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## FOREWORD

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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

In general, there were some informed and proficient responses across the range. At its higher end, candidates commented on the set extracts with flair and probing analytical skill, using selective and brief quotations skilfully and commenting on their particular effects with perception and depth. At the lower end of the range, some candidates tended to rely on 'feature spotting', identifying particular techniques that they had learned or seen before. A few candidates had a degree of trouble in understanding the passages and Centres are reminded that this paper meets international AS standards in terms of levels of text. Candidates' recreative writing, as is often the case, allowed them to show some of their imagination and understanding, even when analytical responses had not always been too secure.

### Comments on specific questions

#### Question 1

- (a) In the first part of the question there were some detailed responses which carefully noted the methodical and controlled use of vocabulary and expression in order to reflect the nature and approach of the father. Candidates commented on the relationship between him and the children, noting their wonder and fascination with the process. Answers in the middle part of the range focused more on this relationship rather than linguistic features; answers in the lower part of the range relied on feature spotting rather than basic matters such as repetition and the use of commas and full stops.
- (b) The second part of the question produced a full range of answers and allowed for clear differentiation. It was important here that candidates selected an appropriate household task and these ranged from preparing food to washing the car. It was also important that candidates recognised the narrative perspective here – that it was written in the third person voice and not first. Better responses reflected the carefully controlled structures of the original extract and its careful use of markers such as 'then', 'now' and 'after'. The use of repeated actions and the slow progressive nature of the task were, in general, highlighted with some flair and skill. Less secure responses focused on digression or narrative which was not really aligned with the original piece.

#### Question 2

- (a) There were some very focused and proficient responses here because candidates used the material of the passage and imported the personal, subjective female voice skilfully for the most part. They foregrounded the secretive maternal realisation of the situation in contrast to the collective silence of the original, bringing out the private anguish or determination to avoid reality of the diary writer. When such responses were supported by a high level of technical accuracy, there were many high scoring pieces.
- (b) Commentaries were, on the whole, informed and perceptive, especially when candidates remembered to compare both their piece and the original. There were competent comments on the style of the original, ranging from its almost epic or mythic feel to its use of imagery and descriptive material. The anonymous nature of the characters added to the mystery and sensitive answers picked up on this well.

**Question 3**

- (a) This was a popular question and drew a range of responses. Better answers focused on the mood and humour of the passage, exploring its gentle parody of teenage angst, the self-dramatisation of its protagonist and her excessive mood swings from the start to the close. The two letters from her erstwhile suitor were often compared well too. Less secure answers tended to rely heavily on feature spotting here and avoided addressing the mood and ironic nature of the material.
- (b) There were, again, some very good responses here, especially when candidates sensed the outraged pride of Clara and wrote back with an air of disdain and blunt humour, coupled with a rather formal and harsh style. Answers at the lower end of the range tended to misread the situation and presented Clara as someone who would do anything to have James back. Whilst such answers were sound in their own right, they did not fully reflect the attitude and principles underlying the original piece.

**Paper 8693/02**

**Composition**

**General comments**

Candidates continue to perform well on this component, writing imaginative and reasoned answers on the whole. Time management is usually well handled and there are few rubric infringements. Perhaps it would help some candidates if they checked the technical accuracy of their work more, especially in areas such as confusion of past and present tenses and agreement between singular/plural verbs. Candidates should also be reminded of the need for clear paragraphing and ensuring that they write the minimum number of words required (at least 600 words per essay). Examiners continue to note with pleasure how much rewarding material they come across on this paper and it is clear that Centres, in general, prepare their candidates through practice of a good range of both generic and discursive writing skills. Occasionally, some candidates offer derivative materials in their imaginative responses: for example, they 'borrow' names and storylines from films they have seen. This is a trend they should guard against.

**Comments on specific questions*****Section A*****Question 1**

This was a popular choice and candidates produced some very effective responses covering gothic, horror, crime and romantic genres. Answers fared well where they were not simply plot-driven but instead focused on a particular, sometimes unexplained, moment and gradually built up atmosphere and mood through describing the details of the place or environment, without necessarily revealing the exact motivation or rationale of the protagonists.

**Question 2**

This was handled competently in the main but responses were sometimes hampered by the lack of an imaginative storyline. A sense of personal failure often relied on matters such as a broken heart or a series of examinations which were not completed successfully; whilst these were reasonable in conception, their execution was sometimes limited by a lack of emotional engagement on the narrator's part.

**Question 3**

There were some very pleasing and thoughtful responses here where the candidate had thought through the rubric demand for a complete storyline: sometimes the end of the narrative just faded into oblivion. Issues covered focused on areas such as eccentric characters not being welcomed by a strange community, to matters of prejudice and discrimination. Sometimes, this was an example of a question where answers at the lower end of the range relied on derivation: there were quite a number of responses which relied on the Western genre and tended to lack real originality or spin on the usual conventions.

**Question 4**

There were many proficient and measured answers here and generally candidates brought out the... for clear contrasts in mood and atmosphere with skill and insight. Answers which were less secure tended to lose focus on the descriptive nature of the task and relied on narrative at its expense. Occasionally very able candidates feel that this is an opportunity to reveal their extensive vocabulary at the expense of the contexts they have established and this can lead to some of the lexis being inappropriate for the situation, in a hyperbolic and less controlled approach to the question.

**Section B****Question 5**

This was a popular choice and allowed candidates to show that they could direct their specialised knowledge to a different kind of audience. On the whole, this was done successfully, although some candidates tended to patronise older readers or rely on a hectoring approach which may have lost a few of them. There was a pleasing sense of structure and planning to most of the articles, supported by a good use of examples and possible scenarios.

**Question 6**

This was answered with a great deal of gusto and panache at the top end of the range. Responses drew on both philosophical material as well as relevant past and present examples. Some candidates referred heavily to current world issues and argued their case from generally informed and balanced perspectives. Answers which took a particular slant and argued from that viewpoint tended to stand out from those which tended to simply sit on the fence and offer no real commitment or personal engagement with the issue.

**Question 7**

This was a popular choice too and elicited some strong personal responses. In general, answers adopted the appropriate register but some tended to offer an exhaustive curriculum vitae rather than selecting the most relevant parts of it. Some answers only addressed the first part of the question and did not always offer creative ideas for the show itself, thereby creating an imbalance in the response.

**Question 8**

This question also produced a lot of strongly argued, proficient responses with a good sense of past and present contexts. Again, answers which tended to offer a personal viewpoint seemed to engage the reader more than those which took too much of a detached, objective view: this is not to say that candidates should not look at both sides of the issue (indeed it is imperative that they do) but that they can afford to take a stance.