exams and football matches loomed large here, and some of them were handled well, but some candidates did manage some originality. Disappointing public performances by singers and dancers were often handled very convincingly and in painful detail.

Summary of key points

In the reading section:

- Candidates should 'line up' the question and the answer to ensure that they are using the text to answer the question (using the words of the question is often helpful).
- Comments and inferences should be linked to textual evidence/references to the text.
- Candidates need to provide some substance and detail in questions worth ten marks. Some answers are too brief and offer very limited coverage of the text.
- Candidates need to answer the question that is actually there (for example in 05 which requires a well-argued personal response).

In the writing section:

- Candidates should develop their ideas so that their writing has some substance and detail. There is no need for excessive length but a narrative needs some detail and development.
- Candidates should think carefully about the direction and structure of their narratives before they start writing.
- Candidates need to be consistent with tenses and chronology.
- Most candidates need to take more care with spelling, punctuation and sentence construction. Too many responses are still undermined by a lack of technical control.

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COMPONENT 2

General Comments

Section A

The two reading texts for this examination focused on the work of Punch and Judy performers in Victorian and modern times. Henry Mayhew's 'London Labour and the London Poor', published in 1851, included an account of the life and work of a man who owned and performed a Punch and Judy puppet show and this was used together with a newspaper article about one of the few remaining seaside Punch and Judy shows still operating in the present day.

The questions followed a familiar pattern and most candidates seemed engaged by the subject matter and found the texts accessible. Successful candidates were often able to respond at length to the more demanding questions and used textual details well to support their comments and analysis. Less successful candidates often had briefer responses that sometimes failed to use the whole of the texts on more demanding questions and in some cases, struggled to manage their time effectively; for some candidates this meant they struggled to complete the final reading questions, with the overall attempt rate for question 16 dropping to below 90%.

Section B

In this examination candidates had been given advance information about the writing tasks and were aware that the writing tasks would consist of a formal letter and a magazine article. The formal letter candidates were asked to write was to respond to a letter in a newspaper that offered the view that zoos were no longer important in the twenty-first century. The second task asked candidates to write an article for a travel magazine entitled, 'Where I live' that explained what they liked about their home area but also what was less desirable. Many examiners commented that the advance information had offered candidates the opportunity before the examination to consider aspects such as the structure of a formal letter and the way a viewpoint could be supported and sustained by persuasive features and details. In the magazine article, approaches were varied with 'home area' being interpreted in a number of ways. As usual, there was an expected length of 300-400 words for each task, and whilst many candidates managed this comfortably, some candidates often struggled to write at sufficient length to ensure sufficient development in either of the tasks; in some cases, time management was an issue, with some not attempting the second writing task.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q1.1

This first question focused on the ‘Knockout Punch’ newspaper article, with three one-mark questions that invited candidates to select specific details from across the text. These required some care in reading both the question and the text but the questions were straightforward ‘search and find’ and allowed candidates to have a sense of the whole article before tackling the rather more demanding second question. The first part of the question simply asked Mark Poulton’s age when he watched his first Punch and Judy show and it was unsurprising that most candidates had no trouble locating the correct information – he was five years old. The second part of the question asked candidates where he performed his first summer season; there was more variability in these answers, with some candidates incorrectly noting Weymouth rather than Llandudno. The final part of the question asked when Mark Poulton announced he might stop performing, and although the majority of candidates correctly identified the year – 2016, some candidates responded by explaining why he threatened to quit, rather than when. It is perhaps a useful reminder of the need to read the question with care as the loss of a mark or two here will have had an impact on some candidates’ overall mark.

Q1.2

With the opening question giving candidates the opportunity to have some broad understanding of the content of the article, this next question asked candidates to explore how the writer tried to show that Mark Poulton loved his work as a Punch and Judy man. Previous reports have repeated the message that in tackling any ‘craft of the writer’ question, the most effective and efficient approach is to work methodically through the text, selecting appropriate evidence and then commenting, where appropriate, on the impact of the details and the way these have been presented by the writer. Working in this way, good candidates were able to accumulate a wide range of details and information and present a clear and detailed response. Readers were introduced to Mark Poulton, one of just three licensed Punch and Judy performers in the UK, and it becomes quickly apparent that the role is “the only one he’s ever wanted.” Some candidates commented on the way the reporter allowed Poulton to tell his own story, and highlighted details about his early fascination, even obsession, with Punch and Judy shows from a very early age, selecting one or two telling details to add weight to their comments. They noted, for example his determination to succeed, using details such as obtaining his first summer season at just 16 and then “taking his show all over the country.” Whilst there are points in the article where Arnott, the reporter, invites Poulton to tell his own story, good candidates were also aware that Arnott himself heaps praise on to Poulton with details that confirm his commitment and dedication to his work. He gives the example of Poulton carving his own wooden puppets and designing and making the costumes to view him as “a master of his craft” and further on in the same paragraph describes him as “a man in love with his work.”

In giving Poulton the opportunity to tell his own story, readers are told that he believes his work is now part of the town’s history and tradition, and many candidates commented on the implied sense of pride this gives him. He goes on to talk about the ‘big crowds’ he attracts and the fact that many visit Weymouth simply to see the Punch and Judy show.

Arnott describes the way Poulton tells him this by saying, “he tells me proudly.” Many candidates seized upon the word ‘proudly’ (variously described by candidates as an adjective, adverb, verb and a noun!) but too often it was simply ‘spotted’ without any reference to the context in which it had been used. For some candidates, the hunt for a telling quotation or a particular feature sometimes seemed more important than reflecting on the impact of what was being said or the context of the textual detail. In some cases, the response became a series of quotations with a catch-all tag along the lines of “...this shows he loves his work”, but lacking any real exploration of the quotation or detail mentioned. At times, this became more problematic when candidates unwisely chose to use ellipsis, and in doing so, lost clarity. One example from a candidate trying to use some detail from paragraph 4 of the text was: “I love the thrill...an audience”, with the comment: “this shows he loved his work.” More assured candidates tried to give sufficient explanation and context to the details they selected, for example explaining that in trying to find “new routines” to attract audiences, Poulton constantly challenged and pushed himself to be the very best, was never complacent and was always looking for ways to improve.

Most candidates were able to select at least a few details that indicated Poulton loved his work, perhaps the most obvious being the way he put the work over any financial reward. Others wrote about the difficulties he had with unruly children that made him consider ending his shows but was then convinced to continue by the many “messages of support” he received. Some candidates continued to explore how he had tried to survive financially, giving details from the penultimate paragraph about how he sold souvenir key rings or used a crowdfunding page to raise money and commenting on his resilience and determination to continue his craft. In the final paragraph, readers are once again given Poulton’s own words as he explains that whatever the circumstances, he is “always happy to do the shows, come rain or shine.” Less-assured candidates often simply quoted this with little or no explanation, whilst more able ones were prepared to give a little explanation and a comment on the way this concluding comment captured neatly Poulton’s positive attitude and love for his work, with some saying it was a further example of him determined to overcome every difficulty or obstacle.

Successful candidates found plenty of material from the text to show how the writer had presented Poulton, and the best responses had a good range of relevant detail from across the whole text, with insightful comments, where appropriate, threaded through the answer, together with an awareness of how Arnott had presented the Punch and Judy man in such a positive light.

Q1.3

This question now asked candidates to read and respond to the second text from ‘London Labour and the London Poor’. As in previous examinations, there were three one-mark questions and like question 1.1 should have given candidates an overview of the text that would help them tackle the following question worth 10 marks. The first part of the question asked for one of the jobs undertaken by the partner of the Punch and Judy man. This was explained in the opening three sentences of the passage and almost all candidates were able to state that he played a drum to announce the start of a street performance. As he also collected the money after the performance, this was also a valid answer. A small number of candidates noted that the account mentions both men carry the show booth and this too was a valid answer. The passage explains in some detail about the money the Punch and Judy man received from performing and the second part of the question asked how much he was paid for performing at children’s parties.

This question required more care in reading, the information coming in the opening sentence of the fourth paragraph (“I used to attend very wealthy gentlemen’s houses for their children’s parties and get as much as two pounds for the performance.”), although later in the paragraph he explains how people now haggle with them for these performances and they get only “shillings and sixpences”. Either detail earned reward, although examiners noted that almost any amount of money mentioned in the text incorrectly found its way into this response. This and the incorrect responses to the final part of the question serve as useful reminders about the need for careful reading of both text and question. The final part of the question asked for one detail to show that not everyone paid to watch a performance. The answer to this came in the final paragraph, where readers are told that ‘soldiers never have any money’ and also that most of the boys who watch the performances “ain’t got a halfpenny to bless themselves with”. Either of these details earned reward. Whilst most candidates gained good marks on this question, examiners noted that where candidates had not read the question carefully, it almost inevitably led to selecting wrong details that failed to answer the question. For those who had read carefully, it will have given them some understanding of the difficulties faced by the Punch and Judy man, and this should have prepared them for the 10-mark question that followed.

Q1.4

This question now asked candidates to consider the ‘London Labour and the London Poor’ text in more detail. They were given a statement: “The account shows that making a living as a Punch and Judy man was hard and unrewarding work” and asked how far they agreed with this view. As with question 1.2, candidates who adopted a methodical approach, reading each paragraph of the account carefully in turn, selecting out relevant detail and commenting upon it had a more considered view of the statement, and were usually able to gain good marks as a result. A small minority of readers often limited their focus to one or two paragraphs or seemed to assume they had to try equally to find points of agreement and disagreement, which often led them into incorrect conclusions and selection of detail that failed to support their assertions.

One of the aspects candidates had to grapple with was that at various points in the account the man explained how the work had been financially rewarding in the past and contrasting this with much tougher times that he faced at the time of the account. Candidates who dealt successfully with this and concentrated mainly on what the Punch and Judy man had to say about his work at the time of the account generally avoided muddle and confusion. In any case, simply working methodically through the text should have made clear exactly how he felt about his work.

He begins by drawing a comparison between the money he made “in the early days” and at the time he gave his account. Many candidates saw that it was useful to give the specific details: he used to make “five pounds regular” but “a good day now seldom gets beyond five shillings.” Most used this information to comment that this proved his work was ‘unrewarding’, at least in financial terms. Good candidates were able to explain that if they could only earn five shillings in a full day, what could be earned during a single street performance was a pittance: “we take on average only threepence.” Sometimes less successful candidates seemed unsure how to untangle this and simply stated they “earned only five shillings and averaged only threepence”, running the details together with limited clarity or understanding.

Some candidates made the case that ‘better money’ could be made from private shows, although more-assured readers were able to make the point that even here, they were robbed by maids who took some of the money that was to be paid to them so that they could “buy fancy ribbons.”

Most candidates recognised that it was in the third paragraph where the Punch and Judy man made it very clear that the work was hard in a number of different ways. He begins by saying that although there was money to be earned on Mondays, by the end of the week, little or nothing could be made “because then the poor have spent all their money.” The details of the daily work come in the following four sentences of the paragraph. Here, less successful candidates often simply included a long quotation, sometimes two or three sentences long with little more than a concluding comment suggesting, “this shows it was hard”. Better candidates dealt with each of the specific details, explaining how this impacted on the man. For example, some commented that for the man to perform twenty shows in a day would be extremely physically draining, having to work from “early in the morning...till dark at night” suggests that the long hours are necessary to make a living and having to walk up to twenty miles a day every day, would have a negative effect on his health and having to carry the weight of the booth “which weighs a good half-hundredweight” would make the job a physically exhausting one day after day. Candidates found further evidence of this when the man calls the work “great exertion” and goes on to say, “my voice very often fails me.”

The man goes on to give further details about how the business has become more difficult, explaining that where he was well paid for putting on a show at children’s parties, that side of his work has reduced, and where he had attended ten parties “in the olden time” he now says, “I don’t go to two now.” This loss of work is made even worse for him because of the way people now “haggle us down” from pounds to “shillings and sixpences.”

The final paragraph continues in a similar vein, with the man saying that some people, such as soldiers, who watch the show don’t pay and even when gentlemen stop to watch and sends his footman with money, he will take some of it for himself. He finally turns his attention to the boys who come to watch the street show, describing them as “the greatest nuisances” because of the way they try to disrupt the show and also because they too never have any money to put in the collection.

Although some candidates did attempt to view the man’s work as rewarding, using references to “the olden time”, most found it much more rewarding to track through the details of his daily routine to find lots of support for the view that his work was both hard and certainly financially unrewarding. Using the whole text allowed candidates to select a wide range of relevant evidence and this usually resulted in a good response that gained high marks.

Q1.5

This question asked candidates to select relevant material from across the two texts, with a little brief explanation, about how the Punch and Judy men made their money. As has been indicated in previous examination reports, the best approach to this question is to deal with each text separately. If candidates happen to explain details that apply equally to both texts, they will be rewarded but too frequently examiners report reading responses where the candidate is suggesting details about both texts, when in fact they only apply to one of them. In tackling this question, it is important for candidates to indicate clearly which detail applies to which text. Some examiners reported responses where details were muddled across the texts and this lack of clarity and precision meant candidates struggled to gain good marks. One example of this was a candidate who began his response with, “The performers made their money by selling key rings and performing at children’s parties.” Where candidates focused on each text separately, it often led them to a good mark.

In the ‘Knockout Punch’ text, when Mark Poulton is performing on the beach, he relies on the donations made from his audience, his assistant going round with a collecting box.

He hopes that the many performances he gives to the large seaside crowds would give him a steady income, and he further supplements his income by selling souvenir key rings. However, this is still often insufficient to bring in enough money for him to live on. As a consequence, he has set up a crowdfunding page on Facebook, appealing for donations and this has allowed him to continue his Punch and Judy show.

In the ‘London Labour and the London Poor’, the Punch and Judy man also relies on donations from the many street shows he performs each day, but like Mark Poulton, he also looks for other ways to supplement his income. He will perform his show in ‘private houses’ where he is able to pacify noisy children with the show, and he also talks about putting on his show for children’s parties at the houses of wealthy gentlemen, where despite parents who “haggle us down”, will still make much more money than he would from a street performance.

The instruction in the question asked candidates to ‘explain briefly’ some of the relevant details, but some examiners reported candidates using a grid with a note of a detail but with no attempt to explain, for example, why Mark Poulton used Facebook or why the Victorian Punch and Judy man attended children’s parties. For candidates to gain good marks in the question, it is important that they follow the instructions and unless there is a specific instruction to organise their responses in a grid or other format, this should be avoided.

Q1.6

This final question invited candidates to make comparisons of the two texts, focusing on the two bullet points. These asked for comparisons of the impressions the Punch and Judy men give of the children who have watched their performances and how such impressions had been created.

In the ‘Knockout Punch’ text, although Mark Poulton said he encouraged participation from children and saying that he wanted them join in and “to shout and yell”, there was a more disturbing impression of some children who behaved badly and lacked respect for him. He gave one example of their disruptive behaviour, saying that whilst he was performing, some would throw stones at the show booth. He went on to say that some children tried to even stop the show continuing by banging on the show booth whilst he was performing. When he told them off, he “got a load of verbal abuse.” Poulton uses the word ‘deliberately’ when describing the children’s determined attempts to stop the show and the impact of this unruly behaviour on him is shown when he talks about how the incidents “destroyed my faith in humanity” and were so bad that it nearly caused him to end the beach performances.

The impression of the children in ‘London Labour and the London Poor’ were in some respects similar but in other instances, rather different. When talking about the performances in the private houses, the Punch and Judy man says the children are pacified by the show and it is “something to quiet ‘em a bit.” However, out on the streets the problems are similar to those encountered by Mark Poulton. The impression of the Victorian children is that they too are unruly and will try to stop the performances with their poor behaviour. A further impression is that they never have any money and so are unwelcome spectators at the street shows. He describes them as “the greatest nuisances we have to contend with” and gives examples of their annoying and disruptive behaviour, saying they throw their caps into the show booth and try to poke their fingers through the cloth to try to make holes to peep through. The account ends with the man’s exasperated cry of “Bother ‘em” summing up the frustration he feels about them.

As has happened in previous examinations, some candidates failed to keep their focus on the bullet points: the impressions of the children in the two texts, and drifted into more general details of the work and lives of the Punch and Judy men. Others wrote only very brief responses, perhaps because of problems with time management, or they viewed the children in rather different ways from those presented in the texts. However, many made good use of the textual details to support the views given of the children in the two texts and their accumulation of detail and sensible comments allowed many to gain good marks on this question.

Q2.1

As indicated in the `General Comments`, candidates were given advance information that the writing tasks would be a formal letter and a magazine article. The letter took the form of a response to part of a letter that had appeared in a newspaper suggesting that zoos were no longer important. The letter included some points that candidates could choose to use in support of their own viewpoint and almost all did. It has been said in previous reports that letters in newspapers dealing with an opinion on an issue invariably argue their case, rather than offer a more balanced view with no real concluding viewpoint. Most candidates did the same, and the relatively few who tried to simply weigh up the different arguments without offering a personal or concluding viewpoint, struggled to some extent to give their letters real impact. The invitation to `give your views` on any controversial topic is almost certain best done by advancing a clear case, one way or the other. This was what the vast majority of candidates did, and examiners were treated to a range of arguments on both sides of the topic, many passionately held, with lots of supporting examples, statistics and persuasive techniques that suggested the advance information had helped in pre-examination preparation.

Most candidates were able to show some awareness of the layout of a formal letter, although many seemed to assume the `Editor` or whoever was receiving the letter, had put forward the original proposition that zoos were no longer useful and their letter was a personal response to him/her rather than the general readership of the newspaper. For less successful candidates this sometimes manifested itself in rhetorical questions along the lines of "How would you like to spend every day in a glass case?" that occasionally became something of a personal attack, rather than a series of well-considered points supporting a viewpoint.

That said, there were many impressive and persuasive responses on either side of the argument. Where letters worked well, there was a clear shape and structure to the work. Candidates used a brief introductory paragraph to make clear why they were writing and to give their opinion of the original letter. They then constructed a series of arguments, giving a paragraph to each one, in which they developed the point made in the opening `topic sentence` by giving further information, examples and other persuasive points before moving on to the next argument in support of their viewpoint. The most successful sustained and developed the point raised in their introductory sentence with three or four (and sometimes more) sentences that built their case ever more convincingly, before linking this to the next point in their letter; in some cases, candidates pursued their viewpoint with four or even five supporting arguments. Examiners saw some sophisticated and assured responses in which persuasive arguments were supported by wide-ranging information and details that sometimes touched on wider ecological issues that had national and international implications.

Most of the letters concluded with a brief overview of the arguments, and almost all tried to adopt a polite and measured tone.

Many examiners noted that a minority of candidates often made valid points in support of their views but were less successful in developing their arguments more fully; in some cases examiners saw some quite brief responses that nevertheless contained sensible and persuasive points that, had they been more fully developed, would have had greater impact.

Overall, this seemed to be a task to which candidates responded positively and had things to say. Examiners were treated to many excellent responses and it was disappointing when some candidates could only respond briefly or struggled to explain their views clearly.

Q2.2

The second task was to write an article for a travel magazine with the title, 'Where I live.' This was intended to focus on the candidate's home area and include what they liked about it but also what was less desirable. Candidates were free to decide what constituted their 'home area' and examiners saw responses that ranged from an article on a single house or street, to articles on a village, town or city, whilst others declared their 'home area' to be an entire country.

The task gave candidates the opportunity to be as wide-ranging as they chose to be, with the hope that responses would include a mixture of general information, specific details and some personal opinion. The best pieces balanced these different aspects well and gave examiners some clear insights into their home area and what was good, and not so good, about it. As the readership was intended to be travel magazine readers, it was useful to identify what village or city was the focus of the piece, although in many cases this information was not forthcoming or only revealed at the end of the article.

Good responses tended to give a general introduction to the home area, perhaps with a sentence or two about its location, history, amenities and quite often, the excellence of the local football or rugby team. These responses then tended to deal with a number of specific aspects of the area. Many, for example, gave details of the shopping facilities (or lack of them), with more assured writers able to focus on particular shops that offered good discounts or the very latest in fashion. Some candidates tended to write in more general terms, perhaps suggesting rather vaguely that there were restaurants, cafes or pubs that catered for every possible taste, whereas better responses gave the name and location of a particular place to visit with recommendations about a particular dish, when it was the best time to visit and so on.

In a similar way, whilst many candidates wanted to tell their readers about shops, civic amenities such as parks, notable buildings and local leisure facilities, less-assured writers tended to offer information at a very general level, whilst better responses offered more details, gave more information and included personal perspectives on the things they wrote about. Although it might have been thought easier to write about a place that was busy and lively or thronged with tourists, there were many charming pieces about tiny villages tucked away in the countryside where candidates wrote about the sense of community, the village events, local walks and so on in a way that captured a sense of the place very well. Some wrote about particular celebrations that were held in their area and where they gave some specific details of the events and the time of year this happened, it gave useful information to any would-be reader.

Most candidates tried to balance what was good about the home area with one or two aspects that needed improving, and litter and road congestion featured frequently, whilst others wrote of the dangers of being in less safe areas late at night. As this was the final task in the exam, some responses suffered from time-management issues and examiners reported that some were quite brief and lacked development.

However, there was much to enjoy as examiners were taken on a tour of all corners of the country, and sometimes beyond, and the very best pieces were a delight in the way that they captured a real sense of the particular place but also clearly reflected the views, opinions and involvement of the writer in the places they called `home`.

As in the Component 1 report, writing was often impacted by poor control and technical accuracy, with too many responses placed in a higher band for its content and organisation than the band for vocabulary, spelling, sentence structure and punctuation. Some of the weaknesses and errors were basic, with many examiners reporting, for example, in the letter that many candidates repeatedly wrote `zoo's` when an apostrophe was not appropriate and candidates frequently mis-spelling words such as `endangered` and `enclosures`, even though they were in the question and, in the article, frequently omitting capital letters for names of places.

Summary of key points

In the reading section:

- Candidates should ensure they are clear about the focus of each question and in questions 1.2 and 1.4 try to base their answer on the whole text (unless directed to a specific part or parts of the text), so that it includes as full a range of relevant textual details as possible and these are supported by clear comments and analysis where appropriate.
- Reading responses that are clear and precise gain the greatest reward, so textual details need to be given explanation and context where appropriate. Where quotations are used in responses, they must be accurate and clear and where ellipsis is used, the quoted piece should always make complete sense.
- Question 1.5 is best tackled by dealing with the details from each text before considering those details that appear in both texts. Where the question asks for a brief explanation of the detail, responses should always be in full sentences. Making notes in a grid format to answer this question is not helpful and does not fulfil the requirement to `briefly explain`.
- Responses to question 1.6 should always focus on what is asked for in the bullet points. More general points of comparison gain no reward.
- Candidates should ensure that the reading section is completed in the first hour of the examination, so that sufficient time is available to tackle and fully complete the two writing tasks.

In the writing section:

- Responses that are planned are generally the most successful, so two or three minutes spent planning the content and structure for a response is time well spent.
- Paragraphs (or sub-headings in some tasks) help the organisation of material and the use of an opening topic sentence opens up opportunities for greater exploration and detail in the subsequent sentences. Where candidates are able to build on the topic sentence through a number of following sentences, this improves the information, argument or focus of the topic sentence.
- Each writing task should be 300-400 words and responses that are significantly briefer will lack the range and development necessary for a good mark. As each writing task is marked out of 20, it is important for candidates to manage their time in a way that makes it possible to complete both tasks.
- Weaknesses in technical accuracy continue to impact negatively on candidates' marks and grades. Basic spellings, sentence construction and punctuation need particular care.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCSE

Summer 2022

COMPONENT 3

General Comments

Centres were not required to send recorded samples of the Spoken Language presentations to WJEC Eduqas in this Summer series. Therefore, as no Spoken Language presentations were seen, there is no Principal Moderator report for Summer 2022.

For ongoing Component 3 guidance and support please visit our [English language homepage](#).

Comments on individual questions/sections

N/A

Summary of key points

N/A



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