

OXFORD

INTERNATIONAL
AQA EXAMINATIONS

INTERNATIONAL GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

(9270/1) Paper 1

Report on the examination

June 2019

REPORT ON EXAMINATION: INTERNATIONAL GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE 9270/1 UNIT 1 JUNE 2019

Introduction

This was the third exam in the new iGCSE specification and the entry has increased since the June 2018 series. Almost all students completed both sections in the allotted time and the standard of responses was generally very good.

Section A

The passage for reading was an extract from a travel account, recording the writer's travels across Africa and the experiences he had along the way. It proved to be an accessible extract and students engaged well with the literal detail as well as providing ample evidence of 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.

Centres should be aware that, although examiners will have expectations of the quality of responses at various levels of achievements and the skills likely to be shown within each band, they have no expectation that specific content from the extract will be used and are instructed through the mark scheme that all valid responses should be rewarded. 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.

Centres 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 their skills of interpretation, inference, analysis and exploration of ideas, language and imagery and are able to articulate their ideas in response to a range of questions.

Question 1

This question, based on lines 1-12, required students to identify and use relevant detail about 'what problems' the writer had encountered on his journey in this part of the text. Most students achieved marks beyond the 'identify relevant problems' 1-2 band by collating a range of detail. Those who achieved the highest marks offered some explanation regarding some of the problems he encountered. For example:

"The country had been suffering a civil war and, despite there being a 'temporary ceasefire', people were unwilling to give him a lift, perhaps because there was a lack of trust and security at that time".

Question 2

This question focused on lines 13-27 which gave a description of the town of Wau. The question stem encouraged responses to 'Explain' and lead the students to display the skills of collation and explanation. Many students focused on the details and were able to retrieve a selection of details about the town, achieving marks within the middle band of 3-4. However, those students who offered more detailed explanation and were able to synthesize information in their responses were able to achieve marks in the upper band. For example:

"The 'shabby' buildings made from almost home-made materials such as 'mudbrick', along with the description of the 'streets covered with sand, dust and cow manure', suggest that the writer considered the town to be undeveloped and dirty, which is surprising for a town which is also described as the 'market and administrative centre for much of central Sudan'."

Question 3

This question used the stem of 'How' to elicit responses that focused on language and techniques used by the writer to 'create a sense of panic'. Many students were able to successfully draw out examples of authorial technique and offer some explanation of how this created panic. However, the absence of more detailed 'analysis' and 'exploration' of these techniques meant that responses often remained within the middle band of 3-5. Students sometimes fell into collating relevant detail with little comment on how these lines created the effect of rising panic. However, those students who were able to explore the effects, make connections across the given extract and offer a personal response were awarded marks in the top band, for example:

“The simile comparing how the passengers behaved like animals by ‘screaming, punching, clawing’ their way to the ticket window creates a clear impression of chaos and panic, which is further developed as the writer uses verbs such as ‘forcing’ and ‘crawling’ to highlight how there were no rules or order in the station, a clear indication that desperation and panic had taken over.”

Question 4

This question also opened with the words ‘Explain why the writer...’ which were a signpost for students to select detail and use it to explain. Most students did well on this question, focusing on the writer’s decision to refuse to pay the bribe and the potential consequences he now faced. Higher marks were obtained by offering a detailed and coherent explanation, which many students were able to do. The ability to explain more subtle points helped in achieving the top marks. For example:

“The writer is being chased after refusing to pay the bribe to Scarface and his men. By doing this in front of the locals, he was directly challenging Scarface’s authority which could have caused others to do the same, something Scarface couldn’t risk. So to maintain his authority, Scarface is trying to catch the writer and his friends in order to punish them.”

Question 5

Question 5 also used the stem of 'How does the writer' and required students to explain and examine how the danger of the situation was conveyed to the reader. A few students focused on what was happening rather than how danger was conveyed to the reader, therefore missing the point of the question. However, as the question allowed focus on both detail and/ or technique, the majority of students were able to access marks in the middle or top band. In the middle band, there was more focus on detail in general, with explanations relating to the men being 'armed to the teeth' and the writer being unarmed. Students who closely examined detail and/or techniques achieved marks in the highest band with some developing comment on the 'darkened' and deserted area, suggesting that the writer was exposed and there being a feeling of impending threat. For example:

"The writer conveys the danger of the situation by creating an eerie setting which has 'nothing but silence and a stray dog', creating a gloomy and desolate setting where the writer and his friends are alone and at the mercy of Scarface and his heavily armed men... The danger is further reinforced by the potential consequences such as 'torture', 'prison' and 'death' and potentially becoming another 'gruesome statistic' as no one is there to help them or be a witness."

Question 6

This question required students to consider what they had learnt about the writer from reading the whole passage. The very few students who achieved marks in the lower band misunderstood the question and wrote about Wau or focused on the 'story' rather than the writer. Most students, however, did well on this question, with frequent reference to the writer's adventurous nature and his propensity for taking risks. It was pleasing to see many students selecting detail from across the extract, rather than focusing on par-

ticular sections. Those who achieved marks in the middle band tended to collate a range of detail, and make relevant comments to explain ideas about the writer, such as:

“The writer clearly enjoys taking risks as he describes his travels as his ‘year of living dangerously’ whilst also visiting a country even though it is ‘plagued by civil war’ and there are people like Scarface who take advantage of travellers.”

Responses awarded marks in the 6-8 range offered a coherent, supported overview of a range of impressions of the writer, often with insightful comment and exploration of ideas, for example:

“The man is also self-composed as he was able to come up with three possible solutions when considering the situation because ‘heavy rains washed away both the road and the rail line’ making it almost ‘impossible to cross’. This shows he was an unflappable character in an emergency. The man is also detailed in his description of the surroundings and weighs up the different options carefully, before deciding to stay in the revolting town of Wau.”

Section B

Students are advised to spend an hour on Section B. Whilst students are not given a guide as to length of writing, the size of handwriting being such a variable factor, 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 template is used to assess W4, technical accuracy in grammar, punctuation and spelling.

For some 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.

On the whole, it was encouraging to see students using a varied and effective vocabulary and using sentence structure and punctuation for effect. Perhaps something to bear in mind when teaching writing skills would be to model the use of a range of punctuation and sentence structures as a way of creating specific effects.

There was limited evidence of planning in the writing section. Teachers may want to consider how to develop planning techniques and encourage students to plan effectively in an exam situation. Planning generally helps students to ensure that their writing responses are well organized, appropriately developed and clear in purpose, and allows them to concentrate on the quality of their writing.

Question 7

This narrative task was popular with students and many wrote interesting and engaging stories about ‘Revenge’. Writing a story requires students to construct a plausible narrative with elements of setting, plot and characterisation. Planning, as mentioned earlier, can help students ensure these elements are covered. Students who created an engaging narrative voice and organized their work to ‘reveal’ something to the reader as the plot developed, were particularly successful in this question.

Question 8

The descriptive question required students to ‘Describe a place you do **not** like’. The responses were varied with descriptions of countries, cities and particular buildings. There were also more personal

responses which referred to sites related to the student's past. Whilst students may describe through narrative, there were examples of explanation taking priority over descriptive detail. It would be worthwhile focusing on some modelling of organisation of description to ensure that students are able to develop detail appropriately and make use of linguistic devices in their writing.

Question 9

This was the most popular of the three question options, perhaps due to the coursework option being taken and students feeling well prepared for this style of writing. Students often tackled the statement, 'Travel extends our understanding of the world' from a very personal perspective, thinking about their own experiences of travel and perhaps relating this to their own cultures. Many students drew on the positives of learning through experiencing other cultures first hand as opposed to learning from the internet and textbooks. There was some lovely discussion of not just seeing but 'tasting, hearing and absorbing' a culture through visiting the country, something which students considered impossible through reading or watching film. Responses to this question were often well structured, acknowledged a counter argument and reiterated a clear viewpoint. Whilst there was often evidence of a broad vocabulary range, words were sometimes misplaced or overused, resulting in confused and difficult to follow arguments. On the whole, however, students offered well considered and mature responses which were enjoyable to read.

GET HELP AND SUPPORT

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

FAIR ASSESSMENT PROMISE

In line with Oxford AQA's Fair Assessment promise, the assessment design, marking and awarding of this examination focused on performance in the subject, rather than English language ability.



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

enquiries@oxfordqaexams.org.uk
oxfordqaexams.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.