



GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE
GCSE**

NOVEMBER 2022

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCSE

November 2022

COMPONENT 1

General Comments

Section A

The passage in Section A was taken from a short story by Deborah Moggach, which explored the relationships between several generations of one family and included a dramatic incident involving a missing child. The story was quite subtle in some ways, but the questions were designed to encourage the candidates to read methodically and show what they had understood.

Section B

The writing section offered the usual range of four titles which invited the candidates to write imaginatively or from personal experience. All of the titles attracted significant numbers of candidates and there was neither an obvious favourite nor a title that failed to attract any interest. However, some titles were handled more successfully than others.

Some candidates struggled to sustain or structure their narrative effectively. As I have mentioned in previous reports, there is nothing to be gained from writing endlessly and aimlessly but a successful narrative does need some coherence and substance. Some thought and planning would help many candidates.

Predictably, a lack of technical accuracy was a major problem in too many responses and failure to control tenses was a serious weakness in many responses.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 The opening question is never intended to put barriers in the way of the candidates and there were lots of details about Lily in the first few lines of this passage. All that was required was a degree of care with content and presentation. Clarity and precision are the key qualities in this type of response. For example, she was called Frears, and she was the narrator's mother-in-law, or Ewan's mother. She was a successful painter in her day, and she had been a beautiful girl. She had had several relationships and she had been married twice. She could be stubborn and she kept her name and her independence. It was claimed that lots of people loved her but, according to her son, she only loved her cats. According to the narrator, Lily was a free spirit but Ewan thought she was not a good mother.

This type of question tests location of implicit and explicit information and there were more than enough explicit details to enable the candidates to gain full marks relatively easily. Most candidates took the opportunity to score well and many gained full marks with minimum fuss. However, some did get into a muddle and failed to sort out the difference between Lily and the narrator. Some were just careless and/or imprecise and lost marks unnecessarily.

- Q.2** This question involved a very short section of text and maintained the focus on impressions of Lily, who was seen through the eyes and experience of the narrator. According to the narrator, Lily was an attractive woman and she described her as 'lovely'. In this context, 'lovely' did not mean kind or caring. She was also a striking woman who could turn heads in the street. She was clearly extrovert and self-confident and wore flamboyant and colourful clothes. A significant number of candidates misread this part of the text and claimed that Lily wore dull clothes. She was described as 'a living legend' at the art school and this was open to some interpretation. Most suggested that she was well-known or respected. She was certainly untidy or messy, living in a 'cluttered flat' but she was sociable and talkative, entertaining the narrator for hours with her conversation. Overall, the reader was given the impression of a bohemian 'character', an individual with a rather unconventional style.

The better answers were concise but clear, seeing the essential features of the character. The question was only worth five marks and it was possible to deal with it quickly and efficiently. Most candidates made some progress but not very many were thorough enough to gain full marks.

- Q.3** This question required the candidates to see the general contrast between Lily and the narrator's parents and also the way the writer used very specific details to show the differences between them.

In general, the narrator's parents were presented as traditional, conventional grandparents whereas Lily was presented as informal and unconventional to say the least. The narrator's parents seemed organised and responsible whereas Lily was exactly the opposite.

In detail, the narrator's parents lived in a 'tidy and comfortable' house while Lily lived in an untidy flat. The narrator's parents had 'safe' lawns where the children could play but at Lily's rather dangerous flat they sucked paintbrushes and tripped over cat litter trays. The narrator's parents had a fridge which was always 'crammed' whereas Lily's fridge contained only gin and cat food. The narrator's parents always provided a 'proper' Sunday lunch, contrasting with Lily who 'had never cooked a proper meal in her life'. Sherry was not allowed for children at the home of the narrator's parents but Lily, predictably enough, allowed them to have a sip of sherry. The narrator's mother was 'Granny' (no first names) but Lily did allow them to use her first name and they called her Lily.

This question gave the candidates every opportunity to score well but very few explicitly addressed the second part of the question and looked at how the writer showed the differences. In fact, it was quite straightforward as the writer used a series of pointed and explicit contrasts to highlight the differences.

- Q.4** This question focused on a longer section of the story but the better answers approached the incident methodically and tracked the text. The weaker answers were often brief and lacking substance or unselective, failing to sort out the dramatic from the mundane.

Some candidates showed awareness of the structure of the story and saw the context of this incident was a visit to the Ladies' Lake where the rules meant that the narrator went swimming alone and left her children in the care of Lily.

She remembered noticing that the children were quiet and that was perhaps the first hint that something was wrong but the incident began with little sense of imminent danger. When the narrator returned from her swim, Lily was engaged in drawing the sleeping Cassandra and all seemed tranquil and quiet. However, when the narrator asked, quite calmly, about Alex's whereabouts, all she got was silence and then a casual 'he was here a minute ago.' This was probably the first real suggestion that something could be wrong and the narrator's voice had 'sharpness' in it when she asked again about Alex and questioned if he really had been gone for just a minute. The drama and excitement then began to develop quickly.

The meadow was full of long grass where a child could be concealed but when the narrator called him all she got was more 'silence'. At this point in the story the writer's language was deliberately chosen to build the excitement and drama. The exclamation when she shouted Alex's name indicated her rising panic and she 'barked' commands at Lily while 'frantically' trying to unbuckle Cassandra. She admitted that her hands would not work and verbs such as 'fumbles', 'wrenches' and 'grabs' were all further evidence of her panic. The narrator 'bundled' Cassandra under her arm and 'plunged' into the long grass. The better candidates saw the urgency in her movements and the fact that she no longer trusted her child with Lily. She tried to run, even though it was difficult, and she stumbled over hidden potholes. She used the word 'sinister' to describe the meadow and she began to torment herself with accusations of why she left her 'most precious possession' with a 'self-absorbed old lady'. The writer described the narrator as having eyes blurred with tears and condemning the weeds as 'wicked'. The fact that she 'screeched' at people, hating them and herself, showed the fear and hysteria which had consumed her. She thought of Lily as 'a stupid old woman' and related the incident to the reader's experience. A missing child is perhaps every parent's nightmare and the narrator vividly captured the terrible emotions felt in that situation as time stops and frightening pictures crowd your head. Eventually, she found Alex back where they had started and looking like a 'lost boy' with a red face. Alex was 'matter of fact' about the incident but he slept for fourteen hours, showing the traumatic impact on him.

There was a lot to explore here and the candidates who engaged fully with the text and the question were not short of material. The whole incident was presented from the perspective of the narrator/mother and the drama and excitement were largely conveyed through her increasing and understandable panic and hysteria.

- Q.5** The first four questions in this section were relatively straightforward but, as is usually the case, the final question was the most challenging. It tested the ability of the candidates to show an overview of the whole story and construct a coherent argument. This proved very difficult for some candidates and many of them failed even to mention lines 69-86.

The final section of the story moved on eight years to a time when Lily was dead and Alex had no memory of the events surrounding the 'beautiful drawing' of Cassandra in their lounge. When he asked about the drawing, the narrator wanted him to know the real Lily. She wanted to put the record straight and the question focused on the extent to which these revelations changed the reader's view of Lily.

In the early part of the story, the narrator described Lily as a very successful artist and teacher who was extrovert (and perhaps irresponsible and selfish) but much admired. However, she now exploded some of the mythology surrounding her mother-in-law.

At the end of the story the narrator told Alex that Lily was not a 'famous' painter but just an artistic woman who had people in her life who loved her and admired her. She was not 'a living legend' at the art school but had actually been kept on out of kindness. Her flamboyant appearance meant people sometimes giggled at her in the street. All of this certainly altered the reader's perception of Lily and the narrator explained that her admiration for Lily had been based on resentment of her own parents and it had hurt her husband because it was 'undeserved' and 'untrue'. However, the narrator still talked about Lily being a 'striking beauty' and she also maintained that she was an 'original' who was 'completely herself'. The narrator insisted that she loved and admired Lily, not least because she had time for her when no-one else did. This contradicted the earlier impression of Lily being totally self-absorbed and self-centred.

Some candidates successfully picked a way through the contradictions in the character of Lily whilst other candidates made some progress by simply identifying the ways in which the narrator changed the reader's view of Lily. The better answers saw that in some ways the perception of Lily did not change. However, some candidates were struggling to construct a coherent or relevant response, and many were very brief. Unfortunately, a number of candidates did not respond to this question at all suggesting time management was a problem for some candidates in this November series.

Section B

- Q.1.1 (a)** This title usually involved moving school or house and the responses were often quite convincing in content and tried to convey how it felt to experience a new beginning. Some were improbable in development but those who chose this option generally had something relevant to write about.
- (b)** This was quite a popular choice but not always a successful one. Some candidates found the transition from the given opening rather awkward while others did not really produce a creative piece of writing and their responses tended to be discursive rather than narrative. Some of the stories of attacks by dogs seemed rather alarming but the most effective narratives in terms of content and structure tended to be those where the writer was won over by a pet dog and eventually found the animal irresistible.
- (c)** There were various interpretations of this title, ranging from driving tests to tests of endurance or sporting prowess. However, the most obvious, and popular, approach was to describe taking an examination. This approach had the not inconsiderable advantage of providing real experience on which the candidates could base their writing. Most were only too familiar with the nerves and stress of being tested in examinations and they could draw on convincing detail to give some substance to their writing.
- (d)** This title pushed the candidates towards personal experience, and I suspect few of them have not experienced some sort of sporting event which took place in bad weather. Some of the responses were rather implausible, and others strained the definition of 'an event', but most described cross-country runs, football matches or other sporting events. Surprisingly, examiners reported seeing few accounts of musical events such as Glastonbury.

In general, it is perhaps worth repeating some observations from a report of some years ago which read as follows: 'Most candidates do manage to construct a reasonably coherent narrative, but many are seriously undermined by technical shortcomings and limited, or misused, vocabulary. The technical aspects of written expression are specifically weighted at 40% of the total available marks for writing and too many candidates lose marks because of the lack of accuracy in their work.' Sadly, those words remain true and problems with technical accuracy, including inconsistency with tenses, still prevail.

Summary of key points

In the reading section:

- Candidates need to be careful and precise in answering questions such as 1.
- When dealing with longer sections of text, candidates need to be selective and focused on the requirements of the question.
- Candidates should think particularly carefully about the focus of their answers to evaluation questions (5). It is vital that they read the question carefully and think about a coherent line of approach and argument.

In the writing section:

- Candidates need to think about their writing and make sure that it has some substance and detail. There is no need to write endlessly but the target is 450 words.
- Candidates need to be consistent with tenses. Simple past tense is usually the safest.
- Most candidates write well when they write from personal experience, and some can write original narratives which are imaginative and convincing but it isn't always easy to do this. Candidates should practise writing imaginatively and from personal experience to help them make an informed decision about which title to choose in the exam.
- Technical accuracy is important and should not be neglected. Building in time for proofreading is essential.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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November 2022

COMPONENT 2

General Comments

Section A

The two reading texts for this examination told the story of Jumbo the elephant, brought to London Zoo in 1865 and delighting the Victorian public for nearly 20 years. One of the texts was a passage taken from the autobiography of Jumbo's keeper, Matthew Scott, who looked after the elephant for the entire time spent in London Zoo. The second text was a newspaper article about the elephant that included research undertaken by Sir David Attenborough in preparation for a documentary programme about Jumbo.

The questions followed a familiar pattern and most candidates were able to show at the very least, a basic understanding of the two texts. As ever, candidates who were well prepared for the exam were able to make good progress, showing their ability to select appropriate detail and analyse the texts. However, there were also too many candidates who struggled to use their time effectively, resulting in incomplete scripts or responses that were brief or lacked careful reading.

Section B

As usual, candidates were invited to tackle two writing tasks. The first of these was to write what might be said in a lively talk to younger students, giving them advice about how best to prepare for and cope with the demands of GCSE exams. The second task asked candidates to respond to part of a letter that had appeared in a newspaper. The view that had been expressed was: "It's about time teenagers thought about their responsibilities and contributed more to their communities."

Both of these tasks were signalled in the 'advance information' given to candidates well before the examination, with an expected length of 300-400 words for each response. Both tasks encouraged candidates to draw on their own personal experiences and views, and to shape their responses showing an awareness of their intended audiences.

The most effective responses showed good understanding of the purpose of each task and in each of the tasks successful responses offered suggestions, information and viewpoint as appropriate. Disappointingly, there were still candidates who struggled to manage their time effectively and failed to tackle one or both of the writing tasks. As in Component 1, weaker candidates' work often displayed a lack of technical control, with some very basic errors impacting negatively on overall marks.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1.1 This first question focused on the newspaper article by Alan Lee, with three one-mark questions that required candidates to select details from across the text. These questions were straightforward 'search and find' questions but candidates needed to read both the text and the questions carefully. The first part of the question asked candidates to note where the skeleton of Jumbo was kept and most candidates were able to correctly identify that it was kept in the American Museum of Natural History. Some candidates failed to give the specific detail, responding with details like 'a museum' or 'America' and this perhaps serves to emphasise the importance of precision in what should be simple location and selection of textual detail.

The second part of the question asked candidates why Jumbo had been sold to the Barnum Circus. This was made clear in the later part of the article, where Lee explained that Jumbo's behaviour and 'violent rages' caused zoo officials to fear he would attack Scott or a zoo visitor. Because he had become 'problematic' and the zoo wanted to get rid of him, when the Barnum Circus offered to buy the elephant for £2000, they accepted the offer. Although this part of the question required a brief explanation, again most candidates were able to gain a mark. Some candidates misread the question, selecting incorrect details as a result or tried to respond with too little detail to make the reason clear.

The final part of the question asked candidates to give one piece of evidence that showed people did not want Jumbo to go to America. The penultimate paragraph made it clear that 'there was an outcry', with 100,000 children begging Queen Victoria to stop the sale and adults protesting at the zoo. Any of these details gained reward and most candidates were able to gain full marks for this part of the question.

Q.1.2 Tackling the first question meant reading the whole text and this should have prepared candidates for the 10-mark question that followed: 'How does the writer, Alan Lee, try to show that Jumbo was a much-loved 'Victorian sensation'?'

As usual, the most effective way for candidates to tackle this type of 'craft of the writer' question was to work methodically through the text, selecting relevant textual evidence and detail and, where appropriate, commenting and considering the way in which the information or detail had been presented by the writer. Where this was done effectively, candidates accumulated a good many details, explored quotations, commented on how these showed Jumbo was a 'much-loved Victorian sensation' and gained good marks as a result.

From the very beginning it was made clear that the elephant had an enormous impact on Victorian visitors to the zoo. In the subtitle, Jumbo was described as an 'animal celebrity', indicating the popularity of the elephant and the opening sentences captured this very effectively, giving good candidates immediate opportunities to probe and comment on the details. Readers were told that 'millions of visitors' went to see Jumbo and that he was 'a firm favourite of Queen Victoria's children'. Some commented on the impact that royalty had on visitor numbers, while others explored and commented on the way the animal became the inspiration for the Disney film 'Dumbo'. The opening paragraph gave candidates an immediate opportunity to link details to the question, with good candidates also able to comment on words and phrases such as 'adoration' and 'firm favourite' to show that Jumbo was much loved.

Paragraph two introduced the research into Jumbo that Sir David Attenborough had conducted for his BBC documentary. Here, the elephant was described as a 'gentle giant' and readers were told that the skeleton of the elephant had been preserved at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, which for some candidates suggested the impact the elephant had made during its life. Good candidates were alert to the way Lee described the impact the elephant had on zoo visitors, commenting on phrases such as 'an instant hit', the crowds being 'awe-struck Victorians' when they came to 'marvel at his growing size'. Some also used details such as how rare the sight of an elephant was to the Victorian public or that they delighted in taking photographs and rides on the animal. The mention again about how Queen Victoria's children 'adored' Jumbo was also an area explored by many candidates.

Although candidates had to be selective in their use of material from the newspaper article, when Lee explains that Jumbo was sold to the Barnum Circus in America, the reactions of the Victorian public made it clear that the elephant was much-loved. Lee explained that 'there was an outcry', and that 100,000 children wrote to the Queen to try to prevent the sale of Jumbo from happening and even adults protested at the zoo about the sale. When the animal arrived in America, his fame had spread, with 'huge crowds' awaiting him and 'Jumbo-mania erupted'.

Across the text, there were lots of details that good candidates were able to select and comment on and these candidates often also probed the way Lee used language to make clear how Jumbo was viewed by the Victorian public. Good candidates showed they were able to make use of the whole text, whilst weaker candidates' responses lacked whole-text coverage or struggled to comment effectively on the details they selected. Despite the advice offered in past reports, some candidates still tried to tackle the question as a 'feature-spotting' exercise but this approach proved to be largely unproductive.

Q.1.3 This third question asked candidates to look at the second text, a passage from the autobiography of Matthew Scott, Jumbo's keeper at London Zoo.

Like question 1.1, these three one-mark questions asked for specific details and provided careful readers with an opportunity to gain marks as they gained familiarity with the text, in readiness for the more demanding question that followed. The first part of the question simply asked candidates how much Jumbo weighed. The answer came in the first paragraph: 'nearly eight tons', and most candidates found the detail without difficulty, although some appeared to have referred back to the newspaper article, where it had stated Jumbo's weight as being 'more than seven tons'.

The second question, which asked how long had Jumbo been giving children rides in London Zoo, was also just a matter of locating the correct detail, which came in the second paragraph. In this paragraph Scott wrote about the elephant being a 'busy, industrious creature' and gave as an example of this that he had been 'carrying around children almost daily for twenty years.' Most candidates were able to gain reward on this question, although again, examiners occasionally reported responses that were clearly the result of a misreading of the question.

The final part of the question asked candidates to give an example from the text that showed Jumbo would usually do what Matthew Scott asked him. This was a more demanding question as candidates had to see that although the elephant would normally do as he was asked, the answer to the question was about the one time he failed to obey Scott. This came towards the end of the anecdote about Jumbo saving a small child who had fallen in front of him. Scott had not seen the infant and shouted to the elephant to 'go along'; in response, readers are told that, 'for once he did not obey the order.' Many candidates gained reward but it was clear that not all had read the text with sufficient care and there were examples of quotations that showed a lack of understanding.

Although many candidates found this an opportunity to gain all three marks, once again, the lack of careful reading, either of the questions or the text, meant that some gained only limited reward.

Q.1.4 This next question asked candidates to respond to the statement: 'Matthew Scott writes about Jumbo in a way that shows feelings of pride and affection for the elephant,' saying to what extent they agreed with that view. From the initial reading of the passage in order to tackle the questions in 1.3, it should have been clear that Scott felt enormous affection for the animal he looked after, and also wrote about him with great pride, praising the elephant for being the 'fine-looking creature' he had become and for the 'busy, industrious' life he led. The question gave candidates the opportunity to gain marks for careful tracking of the text and for selecting relevant details as they occurred, whether it was evidence of Scott's affection for the animal or for his admiration of the elephant's prowess.

The passage began with Scott telling readers about Jumbo when he was first delivered into his care. In the first sentence he called the elephant 'the poor thing' as he related how he was 'full of disease'. He told readers how he had nursed the elephant back to full health 'with all the care and affection of a mother', which many candidates noted as a clear example of the bond he forged with the animal. As the elephant regained his health and strength, Scott showed his pride in Jumbo by praising what he had become, and candidates used textual details such as 'fine-looking creature', 'most intelligent', 'most powerful living creature in creation' to support the evaluation of the statement. He went on to talk about the shared experience he had with the elephant, saying it, 'is a pleasure to me and is great reward.' The paragraph concluded with Scott saying his days were happy as long as he was 'permitted the company of dear old Jumbo' and that he would not wish to be parted from what was now his companion. There was plenty of detail to explore in the opening paragraph and good, careful readers were able to accumulate lots of material that supported the view expressed in the statement.

When candidates began to explore the second paragraph, they saw that Scott now gave details of the life Jumbo had in the zoo. He began the paragraph by telling readers what a 'busy, industrious creature' he was, which was done with a mixture of pride but also showed the effect he felt he had on the elephant, having 'brought him from his sick bed.' He clearly admired the work Jumbo got through, showing his pride in the animal's industrious nature: 'he has no idle days for 'loafing' or otherwise wasting his time.' and the tone was one of pride when he wrote about the elephant 'carrying around children almost daily for twenty years.' Readers were told that no animal did his work, 'more affectionately or tenderly, and without accident' as Jumbo. Scott then related the anecdote about an occasion when the elephant saved an infant who had fallen in front of him, while his mother was screaming that the child would be killed.

Scott said the animal ‘gently picked up the child by the waist with his trunk’ and returned it to the mother, using the word ‘tenderly’ to show how careful Jumbo had been. Good candidates were able to use the anecdote to demonstrate Scott’s pride in the animal but also comment on words such as ‘tenderly’ and ‘gently’ as evidence of the affection held for the elephant.

In the final paragraph, Scott gave more details of the calm nature of the animal, particularly when children were near and the passage concluded with Scott repeating what a ‘kind, affectionate creature’ the elephant was and that readers should follow the example set by Jumbo of always going to help anyone in trouble. This again gave candidates the opportunity to confirm the view that Scott showed both pride and affection for the elephant.

Each of the paragraphs contained material that candidates could select and comment on, and good candidates worked methodically through the text to gain creditable marks. However, weaker responses were often too brief and frequently only focused on a limited section of the text and in some cases, just a few lines of the passage. In order to gain good marks, candidates must use the whole text and make reference to a range of details they can comment upon.

Q.1.5 This question, asking for the ability to select and synthesise materials from the two texts, asked candidates to explain briefly what the two writers told readers about Jumbo’s food and drink. This required candidates to select the appropriate details from each text and where appropriate, to give a little explanation about what readers are told. As this question was worth just 4 marks, brief responses that gave the details and explanations with precision and clarity were all that was required. Some candidates wrote more than was necessary, others failed to be sufficiently precise and some tangled up the details from the texts, making it unclear which detail was linked to which text. However, many were able to gain full marks by simply being clear and precise.

In Scott’s autobiography, readers are told that Jumbo eats ‘hay, oats and bread’. For drink, Jumbo was given ‘chiefly water’ but Scott went on to say that for ‘a treat’ he would be given ‘a big dram of whisky’. Later in the passage, he wrote about the children feeding Jumbo cakes, and any of these details gained candidates reward. In Alan Lee’s article, he shed a little more light on the elephant’s diet, saying that he existed on ‘sticky buns and hay’. Earlier in the article, Lee had said that the elephant had ‘violent rages’ and that scientists had discovered the reason may have been bad toothache, the result of what Lee described as the elephant’s ‘monotonous diet.’ Lee went on to say that rather than Scott giving him whisky ‘as a treat’, this, together with beer, had been used to pacify the animal when he was in pain.

As in previous examinations, it was possible to gain full marks by selecting two details from each text or by focusing rather more on one text; providing at least one detail was selected from the Scott autobiography, details from Lee’s newspaper article could gain a further three marks (and vice versa). Although most candidates were able to gain good or full marks, some candidates gave only a single detail from each of the texts and there were others who wrote in very general terms without any specific details.

Q.1.6 Although this final reading question focused on a comparison of the two texts, as ever, candidates were asked to specifically focus on the two bullet points for the focus of the comparison. Candidates who chose to ignore the bullet points rarely gained good marks.

The question invited candidates to compare what the two writers told readers about Jumbo's life in London Zoo and then to consider how the writers got their views about Jumbo's life in the zoo across to their readers. Many candidates were able to see that whilst Scott focused only on the positive details of the elephant's life in the zoo, Lee gave a much more balanced view that suggested despite the animal's huge popularity, the animal actually lived 'a sad, often painful existence.'

In the newspaper article, Alan Lee made it clear that the elephant was a favourite at the zoo, attracting large crowds of adoring Victorians and giving rides to zoo visitors. Readers were also told that Matthew Scott, his keeper, forged a strong bond with the animal, nursing him back to health when he arrived at the zoo 'disease-ridden.' Lee told readers that the elephant suffered from bad toothache, the result of his poor diet of 'sticky buns and hay', and had joint problems and bone damage caused by the daily rides he gave visitors. The pain he suffered meant there was another, 'darker side' to Jumbo's nature, unseen by visitors but his suffering resulted in 'terrifyingly violent rages' that were calmed only by the whisky and beer Scott gave him. It was a different picture from that painted by Scott in his autobiography. He described Jumbo's life in the zoo, once he had been nursed back to health, as being 'busy, industrious', his days filled with carrying visitors on his back. Scott writes of the 'treats' he was given: he would give him whisky and children loved to give him cakes, and there was no suggestion that the elephant was ever a problem. Scott made a point of stating how Jumbo could be relied upon to behave safely and remain calm in all situations.

The writers made their views about Jumbo's life in the zoo clear in rather different ways. Alan Lee gave specific names of those who admired the elephant to emphasise its popularity, and made use of key phrases and language, such as 'awe-struck' to show the impact the elephant made on zoo visitors. He also quoted Sir David Attenborough to add weight to the views about the animal's life in the zoo, and reported the findings of researchers and scientists who studied the elephant's skeleton. In contrast, Scott's writing was more subjective and passionate about the elephant, describing his own feelings for the animal and praising Jumbo for his intelligence, willingness to work and his affectionate and tender nature. He made use of the anecdote to illustrate Jumbo's nature and used direct address to the reader at the end of the passage, asking them to behave in the same kind, affectionate way, helping anyone in trouble.

Where candidates used the bullet points to shape their responses, they were able to accumulate appropriate textual details, comment on how the writers made their views clear and there were some good responses. However, some candidates struggled to organise their work or make it clear which details belonged to which writer, and some responses were very brief. It also became clear that too many candidates had struggled with time management and as a result, failed to attempt this final reading question altogether.

Q.2.1 In the first of the two writing tasks candidates were asked to write what they would say to younger students about how best to prepare for and cope with the demands of GCSE exams. Almost all responses captured a sense of awareness of the intended audience and most contained a mixture of suggestions for success, reflections on the speaker's own examination performance and reassuring comments for those who might still not achieve the grades they sought. Good responses had a clear shape and structure, using separate paragraphs to introduce a particular strategy for success, developing the detail of that strategy and linking it to the next part of the talk. Revision was viewed as essential, with lots of suggestions about how to construct a revision timetable, at what point it was advisable to begin the process, and where to go when there were difficulties. Teachers reading these responses would be heartened to know that candidates were unstinting in their praise for them, and the extra lengths teachers would always go to, for anyone needing help. After-school lessons and requests for extra homework were all thought to be useful and many thought flashcards were essential for success. Others talked enthusiastically about YouTube programmes, BBC Bitesize packages or gave examples of memory games that had helped them. Sometimes, candidates tended to list the successful strategies but gave too little specific detail about them and some responses focused more on the speaker's view of his/her own exam performance than on how others might be successful. Lots of responses wrote of their regret that they had not taken advice from others seriously and failed their exams first time around, but many went on encouragingly to say that once they had seen the error of their ways and worked hard, they had gone on to pass all of their exams with flying colours. Much of the advice given also emphasised the need for a balanced approach, taking time out from revision and work to relax with friends.

Examiners saw some lively, sensible and engaging pieces but there were also responses that were significantly briefer responses than the indicated 300-400 words. These inevitably lacked range and development, and the limitations of the content were obvious.

Q.2.2 This second task was to write a letter to a newspaper in response to a comment seen that had appeared in a letter in a previous edition. This offered the view, "It's about time teenagers thought about their responsibilities and contributed more to their communities." The inclusion of a formal letter had been indicated in the 'advance information' to centres, so it was disappointing that some candidates offered no attempt at letter conventions or layout. Some candidates objected strongly to the criticism, writing about the pressures teenagers were already under, with examples of a heavy school or college workload, regular homework, responsibilities for younger siblings and so on. Whilst there were many who took this route, others chose to agree with the view, often adopting the persona of an older adult, witnessing poor or anti-social behaviour from youngsters who showed little care for others. There were also candidates who offered a view that while it was right for teenagers to become more involved in community work, greater opportunities needed to be created for training and guidance so that young people could get involved in community work effectively. Others gave detailed accounts of the work they and others did for their own families or local community groups and gave examples of raising money for those in need. Many were passionate about the views they held and the best responses were well-organised and when a viewpoint was expressed, there was sufficient supporting detail and evidence to convince the reader. As with the first writing task, there were too many candidates who wrote brief responses; these simply had too little content to warrant a decent mark. There were also candidates who offered no attempt at the task.

As has been reported on in previous examinations, and in the current Component 1 report, limited technical accuracy remains a concern, with basic spelling errors and poor sentence control continuing to weaken the impact of the written work of too many candidates.

Summary of key points

In the reading section:

- Candidates should try to track the text methodically to select details relevant to the question, commenting where necessary. This allows candidates, particularly in questions 1.2 and 1.4, to accumulate a range of appropriate information that is linked to the question from across the whole text.
- In selecting and commenting on quotations from the text, it is important that candidates give enough contextual information or explanation where it is helpful to do so. In their desire to avoid long quotations, candidates sometimes offer only fragments of the text, which, without explanation, often lack clarity and fail to gain reward.
- Questions 1.1, 1.3 and 1.5 are essentially those mostly requiring specific details from the texts. In order to gain good or full marks on these questions, it is important for candidates to give sufficient detail so that the answers are both clear and precise.

In the writing section:

- Responses that are significantly below the 300-400 words indicated in the exam paper are likely to struggle to have the range and development of content that mark out more successful responses.
- Candidates should plan their writing so that it has shape, structure and development. For most tasks, a brief introduction, three to five paragraphs each dealing with a specific topic or area of the task, together with a brief concluding paragraph will usually work well.
- Lack of technical accuracy remains a significant issue and many writing responses were rewarded marks for VSSSP in a lower band than was gained for the communication and organisation of the work.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCSE

November 2022

COMPONENT 3

General Comments

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

For ongoing Component 3 guidance and support please visit our English language homepage.

Comments on individual questions/sections

N/A



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