

OXFORD

INTERNATIONAL
AQA EXAMINATIONS

INTERNATIONAL GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

9270 Paper 1 Literary non-fiction and
composition

Report on the examination

June 2018

REPORT ON EXAMINATION: INTERNATIONAL AS ENGLISH LANGUAGE 9270 UNIT 1 JUNE 2018

Introduction

This was the first exam in the new iGCSE specification and the entry was small, consisting of one school of 64 students. Almost all students completed both sections in the allotted time and the standard of responses was generally high.

SECTION A

The passage for reading was an extract from a travel account, recording the writer's first meeting with the African Hadzabe Bushmen. It proved open to response at a literal level as well as providing ample opportunities for inference, analysis and supported interpretation. The three bands in the mark scheme for each question, excepting Q1 which has two bands, reflect progression from literal responses with simple comment, to those which use detail to develop some comment/explanation, to those which explore and analyse aspects of the text, offering developed, considered comment and inference.

Schools should be aware that, whilst examiners have an expectation of the quality of responses at various levels of achievement and the skills likely to be demonstrated therein, they have no expectation of the specific content of such responses and are instructed to reward all valid answers. Students who have been encouraged to read a wide range of good quality literary non-fiction, explore meaning and stylistic qualities, and develop an independent response based on textual evidence, are likely to do well in this section.

Schools new to this specification are reminded that there is no set number of questions, nor any predetermined area of focus for the questions. The questions arise from the chosen text. They are linked with the Assessment Objectives and are considered to be the best questions to ask on the given text. The best responses are produced by students who have developed and use their skills of interpretation, inference, analysis and exploration of ideas, language and imagery.

QUESTION 1

This question, based on lines 1-11, required students to identify and use relevant detail to explain 'what' had been learnt about Mdu and his kinsmen. Most students achieved marks beyond the 'literal' 1-3 band by using details to develop comment, for example:

"He had a unique style that others didn't have – 'a halo of baboon hair'. Besides, the narrator's action – 'lowered my head, acknowledging his dominance' suggests that he was the one with great power."

QUESTION 2

As always, students need to read the question carefully. Its opening words 'How does the writer add to...' were intended to lead students to a consideration of authorial technique. Many students answered 'what' not 'how'. They did so well, often achieving the top mark of 4 in the middle band, but the absence of consideration of technique meant they failed to move into the 5-6 range. Those who did so showed, among other things, understanding of the use of detail, referencing of personal response and awareness of the effects of specific techniques, for example:

“By using similes like ‘ran his finger over both like a blind person’, the writer vividly connotes that these men are so isolated that they do not know anything about the modern world.”

QUESTION 3

In order to answer this question, students needed to use the detail to explain what is shown about the relationship between the writer and Mdu. All students were able to identify relevant features of the relationship such as the student-teacher aspect, gaining a mark in the 3-4 band. Generally speaking, it was the development and quality of the comment, that lead to a mark in the 5-6 band, for example:

“The writer was also brave and curious to ask questions, as ‘I pointed out a contrail in the overhead sky and wondered if it meant anything to him’. However, Mdu seemed to have little patience with the narrator because he ‘gave a great sigh’. But still, he taught the writer about it. So the relationship between the writer and Mdu is learner and teacher, the learner was eager to learn and the teacher was responsible and willing to teach.”

QUESTION 4

Again, the opening words, ‘How does the writer reveal’ were a signpost to students to consider authorial technique. Students in the 3-4 band were, generally, aware of the effect of particular words and phrases, for example:

“At first, the writer felt panic, and he ‘froze’ in place could indicate that he was so scared that he didn’t know what to do’.”

Students achieving a mark in the 5-7 band tended to collate and examine detail, and demonstrate understanding of method and effect, for example:

“The writer was firstly terrified by the animal which he has met. Words such as ‘large’ and ‘enraged’ suggest a sense of power and strength. ‘No more than 20 feet from me’ builds tension by suggesting the closeness of the baboon. The word ‘frozen’ is the reaction of the writer to this scene, and could indicate that he suddenly lost his mind and was waiting for death.”

QUESTION 5

Students did well on this question, responding appropriately to the, perhaps more familiar, prompt: ‘How does the writer use language to...’. All students achieved marks above the literal level with many being placed in the 5-7 band. Some students dealt with each extract in turn, whilst others presented a convincing overview based on detail within them. High marks could be obtained through either route. In the 3-4 range, students showed awareness of the effects of the writer’s use of language whilst, in the 5-7 range there was often evidence of exploration of these effects, for example:

“The phrase ‘punched his chest twice’ refers to an action that is very animal-like, as a chimpanzee would do to show its strengths. This suggests Mdu lives in an isolated condition with modern life, and still has a quite ‘original’, non-developed lifestyle. Meanwhile he shows a kind of obsession with powerful male figures. ‘Spread his arms wide’ is a form of showing a sense of owning, and suggests he enjoyed taking control of people and loved to be a leader, king-like man, with authority over the land.”

QUESTION 6

Most students did well on this question. The few who were placed in the 1-3 band had, generally, misunderstood the focus of the question and wrote about Mdu rather than ‘the man telling the story’. Responses in the 4-6 band tended to use detail to make some relevant comment, for example:

“The author is not afraid of risks and can bear the bad conditions as he was staying with the local people in temporary shelters or even caves.”

Those awarded marks in the 7-9 range offered a coherent, supported explanation of a range of impressions of the author, often with inferential comment and exploration of character, for example:

“He is unbiased. Many people would refuse to make closer contact with these humans living in caves, but he considers these African wild humans to be the equal to himself, and was willing to know more about them. He says it was ‘emotionally exhausting’ which shows he uses all his strength and power to stay and communicate with them. Also, he is willing to learn from Mdu about the ways to hunt in the forest. He knows that there are many things to learn from others and is not arrogant, nor proud... He is emotional and sensitive. He tries hard to assimilate into the community and showed respect to Mdu, the leader. He tried to learn from Mdu and to walk ‘into’ his mind. He hoped to know what Mdu is thinking and to have a spiritual communication with him...”

SECTION B

Students are advised to spend an hour on Section B. Whilst students are not given a guide as to length of writing, it is expected that the essay will be suitably developed and structured. Students who offer very brief and/or undeveloped responses inevitably limit their potential achievement.

The mark scheme is divided into two parts. The first part is designed to assess W1 (communication and content), W2 (variety and effectiveness of sentence structure) and W3 (organisation and structure), with each strand being represented by a bullet point. The second is used to assess W4, technical accuracy in grammar, punctuation and spelling.

For the majority of students taking this exam, English was a second language. Whilst this, inevitably, gave rise to grammatical errors, it remained possible to gain marks in the higher bands through sophisticated use of detail and vocabulary, effective sentence structures, sound organisation, and high levels of accuracy in spelling and punctuation.

QUESTION 7

The vast majority of students answered Question 7 and many offered well-considered and interesting discussion on whether ‘People learn more from experience than they learn from study’. They often drew on personal anecdote relating to the study of science, juxtaposing the virtues of practical experimentation against those of text-book learning. Others considered the value of experiences such as volunteering, competitive activities and work experience, often displaying a sound grasp of complex issues. Overall, the students were mature and balanced in their reflections and the responses were well organised and persuasive. The response below is given verbatim:

“Experience might be vital to employees and students, and they could learn more from it. A number of occupation is based on practical experience, such as accountant, chef and teachers. For example, in accountancy, different corporations would have their own case and their situation could be completely differentiated from others, even competitors. Due to the varied conditions, such as differences in the liquidity of the business or different level of debts owned by the business, accountants would make analysis based on the individual circumstance. Textbooks would only tell student those typical models and cases of business, but the actual situation might be much more extreme and severe. Therefore, experience would be crucial for these extreme cases, which would make accountant more skillful, sophisticated and shrewd.”

QUESTION 8

A minority of students opted to ‘describe the place’ where they ‘feel, or have felt, most happy’ with selected places varying from ‘a farm in the country’ to ‘my grandfather’s house’ to ‘the public washing room at the corner of my street’ In most responses, there was clear focus on description with, at times, delightful and evocative vocabulary choices, for example:

“It’s in late November when a backing wind brings the granite sky and mizzling rain with it. It’s only three o’clock in the afternoon, but the darkness gradually crawls over the entire landscape and attacks every corner filled with sunlight. The pallor of lifelessness and grey spreads over the mountains, cloaking them in the mist. The thick, inky clouds are declaring its (sic) dominance.”

QUESTION 9

A few students wrote a story called: ‘The Trick’. One of these was a relatively simple story, another based on a dual narration and the third, a more complex narrative with convincing setting, plot and characterisation, the latter exemplified below:

“The salesman, a middle-aged man in his fifties, is apperantly (sic) not in a hurry. He carefully places each vase while drinking a small bit of tea each time from the silver cup he holds, His hair has been combed neatly backwards; his face as if polished with oil, glitters under the sun; when he yawns, the golden tooth he has cannot by more obvious; shinniy (sic) to all.”

GET HELP AND SUPPORT

Visit our website for information, guidance, support and resources at oxfordaqaexams.org.uk



OXFORD INTERNATIONAL AQA EXAMINATIONS
GREAT CLARENDON STREET, OXFORD, OX2 6DP
UNITED KINGDOM

enquiries@oxfordaqaexams.org.uk
oxfordaqaexams.org.uk

Permission to reproduce all copyright material has been applied for. In some cases, efforts to contact copyright-holders may have been unsuccessful and Oxford International AQA Examinations will be happy to rectify any omissions of acknowledgements. If you have any queries please contact the Copyright Team, AQA, Stag Hill House, Guildford, GU2 7XJ.