



GCE AS EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE
AS**

SUMMER 2019

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCE AS

Summer 2019

Component 1: Analysis of Texts in Context

General Comments

Candidates were generally prepared well for this paper. They could demonstrate a mostly sound grasp of the assessment objectives. Candidates' performance suggested that the demand of both sections was very similar to equivalent items last summer, with some similar bunching of marks around the mid-lower end. The attempt rate for both sections was very high, indicating candidates' ability to analyse both speech and writing, and reflecting well on the accessibility of the paper. On the whole, both sections enabled the candidates to achieve the full range of marks, and there were no particular patterns of candidates doing significantly better or worse in either section. On the whole, however, fewer candidates achieved the top marks in 2019 compared with 2018. Centres should emphasise the need to engage with the subtext of each transcript when teasing out connections between the two texts in Section A. Approaching the question in that manner enables candidates to avoid reliance on feature spotting when forming connections between transcripts. Some candidates struggled to access the higher marks due to some lack of development in their discussions. Stronger candidates gave responses which were analytically precise and explored the construction of meaning in context.

The texts chosen in both sections were fairly accessible yet provided ample opportunity to challenge the more able candidates, allowing some to achieve the very highest marks. Many centres had evidently addressed issues identified in previous examiners' reports pertaining to candidates' use of a range of linguistic terminology (AO1) to make their points, and to establishing and sustaining connections for AO4 in Section A. Nevertheless, it was clear there is still a way to go for all candidates to effectively address the demands of the full range of assessment objectives. Elements of genre (AO2) had been clearly addressed both in Section A and Section B. However, some weaker candidates tended to miss opportunities to fully explore how language reflects the identity of the speakers in Section A and writer in Section B, which resulted in a concentration of marks in upper Band 2 and lower Band 3.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A: Spoken Language of the Media

Candidates had to analyse two transcripts of conversations with experts which featured on popular Sunday television programmes. Although linked by topic, the discussions were distinctive in their particular contexts, as they were taken from different types of programmes.

Text A was a transcript from the Sunday evening programme *Antiques Roadshow*. In the chosen extract, antiques expert John Benjamin talked to a female guest, evaluating the item she had brought to the roadshow, a Fabergé cigarette box. This conversation was spontaneous, yet confidently managed by the expert, who controlled the agenda and used his expertise and television experience to gradually reveal significant historical contextual detail about the object, building towards a discussion of the item's distinctive Fabergé seal, a mark of its likely value.

By contrast, Text B was a more loosely structured spontaneous conversation between the host of the Sunday morning Channel Four magazine programme *Sunday Brunch*, Tim Lovejoy, and his guest, an expert in cocktails, Gareth Evans; the conversation also involved pop singer Una Healy, although her contribution to the transcript was minimal. The agenda-setting and control between host and expert was more evenly distributed than in Text A because here the expert was the programme's guest and his interlocutor was the programme's main host.

AO1 The most able candidates had a secure grasp of the demands of the question. Their analysis was sound and employed both terminology associated with the spoken mode and core linguistic terminology. Precise selection of evidence by such candidates was integrated securely into a focused discussion of how each speaker's language reflected their status and role in the conversation; for example, more able candidates discerned that although both experts used technical language within their respective fields of expertise, the expert in Text A employed low-frequency register such as the nouns 'kokoshnik' and 'Cza::r' because in this programme audiences expect a degree of historical accuracy. By contrast, the expert in Text B tackled the historical evocation of the drink using humour in the pun 'Quince of Thieves' rather than an exacting historically accurate approach. Weaker candidates, on the other hand, used terminology to feature spot rather than as a way of supporting a discussion of how meanings were constructed. For example, noting that both speakers used emphatic stress was not in itself relevant unless candidates could link that observation to the nature of each speaker's expertise.

AO2 The main issues raised by a discussion of both texts as examples of conversations with experts were centred around the respective status of each speaker and their use of distinctive tactics to engage, inform and entertain audiences of the programmes under discussion. Stronger candidates made sensible comments about language reflected the identities of each speaker. For example, some noted that the expert in Text A, although fluent, used language which suggested he was thinking on his feet, whilst discovering more information about the cigarette box in an attempt to evaluate the age and value of the object. They noted that the timed pauses signalled Benjamin's confidence and experience, and his use of emphatic stress reflected the build up of drama in unveiling the name of the prestigious jewellery maker responsible for the cigarette box, a figure whom regular audiences for this programme would be well familiar with. Higher achieving candidates understood the expert in Text B, Gareth Evans, was less polished and perhaps somewhat distracted by the fact he was actually making the cocktail he was discussing with the host at the same time as he was talking about it. The most able candidates explored Evans' non-fluency as a reflection of this.

Those scoring in the lower bands tended to ignore the links between use of language and speaker identities, and instead attempted to impose a theoretical interpretation of power struggles and face-threatening acts which were unsupported by the contexts of each conversation. Centres should be reminded that theoretical frameworks for discussing unseen texts like these should only be used insofar as they support an appropriate analysis of the texts in question.

AO4 As in previous years, some chose to explore Text A in detail, before moving on to a discussion of Text B, drawing out the points of comparison and contrast between it and Text A. Other successful candidates took a more thematic approach, comparing and contrasting both texts throughout their response. There are merits in both approaches; done well, both can produce perceptive comparisons and insightful discussions of how speakers' language was used to entertain their respective audiences. It was pleasing to see that, overall, connections were well-embedded, and centres had taken on board previous guidance that AO4 was suitably covered by their candidates' responses.

Candidates achieving marks in the higher bands made subtle and sustained links between texts, examining how the experts used both similar and different strategies to describe the items under discussion. Such candidates teased out Benjamin's descriptions of the cigarette box's craftsmanship and its historical significance and value, whilst noting that Evans in Text B described the cocktail's principal ingredients and emphasised its unique selling point as a heritage beverage. Candidates achieving marks in the lower bands, on the other hand, made more obvious links focused on similarities and differences in linguistic or spoken features, ignoring the function of each conversation and their purposes for their respective audiences.

Characteristics of a successful response

- Real engagement with the texts and their respective contexts.
- A command of linguistic terminology.
- Sustained and purposeful connections.
- The analysis is informed by a secure grasp of genre.

Areas for improvement

- Surface-level connections need to be avoided
- The "forced" application of theory (where the data does not seem to illuminate any discussion points) is to be avoided
- A further emphasis on applying core and spoken linguistic terms would be well-advised

Summary of key points: consideration for centres

- Encourage candidates to use core linguistic and spoken terminology to label evidence
- Equip candidates with the skills to apply their linguistic knowledge and avoid feature spotting
- Encourage candidates to tease out connections between language use and speakers' respective roles and identities
- Encourage candidates to consider the specific contexts of each text
- Advise candidates to use theoretical frameworks to support the discussion rather than drive it

Section B: Written Language

Section B produced some successful responses. As with last year, it was clear that candidates had been guided well to manage their time in the examination appropriately to reflect that Section B is worth 50% of the marks available.

Candidates were asked to analyse an extract from the opening chapter of *Berlin Now: The Rise of the City and the Fall of the Wall*, where author Peter Schneider adopts an insider's perspective to introduce the city he knows well, offering a bird's eye view of the city's history, cultural landmarks and architectural features. The entire extract is framed by the extended metaphor of the city as a 'Cinderella' tourist destination, emphasising its less than immediately appeal. The question was focused on how the extract was typical of travel writing but candidates were invited to comment on how language was used to describe Berlin, its history and appeal.

AO1 Higher scoring candidates frequently used terminology to support their discussion of the texts. With such candidates, the terminology was relevant and did not drive their discussion, instead supporting the development of ideas.

A range of methods of approaching the discussion was observed here, and many were acceptable. Some tackled the intentional motif of negation in the author's description of the city's understated appearance, which was only secondary to its historical significance to world events in the twentieth century.

For example, candidates noticed the author's description of the city's 'concealed beauty', which becomes the foundation of the travel piece. Those at the lower end of the mark scale, by contrast, tended to interpret the writer's attitude superficially, as straightforwardly critical, missing the more nuanced subtext that although its appeal may not be obvious at first, the city certainly has its draws as a travel destination.

AO2 For AO2, candidates were encouraged to consider the extent to which the article presented genre features typical of travel writing. For example, they could examine descriptions of architectural landmarks, comparisons with cities of similar international stature and significance, and historical and cultural aspects of this destination. The discussion of these in isolation tended to produce less fluent and less sophisticated responses rooted in Band 2 and 3. It was only when these aspects were contextualised in analysing how language encouraged the reader to appreciate Berlin's more subtle enticements that, despite its shortcomings when compared with the likes of London and Paris, it is a city with its own unique atmosphere and distinct identity of international significance.

AO3 Candidates were asked to consider how the context of production of this text, for example, the opening chapter of a book of travel writing, guides the reader to explore the idea of a city whose historical and cultural stature is at odds with its aesthetic appeal. To that end, the author was seen to frame a city whose 'transformation' in the last one hundred years was 'Cinderella-like'. Furthermore, candidates were invited to see how the city's history, 'both the good and the atrocious', were crucial to its current appeal as a tourist destination. It was possible for candidates to discern the writer's perspective on the city without necessarily having prior knowledge of its troubled past as the capital of Nazi Germany and its Communist successor, the GDR. References to Berlin's current status as a 'reunified' city implied its past as a divided city, and its renaissance as a magnet for tourism. Similarly, the metaphor of the 'dust' of the East German era being 'swept clean' in more recent times also provided fertile discussion for candidates with a secure grasp of AO3.

By contrast, candidates achieving in Band 2 tended to ignore the city's 'extreme historical transformation in the last hundred years', instead leaning rather heavily on the author's more superficially-critical references to Berlin's current appearance and aesthetic qualities. Such candidates tended to ignore the fact that the extract was from the opening chapter of a book, and that its central conceit and preoccupations would likely be developed in more detail in later chapters.

Characteristics of a successful response

- Skilful engagement with the text and its context.
- A sustained discussion which explores typical and unusual genre elements.
- A precise application of relevant linguistic terminology.
- A perceptive and concise exploration of how language is used to construct meaning.

Areas for improvement

- Reading words and phrases out of context and, as a result, misinterpreting their meaning.
- Feature spotting.
- Producing a generic analysis which lacks a linguistic focus on the specific text provided.

Summary of key points: consideration for centres

- Advise candidates to consider carefully the distinctive context of production for the text under discussion.
- When analysing particular features, encourage candidates to pay close attention to how such features relate to the author's overall perspective in the text as a whole.
- Encourage candidates to consider how the text exemplifies and flouts genre elements and conventions.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCE AS

Summer 2019

Component 2: Using Language

General Comments

Candidates were generally well-prepared for this unit overall. Sound knowledge of the assessment objectives was demonstrated across the range of responses seen, with candidates applying a broad and varied range of terminology whilst probing for meaning. The corpus of signs in Section A appeared to be well-received by candidates, clearly providing them with a range of points to explore. Differentiation between candidates was also clear. The creative questions in Section B also encouraged a wide range of interesting and lively responses, with candidates successfully demonstrating their creative skills in both narrative and opinion writing. As has been the case in previous series, the commentary task in Section B produced a wide range of appropriate responses, demonstrating candidates' ability to reflect upon and evaluate their own linguistic choices.

Overall, it was apparent that centres have addressed some of the key issues that were outlined in the 2018 report, such as differentiating between the language levels for the low tariff questions in Section A. It is also encouraging that time management continues to improve, with notably fewer candidates failing to respond to all the questions. It should be noted that some issues still remain, such as candidates losing marks for phonology by selecting techniques that were clearly lexical (such as rhetorical interrogatives or semantic fields) and not focusing on the effects of sound. These issues were less pronounced than in previous exam series, but still do need to be addressed.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A: Investigating Data

Candidates were here required to analyse a corpus of extracts taken from a selection of signs. Signs function as brief, succinct and clear snippets of information and they are designed for a range of purposes: to warn, to instruct, to guide, to advertise or sometimes to entertain. The signs in the corpus were also aimed at a wide range of possible audiences: drivers, children, parents, employees and the general public. It was, therefore, important for candidates to explore the signs in terms of context in addition to evaluating any linguistic elements. Each sign offered candidates an increasingly complex range of features to identify and explore, such as the repeated use of imperatives ("Keep your dogs on a lead"; "Take care when approaching roadworks"; "DO NOT WALK CLOSE TO VEHICLE"); a range of listing patterns to deliver information quickly and concisely ("We listen carefully to others; we are kind") and a shrewd use of humour used to parody serious sign-writing ("HUSBAND DAY CARE"; "ONLY ENTER IF BRINGING FOOD AND DRINK"). As with previous series, the questions in this section were designed to provide an increasing level of challenge as the paper progressed, and this was generally reflected in candidate responses. As with the 2018 paper, responses to the grammar section seemed strongest overall, with many candidates again receiving typically higher marks for this question.

- Q.1 (a)** This four-mark question required candidates to identify two different phonological techniques and briefly explain the effects created in each case. Candidates generally responded well to this question, with many successfully identifying the use of alliteration used in Sign 7 “BACK OFF: BABY ON BOARD”, the use of puns in Sign 14 “PLANET B” and the use of rhyme used to engage a younger audience in Sign 8 “FRIGHT NIGHT”. Centres appear to continue to address some issues outlined in the 2017 and 2018 Examiner Reports, as candidates seen to successfully focus on sound when analysing their chosen quotations, however, in some cases candidates strayed away from sound and analysed the semantics or grammar used with little success. For example, some candidates identified the use of non-standard typography of “BACK OFF” and then launched into a fruitless discussion of how this was “eye-catching”. Centres are reminded that candidates must focus on the sound effect of the technique selected, not the connotations of words used or the semantics behind particular phrases. Successful candidates were able to comment on the harsh bilabial sounds in Sign 7 and highlight how these aggressive sounds emphasised a sense of warning. One recurring issue was candidates identifying grammatical techniques used, such as rhetorical interrogatives, rather than focusing on particular sound techniques, such as sibilance, rhythm, rhyme or phonological puns. Centres may wish to use the mark scheme for this paper, and those from previous series, to explore the kind of phonological features and effects that would be credit-worthy. Candidates gaining full marks here were able to identify and evaluate phonological features confidently, such as one candidate who correctly identified that Sign 11’s use of onomatopoeia – “SMASHING” – reflected the sounds and explosions used in many games stereotypically aimed at young boys.
- (b)** This eight-mark question required candidates to identify four lexical and/or semantic techniques and briefly explain the effects created in each case. Candidates were well-prepared for this question overall, and although some issues remained with a small minority of candidates being unable to differentiate between the language levels, or failing to provide any textual support, it should be noted that the majority of candidates handled this question very well. As with previous Examiner Reports for this Component, centres are reminded that candidates receive no credit for identifying word class without identification of a lexical/semantic technique (such as metaphor, direct address or semantic field), as is outlined in previous mark schemes. It also should be noted that a very small number of candidates failed to provide textual support, and this is essential if identification is to be rewarded. Despite some minor issues, the majority of candidates were able to successfully identify a wide range of lexical and semantic effects, such as the use of a semantic field of mock-horror linked to Hallowe’en in Sign 8 (“Fright”; “ghoulish”, “scream”, “freaky”), the use of playful metaphor in Sign 15 (“HUSBAND DAY CARE”) and the use of direct address in Sign 6 “IF I CAN’T SEE YOU...”. Candidates receiving full marks were able to accurately unpick a range of techniques with precision.
- (c)** This eight-mark question required candidates to identify four different grammatical structures and briefly comment on the effects created in each case. As identified at the beginning of this report, candidates seemed to be better prepared for this question than they were for 1(a) and 1(b), being able to better differentiate between the language levels and select specific grammatical techniques.

Many candidates were able to successfully identify an increasingly sophisticated range of grammatical techniques, such as Sign 13's use of parenthesis to give information "(M62) (A63)"; the use of rhetorical interrogatives to create an emotive response "THE CLIMATE IS CHANGING. WHY AREN'T WE?"; and the use of bold imperatives to give a strong and urgent sense of warning, such as in Sign 7 "BACK OFF". Higher scoring candidates here were also able to begin to evaluate the pragmatic choices within the signs, such as the more playful use of the imperative "KEEP OUT" in Sign 11 to warn parents, or the use of gender stereotypes for humour used in the repeated use of exclamatory sentences in Sign 15: "Leave your husband with us! You only pay for his drinks!".

It should be noted by centres that candidates are still incorrectly labelling exclamatory sentences as "exclamative" sentences. Centres should remind candidates that exclamative sentences usually begin with "what" or "how" and are usually used to express strong feelings or emotions.

- (d) This question is worth 30-marks and so requires candidates to produce an extended and in-depth analysis of the corpus as a whole, making links between different signs to create a clear overview of the genre. Candidates here were asked to focus on the language used by sign writers. Candidates continue to manage their time very well here. Very few brief responses were seen. Most responses produced here were extended, allowing for more sophisticated analysis of the corpus and the genre of sign-writing as a whole.

The higher scoring candidates were able to show an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the way in which signs appeal to different audiences and how they function in different situations. These candidates produced detailed and wide-ranging responses, addressing the required Assessment Objectives and engaging confidently with a range of textual examples. It was encouraging to see that very few candidates produced analyses that failed to engage with the corpus or were vague in nature. Centres should, however, remind candidates to use appropriate terminology and textual support as a foundation for their analysis; relevant textual support is essential if candidates are to be successful in this question; the language levels underpin all of the Assessment Objectives here, so language terminology should be central to every element of candidates' analyses.

Methods and approaches to this question continue to be varied, and candidates demonstrated (as they have in previous years) that it is possible to employ a range of strategies and approaches and still gain high marks. For example, some candidates chose to use the bullet points within the question to structure their responses, whilst others used the language levels as a logical framework (for example, writing one paragraph on each level: lexis, semantics, grammar, phonology etc.). Others adopted a different strategy that entailed taking a more thematic approach of comparing and contrasting the texts through theme and context (for example, levels of formality and how this reflects targeted demographic; signs aimed at the general public and how these differed to those for more specific audiences; the use of emotive approaches). It is to be noted that there are significant merits for these different approaches, and when these strategies are applied they enable candidates to produce increasingly perceptive and sophisticated analyses. As was mentioned in last year's report, it is important to note that AO2, AO3 and AO4 are equally weighted in this question, and so candidates should familiarise themselves with these objectives on a regular basis in order to ensure that these are addressed equally in their responses.

Candidates successfully reaching the upper bands of the mark scheme were able to make sophisticated and subtle connections across the corpus, with confident linguistic analysis. Such candidates typically focused on the contextual and conceptual issues, such as the playful use of gender stereotyping and parody in signs such as Sign 15 and Sign 11; the creation of an inclusive and friendly community approach in Sign 12; or the emotive appeal used in Signs 2 and 9.

One recurring issue in 1(d) this series was a rather fruitless focus on basic graphology (such as a descriptive mention of bullet points, bold writing and the layout of the signs) with no reference to relevant terminology, such as non-standard typography or implied emphatic stress. Although graphology can be useful here, it must go hand in hand with identification and analysis of linguistic techniques. A basic and generalised discussion of the layout being “eye-catching and bold” is unlikely to accrue many marks.

Characteristics of successful responses

- Insightful discussion of points of similarity and/or contrast.
- Clear appreciation that contextual factors shape the content, language and grammatical structures.
- Tightly focused, meaningful analysis of the corpus in light of the question set.

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring there are concise and precise textual references to support the points made.
- The arguments presented should be consistently and purposefully tied to the corpus.
- Ensuring the discussion of linguistic concepts/issues is relevant and linked to the question/corpus.

Summary of key points: considerations for centres

- Students should be familiar with the relevant assessment objectives and ensure that these are addressed equally in their responses.
- Explore different methods and approaches with students to determine the most effective strategies to use in tackling the analysis essay.
- The language levels underpin the Assessment Objectives, so language terminology should be central to candidates’ analyses.

Section B: Creative Writing

Section B provides candidates with the opportunity to showcase their creative flair, and there were many very successful and highly original responses in this series. Candidates were required to write one creative piece (from a choice of two questions) followed by an analytical commentary of their own writing.

As with the 2018 series, the majority of candidates had clearly apportioned their time appropriately according to the 50:50 weighting of the marks across both sections. It seemed that, overall, candidates had given themselves enough time to write both the creative piece and commentary, with only a small minority of candidates writing overly-long creative pieces at the expense of their commentaries. Where responses were short, candidates generally made up for this with some careful crafting and shaping of the narrative. Commentaries were mostly extended and provided a suitable foundation for candidates to effectively evaluate a range of linguistic approaches used in their creative writing.

- Q.2 (a)** Candidates were here required to write an extract from a novel in which a character ignores a warning sign. This question choice was by far the more popular of the two questions in this series. There were a range of original responses to the question, with some candidates taking the very sensible option of directly referencing the corpus (for example, shaping a narrative based around a character's inability to follow Sign 10's warning to 'KEEP OUT'). Others took a more subtle approach; for example, one particularly credit-worthy response placed Sign 5 in a meticulously crafted and highly realistic war zone setting; other higher band candidates adopted a narrative viewpoint relevant to the signs (such as the father in Sign 2, the driver of Sign 6 or an eco-warrior in Sign 14). It was encouraging to see such a varied range of original responses.

Successful responses were characterised by an assured and controlled narrative voice, skilful engagement with the audience and an original approach. Candidates achieving the higher bands produced thoughtful responses, often using the idea of a 'novel extract' to allow them to jump into the narrative during a key moment rather than merely writing an opening. Many responses used multiple perspectives with success, such as a candidate who layered the narrative with the voices of the father, wife and daughter of Sign 2, allowing them to showcase their flair for creating a range of lively personas.

In terms of the genre, the majority of candidates were clearly well-prepared for this task and very few candidates struggled with the concept. However, one major pitfall with this question was a tendency to write a short story rather than an extract from a novel, with some candidates writing very straightforward narratives that lacked creativity and were hindered by a sense of predictability. These were often basic short stories that involved a car crash, ending with a BANG or CRASH. A minority of candidates appeared to create a GCSE-style descriptive task based on a horrifying seagull attack, some of which completely lacked any sign of a protagonist or any kind of plot. Another pitfall was to write from the perspective of child (such as the child in Sign 11) as these approaches often lacked in flair and sophistication as a result.

- (b)** Candidates were here required to write an opinion piece entitled 'Help or Hindrance?' for a national writing competition expressing their views on how signs are used in everyday life. The task required candidates to create a lively and engaging sense of debate whilst putting forward their opinions, and some tackled this with an appropriate mixture of sarcasm, humour and intelligent observations. Although this question was less popular than 2(b), responses were generally successful with a solid sense of what was required.

Candidates who obtained marks in the higher bands were able to create a strong sense of voice and give a diverse range of examples from everyday life, such as one candidate who observed that "a sign at a Trump protest rally is a common sight in Britain today". Sarcasm and humour were utilised well in responses achieving marks in the higher bands, as was a balanced and passionate sense of debate. Rhetorical devices were used intelligently here to express a range of opinions.

Responses gaining marks in the lower bands were few, but they tended to have a weak sense of voice and lacked audience engagement, often including quite basic observations regarding signage or a laborious description of the corpus, including simple or generalised points such as “Signs are there to be read by people”.

Characteristics of successful responses to the creative tasks

- Clear, logical and appropriate structure to engage the reader.
- Content drawn from the stimulus material but creative development of appropriate details.
- Appropriate, accurate and coherent written expression with linguistic choices appropriate to genre.

Areas for improvement

- Convincingly meeting the requirements of the task by focusing on the reader’s needs.
- Maintaining focus on task incorporating appropriate genre features.
- Keeping a tight focus from prescribed viewpoint.

Summary of key points: considerations for centres

- Explore different genres with appropriate style and register.
- Provide plenty of opportunities for creative writing practice.
- Encourage use of a wide range of lexical and semantic techniques.

- (c) Most responses demonstrated the linguistic focus that is expected from a commentary of this sort. The question required candidates to write a commentary analysing and evaluating the linguistic and grammatical choices made in their creative response to either 2(a) or 2(b). The question highlights that there should be focus on language features and their effectiveness. As last year, short and undeveloped responses were thankfully rare. Candidates should be reminded that lengthy, generalised introductions (including an overview of the task, genre, audience and etc.) should be avoided unless they engage directly with specific techniques and include examples.

More insightful responses were able to produce an extended and detailed analysis that successfully identified techniques from across the language levels and demonstrated perceptive and increasingly sophisticated skills of analysis. A common feature in responses scoring in the upper bands was the ability to reflect on personal language choices in an intelligent and thoughtful way, especially where candidates had made original and experimental choices in their creative tasks.

Responses in the lower bands were characterised by candidates often being unable to identify linguistic features, with some making generic comments regarding their use of “short sentences” or “full stops” and others failing to use textual references to support their claims. A feature of less successful responses was a failure to engage with AO3 – to analyse the construction of meaning and relevant contextual factors – but these cases were rare. The 2018 Examiner Report mentioned a growing trend for candidates to engage in a fruitless dialogue about what they did not do or planned to do. Unfortunately, this trend has continued into this series.

One candidate began their commentary with: “I have been unsuccessful in creating a novel opening because I haven’t used any semantic fields. If I had used these then my writing would be better”. Such conjecture is unlikely to warrant any credit, and candidates should focus on the piece that they have actually written, as the question requires.

Candidates adopted a varied range of approaches, but it should be noted that more successful answers ensured even coverage of the language levels, including detailed and perceptive analysis of more challenging areas, such as grammatical choices and employment of specific genre conventions such as evaluating techniques of characterisation or creation of narrative voice in their novel opening.

Characteristics of successful responses to the creative tasks

- Clear evaluation of the success of the intended effects.
- Thoughtful discussion reflecting on how meaning is shaped.
- Consistent and accurate reference to the language levels.

Areas for improvement

- Use of apt and accurate quotation to support points.
- Moving beyond merely observational or descriptive overview.
- Focus on what features have been included rather than what has not.

Summary of key points: considerations for centres

- Candidates should be reminded that lengthy, generalised introductions, including an overview of the task, genre, audience, etc. should be avoided.
- Explore approaches for analysis that identify techniques from across the language levels.
- Encourage analysis of grammatical choices and specific genre conventions.



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