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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Paper 8693/01

Passages for Comment

General comments

The Paper proved to be an effective discriminator of different levels of ability. Candidates analysed texts competently for the most part and had been well prepared. However, some seemed less equipped to deal with some of the material because they did not always seem as well versed in appropriate terminology and practice as they could be. Directed writing tasks were handled with aplomb and even those who fared less well on the commentaries showed that they could gain marks here. Centres seem more prepared for this Paper and are starting to show greater confidence in handling different kinds of material.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was a popular choice perhaps because of its contemporary content and proved quite a challenging piece for some candidates in terms of analysing the language, although most seemed to grasp essential ideas and issues. It was pleasing to see that most candidates have grasped the importance of looking at the progressive structure and development of a passage and this was in evidence here and in **Question 2** in particular. There were some perceptive comments on how the writer seems initially rather negative in her praise for the group but gradually shows her enthusiasm and positive beliefs. There were some sharp and incisive comments on the language at best, particularly the way in which the writer's quirky mix of intellectual and colloquial language tries to emulate her perceived view of the duo as an odd or eccentric pairing in terms of their appearance and performance. Even at the lower end of the range, candidates offering a narrative summary detected the changing attitude of the writer.

The directed writing task produced many sharp and enjoyable answers; the best drew on selected information and moulded it into an answer which emulated the original's language and attitudes; weaker answers tended to rely on heavy borrowing of phrases from the extract or simply tried to substitute a few words and phrases.

Question 2

This was also a very popular choice and produced a number of excellent analyses. Candidates sensed the matter-of-fact, even laconic or documentary style of the piece in relation to its dramatic content; good answers noted the ways in which the passage begins in a rather factual style and there is a little foreshadowing based on the idea of the engine's vibrations; they noted the sense of calm and stillness and the ways in which the author presented different details about different passengers; the irony of the service and the song were explored by good answers and the change in mood in the second half too. The use of repetitive phrasing and some poetic touches elicited some effective insights. Many noted that because the reader knew the narrative outcome the passage gained in depth and poignancy.

The directed writing task was answered most efficiently when candidates kept to the information in the passage: a number of responses drew on other sources, especially details and storylines from films based on the episode.

Question 3

This was not tackled by as many candidates but produced some effective creative writing which reflected the mixture of the personal and the comic of the original extract. Some candidates did not really develop the use of the characters as much as they could and, in particular, the use of brackets. Commentaries tended to be less sure here at times but candidates managed to produce some competent ideas especially in relation to the author's attitudes and changing emotions.

<p>Paper 8693/02 Composition</p>
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General comments

The Paper produced many excellent responses at the higher end of the range; there were some amazingly developed answers, suggesting thorough preparation in appropriate skills. In the middle and lower ranges there were some focused and engaged responses, some of which may have contained promising and thoughtful ideas without quite being aligned to technical accuracy (particularly in the use of consistent tenses). Many candidates responded to both types of writing with enthusiasm and zest and seemed to respond to the challenge of the Paper with focused attention. In the first section candidates need to ensure that they recognise the need for descriptive content regardless of the question choice.

Comments on specific questions**Question 1**

This was a popular choice. The good answers were mature and well constructed. There was careful control of the lexis and syntax with openings and conclusions that were engaging and effective. Less secure responses tended to be predictable and dogged. A few responses tended to be derivative and drew on identifiable sources. One or two candidates failed to take notice of the wording and simply wrote horror stories that were set at parties or amongst crowds without any sense of isolation.

Question 2

A few candidates attempted this but the question demanded some notion of radio scripts; some were skilled enough to produce such scripts aligned to a sense of the specified genre; they were aware of medium, character and conventions. Those without relevant expertise tended to just write a play without a clear focus on the question, and therefore could not score well.

Question 3

This was a very popular choice. The best responses chose incidents carefully and combined them with a sense of purpose and audience. Even answers in the lower range provided sufficient focus and direction. Often candidates seemed to gain confidence as the piece progressed. However, some candidates tended to treat such material as a means of personal therapy – that is, some felt it was a chance for an ‘outpouring’ rather than a piece of descriptive or imaginative writing. Centres may wish to advise candidates that it is hard to assess such responses in terms of style of writing and that they will do themselves a disservice if they do not keep to the form of writing under examination.

Question 4

This, too, was a popular choice and produced some carefully constructed contrasts. There was some excellent use of vocabulary and expression here. Candidates are reminded that they should address both parts of such questions, the before and the after.

Question 5

This was a popular and, on the whole, well answered question. Responses were often focused clearly on the needs of the visiting audience; there were some eloquently informative and humorous speeches and it was pleasing to see candidates relax and take an appropriate and independent line of approach. There was a clear sense of pride and fondness displayed from a diverse range of countries and nationalities.

Question 6

This proved to be an effective and popular question. It was convincingly argued whichever stance was taken. There were many lively and enthusiastic responses. Candidates drew on a pleasing range of ideas: perhaps the most enjoyable answers were those where a really strong stance was taken supported by a clear line of argument interwoven with a diverse range of illustrative material.



Question 7

Some of the best answers included interviews with a variety of voices expressing cogent opinions and... This suited the idea of a magazine particularly well when the views were summed up efficiently by the... writer. Other very good answers adopted magazine speak but presented the arguments for and against... a lively, emotive and persuasive style. There was an informed and pleasing range of examples used to illustrate particular points.

Question 8

This was also a very popular choice. Very good answers included those which were prepared to look at a range of technological developments with particular reference to young people and with a lively examination of both the serious implications and the advantages which technology provides. Less secure responses tended to focus solely on the Internet. Candidates need to ensure that they have a suitable range of examples.