

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

J351

For first teaching in 2015

J351/02 November 2019 series

Version 1

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates. The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report. A full copy of the question paper can be downloaded from OCR.

For information on the English Language Spoken Language Endorsement process, please refer to: <https://www.ocr.org.uk/administration/stage-3-assessment/general-qualifications/orals-practicals-performances/gcse-9-1-english-language-spoken-language-endorsement/>

Paper 2 series overview

This is the third November Session of this paper in the current series, in addition to the three June Sessions in 2017, 2018 and 2019. It reflected that both teachers and their students are increasingly familiar with the layout and set up of the Paper, and similarly with Paper J351/01, its companion component.

The main difference between the two components is that J351/01 assesses candidates' responses to non-fiction texts whereas J351/02 assesses their responses to literary texts. Each of the components follows an almost identical structure (the difference is the amount or assessment given to AO1) and each of the four Assessment Objectives is tested in each paper. There is no assessment of AO1/2 (the comparative question) in this Paper 02.

To do well in this component candidates must be able to read unseen literary texts with confidence and understanding. They should be able to select relevant details from each of the texts and identify and explain points of language and structure. They must also be able to identify similarities and differences between the texts and evaluate their impact on the reader. That is to say: respond to the task set with independent thought and aptly selected evidence from both the given texts.

There was more evidence in both sessions this year that candidates had managed to read to the end of both passages, perhaps an advantage of their relatively shorter length.

They should be practised and confident in producing well shaped, thoughtful and accurate personal writing.

Centres have clearly paid careful attention to previous versions of this document. Generally speaking, candidates are using more successful approaches to respond to each question in turn. Responses generally show a clearer understanding of the separate demands of each successive task. The match between the space available in the answer booklet and the candidate's response is about right. Often candidates who go on to an additional answer booklet have little more to offer which is rewardable. We note some exceptions to this below.

Overall, candidates might still improve their performance on the paper by developing their performance on Questions 2 and 3, those that test language and structure, especially the latter. This is tested in Question 3 of Paper One. There is also some evidence that candidates' writing might be enhanced through a more carefully judicious choice of topic. These points are greatly expanded and exemplified below. In this session too many candidates spent too long on writing at the expense of gaining more marks on reading. We strongly advise against this.

Overall the paper elicited some interesting and perceptive responses. The passages had been understood (although passage two often less well than passage one) and there was the usual significant evidence that candidates had been carefully prepared for the requirements of the paper. Candidates of all abilities were afforded and mostly took a variety of opportunities to show their skills and knowledge in English. Conversely there were few who were unable or unwilling to complete the paper or for whom the reading passages were beyond comprehension.

Section A overview

Candidates had obviously enjoyed both passages:

T1, the excerpt from Roald Dahl's autobiography perhaps more than the extract from 'Jamrach's Menagerie' simply because the former was a much more familiar and respected name. Many read the final lines of paragraph two (as set for Question 2) and pondered how literally Dahl intended us to take his mention of 'I told myself..... rhinos, lions and all manner of vicious beasts'. Where answers were supported and relevant a wide range of options were credited. We were pleased that so many saw that this technicolour panorama of huge scale was all framed 'through the port-hole' and that this intensified the impressions rather than diluted them.

Some candidates were less comfortable with T2 and, perhaps needed a more confident grasp of the fact that while the Azores looked very attractive from the ship and through a telescope (as opposed to a porthole) it was all a very different experience as they neared the port and explored the town. The mountain becomes a 'great grey crag' and the thought of 'a volcano' stir fears in Jaffy which are further endorsed by the shock of the inhabitants and their repeatedly 'foreign' impression. There was some confusion about when the switch from ship to land actually occurred.

Stronger responses benefited from the ways in which the paper provides an incremental structure and successfully recycled points made in Questions 2 and 3 into Question 4.

Some candidates mistook both pieces for travel writing and others attempted to use one passage to answer both Questions 2 and 3.

Option overview

There are no options in this Section.

Question 1 (a)

Question 1 is about **Text 1**, *Going Solo* by Roald Dahl.

Look again at lines 1–6.

1 (a) Where does the *Dumra* arrive at the beginning of the text?

..... [1]

Zanzibar.....or

An old Arab town.

Most candidates identified 'Zanzibar' correctly while very few responded with 'An old Arab town'. A few more wary candidates included both to be sure of the marks. Candidates who answered in sentences invariably identified the names by underlining or using quotation marks, thereby indicating effective preparation for AO1 questions. The few candidates who did not gain a mark usually answered, 'Dar Es Salaam in Africa'. One can only assume that this was lifted from the question rubric: while it is crucial to read this, it will never contain a right answer: only the extract from passage can provide that. A very few candidates answered 'London'.

Question 1 (b)

(b) When did the *Dumra* leave for its next destination?

..... [1]

Midnight

No other answers were viable. Virtually all candidates got this right: the few who did not put 'the next day' having inferred it from 'knowing that tomorrow would be journey's end'. The question was precise in its insistence on correct retrieval of textual detail.

Question 1 (c)

(c) Give **two** reasons why Roald Dahl feels lucky.

.....
..... [2]

- **The places are marvellous**
- **The experience was free**
- **He has a good job to go to**
- **The next day will be the end of his journey**

Most candidates did very well with this question and usually identified three of the above in two sentences. The most popular picks were 'marvellous places'; 'free of charge' and 'good job to go to'. The fourth option was not frequently chosen. One of the reasons for success here was that there was no requirement to use own words. 'Job' however was insufficient: the mark required 'good job'.

The majority of candidates got full marks on Question 1. Very few did not read and understand what they had been asked to do.

Exemplar 1

1 (a) Where does the *Dumra* arrive at the beginning of the text?

Zanzibar..... [1]

(b) When did the *Dumra* leave for its next destination?

at midnight..... [1]

(c) Give **two** reasons why Roald Dahl feels lucky.

he was felt lucky because he was
Seeing amazing places and that he has
a good job [2]

Clear, concise, correct answers.

Question 2

Question 2 is about **Text 1**, *Going Solo* by Roald Dahl.

2 Look again at lines 7–16.

How does Roald Dahl use language and structure to present his first impressions of the natural world here?

You should use relevant subject terminology to support your answer.

.....
..... [6]

It is crucial that candidates base their answers on the lines set. Comments on lines outside the set extract (e.g. lines 1-6 here) will not be credited.

The question here (and in Question 3) and the AO are concerned with language and structure. There was insufficient focus on structure from a lot of candidates to go further than Level 3 or 4 in this session which was a contrast with the improvements we noted in this in the summer session. Put simply, too many of these candidates equated structure with sentence structure and appeared reluctant to look at the way both pieces were shaped and developed. In this question the movement from the foreground: attractive, appealing, familiar to what lies in the background: exotic, dangerous and frightening, unfamiliar was crucial in coming to terms with structure.

Too many candidates appear to rely in this AO on device spotting. We have counselled against this from the inception of the specification but this does not appear to deter candidates from believing that referencing a simile, a short sentence, a synecdoche, or semantic field (usually interchangeable for a lexical field) for example is sufficient to gain marks. It isn't. It simply means that the comments become circular: "teeming with rhinos and lions and all manner of different beasts' is a list/ tricolon/rule of three/ asyndeton etc. etc. and makes it frightening" gets nowhere.

Some candidates tried to identify parts of speech in an attempt to define effects and impact. 'These words are all adverbs and have a powerful effect' is, again, redundant. Often the parts of speech are confused and misidentified.

Stronger responses focused on the vivid scene from the porthole with the emphasis on the ways the colours of the sea, beach and backdrop are presented: the metaphor of 'coconut palms.....leafy hats'; the variety of compound adjectives and the paragraph's closing ambiguity (as noted above). Above all there was masses to dine out on here if sentence structure was fully investigated. The use of conjunctions (polysyndeton for those who can identify it accurately) is used to structure the panning effect from fore to middle to background as well as to link the flow of the fourth sentence from the third.

The device of the session was 'pre-modification' and was used randomly and non- specifically throughout. Runners up were 'parataxis' and 'low frequency lexis'. Much better to assess these effects using your own words.

Exemplar 2

Dahl uses personification to present his impressions of the natural world in 'breakers were running up on to the sand'. 'Running' has implications of speed, power and enjoyment, so his impression here is positive.

Dahl uses alliteration to present his ~~ideas~~ impressions of the natural world in ~~but~~ 'breathtakingly beautiful'. 'Breathtaking' has connotations of the unimaginable beauty of the natural world and that he is in awe of it. ~~Beautiful~~ 'beautiful' has connotations of love and that Dahl is in love with the natural world.

Dahl uses harsh adjectives to ~~use~~ present his ideas on the natural world. 'Visious beasts'. This contrasts to earlier when Dahl describes the natural world as 'breathtakingly beautiful'. So the tone has changed through the paragraph. [6]

This response just gets to a Level 3.

Exemplar 3

You should use relevant subject terminology to support your answer.

Rudolf Dahl opens with the use of ^{alliterative adjectives} ~~adjectives~~ to describe the lagoon as blue-black. The use of sensory imagery shows how he ~~uses~~ ^{immerses} the natural world in its beauty. He uses ^{synthetic} ~~using~~ to describe what he sees after getting off the boat ^{with} ~~using~~ ^{generous} ~~the~~ ^{passage} ~~of~~ breathlessness. This depicts ^{Dahl} ~~that~~ ^{overwhelmed} ~~to~~ ^{be} ~~overcome~~ by what the environment has to offer from ^{branches} ~~branches~~ running up ^{beside} ~~beside~~ to ^{loopy} ~~loopy~~ ^{hats} ~~hats~~ and ~~the~~ ~~use~~ ^{casuarina} ~~casuarina~~ trees. Dahl emphasises the fact that nature is filled with things to see by using ^{zeugma} ~~zeugma~~. He describes the jungle ^{to} ~~to~~ contain dark-green trees that were full of shadows. By combining physical and abstract imagery the reader gets a sense of how much ^{there is to see} ~~there is to see~~.

Dahl ~~uses~~ ~~con~~ ^{contrasts} ~~contrasts~~ ^{breath-takingly beautiful} ~~beautiful~~ foliage with vicious beasts. This helps to ^{exaggerate} ~~exaggerate~~ his drive to explore and shows how vast a range of ^{actual} ~~actual~~ ^{features} ~~features~~ there are in this natural world. By opening with a complex sentence ^{this was my first glimpse} ~~this was my first glimpse~~ never forget that it ^{foreshadow} ~~foreshadow~~ what Dahl is about to describe. This emphasises how ^{greatly} ~~greatly~~ ^{he was impacted by this experience} ~~he was impacted by this experience~~.

There is a recurring motif of learning which depicts Dahl as an interested child experiencing ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{new} ~~new~~ ^{natural} ~~natural~~ ^{world} ~~world~~ ^{for the first time} ~~for the first time~~. ^{This shows how different it is from the natural landscape he is used to.} ~~This shows how different it is from the natural landscape he is used to.~~ [6]

A full mark response.

Question 3

Question 3 is about **Text 2**, *Jamrach's Menagerie* by Carol Birch.

3 Look again at lines 9–26.

Explore how the writer uses language and structure to present the beauty and strangeness of this place.

Support your ideas by referring to the text, using relevant subject terminology.

[12]

Some candidates treated this as an extension to Question 2 and continued with further consideration of Roald Dahl.

The question has twice the marks of Question 2, there is twice the space in the answer booklet: the reading excerpt is roughly twice the length. Too many candidates appeared not to recognise this and contented themselves with writing a side or less on the first half of the passage. To take the cue from the comments above on Question 2 this meant that there was very little to say about structure, as the essential (and most obvious) structural points are elicited from the contrasts between the transition from wonder to confusion in 19-21 as the island is approached and anchor dropped and the harsh reality of the 'foreign' experience that Jaffy is affected by. It looks nice but its nasty when you get there.

More able candidates appeared to have been emboldened in confidence having negotiated Question 2 and gave a thorough and well documented response which succeeded in covering all the set lines. There was still some confusion between the authorial voice (Birch) and the character's responses (Jaffy) although better answers did give due consideration to his age and status. They identified the extended metaphor of the volcano/ 'gobbled/ spewing' successfully and were sensitive to the changes in mood as the passage progresses and reaches its closure.

There was much preoccupation with 'fluffy' clouds and whether or not this is a metaphor while missing the more important point of scale and distance 'massed around its base'. 'Carol uses language and structure to present beauty and strangeness' was a popular option if nothing else came to mind.

Finally, here some candidates thought that Jaffy was a racist because of the 'barefoot women with their dark eyes and black hair' etc. and the repetition of 'foreign'. A more sensitive reading might have seen these comments as a part of the innocent bewilderment of a fifteen year old on his first sea voyage, many miles from home.

Exemplar 4

Carol Birch ~~uses the term~~ uses the metaphor 'the weather was soft and sweet and warm' right at the beginning of the segment before the young boy had even anchored, to portray the powerful beauty the land projected onto the sailors of the ship. The metaphor suggests to the reader that the weather was so bliss that the boy felt he could touch and taste it. This highlights the strangeness of the land as well as ^{the} ~~the~~ strong hold it has over its visitors. It ^{displays} highlights that perhaps it brings out a strangeness in others. Furthermore, the repetition of the ~~word~~ term 'and' creates a feeling that the boy is trying to get all his words out when describing the land and is transfixed by its beauty. The adjectives ~~that~~ 'sweet' and ~~was~~ 'soft' are not commonly used in descriptors for weather, furthering the strangeness of the land.

Carol Birch also employs structure to display the strange beauty of the ~~area~~ land. Birch's use of long sentences with many clauses highlights the chaos and confusion Jaffy Brown feels ~~or~~ when he sees the population of the land. This use of structure allows the reader to enter the mind of the young boy.

as he jumps from idea to idea. It seems that Jaffey Brown can barely understand what he sees before him: 'loud rasping voices, old men, cranes in shawls, high pitched...' This conveys that the land is strange and weird in his eyes as he cannot comprehend the sights in front of him.

Birch's use of language when describing the inhabitants of the land allows the reader to see how the young boy depicts the inhabitants as odd and strange. The quote 'they could have been birds' portrays the distance created between the sailors and the population of the island.

A Level 3 response.

Exemplar 5

Birch uses an inverted sentence at the start of the second paragraph. By starting with 'Great blue mountains' the emphasis is put on them to suggest they are so eye-catching it's the first thing anyone would notice.

The writer uses polysyndeton when listing the colours in the sky ('purple and grey and lilac and rose'). This is to extend the sentence lengths to emphasize the 'layers and layers' of colour which is already done by the repetition of 'layers':

The second paragraph focuses predominately on the description of the sky. There is a lexical field of nouns and adjectives commonly associated with heaven or God. 'white' has connotations linking to this theme as it is often seen as a symbol of purity and hence related to religion. The mention of the 'church' and 'fluffy white clouds' also suggest the author is describing a heaven-like scene which emphasizes the ^{beauty} ~~beauty~~ and uniqueness.

particularly

of the setting.

The volcano is personified when it is described as having a 'hot-belly' and states 'it might have gobbled us all up'. This is to signify although Raffy is stunned at the sights of Azores he still is nervous which is expected when anyone finds themselves in a new place. This is to emphasize the strangeness of the place as the place is so ^{unfamiliar} ~~so~~ to Raffy perhaps it was in fact possible that the volcano could 'gobble' him up.

The weather is described as being 'soft and sweet and warm'. This ^{use of pathetic fallacy} ~~is to~~ indicates that although the place is very new and unfamiliar it is very welcoming as the ^{author} ~~author~~ uses comforting adjectives to mirror weather to the general atmosphere of the place.

The last two paragraphs focus on how 'foreign' Azores feels to Raffy. He takes note on every person he sees and particularly focuses on those who seem peculiar to him ('barefoot women', 'dark eyes', 'black hair' and 'loud rasping voices'). This in depth focus emphasizes ^{how} ~~the~~ strange everything appears to him.

The response just gets to Level 5.

Exemplar 6

The writer in ~~his~~ her novel for teenagers presents the beauty and strangeness of this place through the themes of fascination, nature and abnormality.

^{abnormality} The Beauty beauty and strangeness of this place is first presented through the theme of ~~nature~~ ^{abnormality}. The place is presented to be unique as through the internal first person narrative I where the narrator ~~expresses~~ ^{expresses} his emotions about the place ~~through~~ ^{perceived by readers} and ~~appears~~ to be confused as through the use of ~~humour~~ ^{is} laughed which has connotations of humour. It The abnormality is also presented through the juxtaposing visual imagery between the first and second paragraph where nature is perceived to be naive and innocent through the list of three adjectives in 'clear sky, fluffy white' which has connotations of being light and airy but this imagery juxtaposes with next paragraph through the personification of the ~~mountain~~ volcano to be ~~a~~ 'gobbled us up with in its hot belly with hot belly symbolising

the power and ferocity of the volcano which is the antithesis so so readers can implicitly recognise the abnormality of the place to be beautiful yet so dangerous.

Beauty and strangeness is also presented by the theme of fascination. This is shown through a shocked tone as through the repetition of 'so close' ~~comparing~~ suggesting the narrator struggles to visualise the place without comparing it and the simple phrase 'I said to myself' is explicitly recognised by readers that the narrator has to reassure himself about the ~~tone~~ as he can't comprehend the beauty through the semantic field of ~~difference~~ ~~the~~ being unique ~~it~~ as strange unknown and different showing fascination.

Beauty and strangeness is also presented through the theme of nature. The ~~extended~~ content of extract is filled with visual imagery as the extended metaphor of the foreign people to be birds as the subliminal of 'shall sing song' suggests the narrator perceives that birds people to be more to nature than mankind and the use of senses to describe the people to be ~~unique~~ unique as in the ~~red~~ fruits in potatoes ~~and~~ onions and pigs see extra page

suggest ~~an~~ a more native perception of the people to be more integrated with nature.

Overall the beauty and strangeness of the place is presented through the different viewpoints of the place, the native as the majority of the place and the fascination in awe by the narrator.

A full mark Level 6 response.

Question 4

Question 4 is about **Text 1**, *Going Solo* and **Text 2**, *Jamrach's Menagerie*.

4 'Both texts describe reaching land after a sea journey as a pleasant experience.'

How far do you agree with this statement?

In your answer you should:

- discuss the characters' different experiences of reaching land after a sea journey
- explain how far their experiences are described as pleasant
- compare the ways the writers present the experiences of reaching land after a sea journey.

Support your response with quotations from **both** texts.

[18]

This session confirmed our impressions in the summer that candidates and their teachers are becoming increasingly confident in their understanding of what this task does and does not require. It was also clear that the wording of this task was very helpful in supporting them on showing what they could with it.

The only exception to this was where candidates did not note what the question actually says: '*reaching land* after a sea journey'. But these were few.

The majority of candidates offered a range of genuine comparisons rather than randomly paired statements with separate evaluative points. The annotation on the scripts reflects this very clearly.

The majority of successful answers argued that while (possibly with the exception of a few wild beasts) Dahl found reaching land a wholly pleasant experience, Jaffy's feelings about what he sees clash with what he feels and hears and imagines as they go from ship to land.

Many successful answers reorganised (as opposed to copied) material used in Question 2 and 3 to support the judgements they evaluated. The point here is that such recycling should liberate the answer not to confine it to simply remaining as 'one I did earlier'. The big difference is that in Question 4 candidates can (and should) use the whole passage of each text rather than the designated excerpts set for the previous questions.

There is always a dilemma here in what and how generously to reward answers which range from sensitive and developed evaluative comment with few links or comparisons to, on the other hand, a wider range of less well-developed points. Candidates are best advised not to lose the sensitivity and detail of their evaluation but to do at least three or four comparisons/contrasts.

Weaker answers stuck with descriptive, generic comments throughout.

Some candidates made good use of the comparison of the 'narrow church steeple and domed mosque' with 'steeple of a church'. Not so the one candidate who (wrongly) claimed that the 'domed mosque' was evidence of a 'low income area'.

Exemplar 7

I agree with the statement, both characters had pleasant experiences after getting ~~back~~ back on land. This is proven in 'soft sweet and warm' and 'breathtakingly beautiful' 'breathtakingly' ~~has~~ suggests that this experience is pleasant and 'soft, sweet and warm' all have connotations of positivity which implies that Birch's experience is also pleasant.

Although I disagree with the statement ~~as~~ because Birch's experience wasn't all pleasant as seen in the adjective 'peculiar'. 'Peculiar' has connotations of discomfort and the unknown. All of these things are not pleasant ~~what~~

whereas Dahl finds his whole experience as pleasant.

A typical Level 2 response.

Exemplar 8

In text 1 and text 2 both authors describe the sight of land as a pleasant experience. However, in text 2 the person holds a greater attachment to the ship and a sense of ~~unsettle~~ being unsettled is portrayed.

In text 1 Roald Dahl is instantly blown away in awe by the land: 'first glimpse of Dar es Salaam and I have never forgotten it'. In one glance at the land Dahl describes it in such detailed and powerful imagery conveying his amazement and the power that reaching land can do to someone. The adjectives and terms used by Dahl such as 'immensely', 'breathtakingly' ... suggests that he wants to share his experience with the reader as if it was like no other. In addition, Dahl had only just left the last land at midnight and had arrived at this new world by the morning, this highlights to the reader that reaching land is such a powerful thing ~~ever~~ after ~~every~~ every single ~~jour~~ journey for Dahl. In just a few hours Dahl again projects his amazement like he has never

seen land for weeks. On the other hand, in text 2 Carol Birch conveys that the boat has become the young boys home: 'The fo'c's'le was another womb'. Despite 2 weeks of travelling the boat is described ~~as~~ ~~the young boys~~ through a metaphor as the young boys mother and he 'wouldn't want to be anywhere else'. This suggests the boat acts as a protector and carer from the outside world. In both texts reaching land is described as pleasant however more for Dahl ~~as~~ the the young boy. Dahl sees ~~the~~ the land as his home whilst the young boy sees the boat as his home.

In text 2 Carol Birch uses imagery to convey awe and imitation. For example, Birch states 'clear sky and fluffy white clouds' as well as 'might have gobbled us all up in its hot belly'. As Jaffy Brown approaches the land on the ship the reader can see the power the arrival has over him; term such as 'gobbled' convey his apprehension. ~~Jaffy Brown has only recently~~ Birch portrays Jaffy to have a lack of understanding of the land via his worry and concern over the villagers who live beneath the volcano. Yet, we see the approach to the land as pleasant as the young boy cannot get his head around the dramatic contrast ~~with~~ with his sailor life. ~~It~~ In text 1, Dahl states 'photographed on my mind ever since' and 'it was all wonderful; beautiful and exciting'. To the

reader this shows that the narrator embraces and lives for his arrival to the land. Dahi will never forget his thoughts and sights as he implies he captured it for an eternity. Dahi's memory became a physical object; ~~the~~ this conveys the pleasantness of the journey. In text 1 and 2 both arrivals are seen as pleasant however in vastly different ways. Birch suggests the pleasantness comes from interest and shock whilst Dahi's is from the relief and beauty of reaching land. Perhaps, the different thoughts are from the different amount of time both men had been sailing for. Jaffy Brown was only 15 and this was his first boat job.

A Level 4 response.

Exemplar 9

Support your response with quotations from both texts.

comparing TP
& last sentence w/cv [18]

Roads Dahl describes his beautiful surroundings throughout ~~the~~ text one and contrasts the beauty with the ~~drab~~ ^{unimpressive scenery} ~~beauty~~ ^{he is accustomed to}.

In text two we are presented with an incredible environment which is ~~not~~ described by a pessimistic narrator leading to the landing not being described in such a positive light as in text one.

The environments in both texts are very different from what the narrators are used to and the narrators are amazed by what they see. In text one Dahl describes ~~his~~ his environment ~~with~~ as "breathtakingly beautiful". This is appreciated by Dahl who describes his exploration of the island with vivid imagery. The experience Dahl has is almost wholly exhilarating to him. The experience Brown has in text two is shown to be spectacular as shown by the description of the mountains as "great blue". This description appeals to our senses and it is therefore unusual that the narrator

does not seem to appreciate his adventure to the same extent as Dahl. Instead he focuses on what he perceives to be the unusual aspects of the island such as their speech which he could not understand. Although both narrators witness an almost equally beautiful environment Dahl describes his in a more appreciative and enlightened tone.

The boat ~~journey~~ ^{journeys} experienced by both narrators are described as interesting and therefore finding land does not seem like an overly important ^{goal} ~~task~~ for either narrator. The finding of land ^{is shown to be} ~~being~~ ^{something} a relief in text ^{to some extent and this is} ~~unexpected~~ ^{at} ~~the~~ ^{concept} ~~only~~ ^{alludes to} ~~reach~~ ^{where} Brown states that they had been sailing for "fourteen days" when they spotted land. This level of time passing has connotations of boredom and is certainly more prevalent in text than in one where Dahl does not mention time and therefore does not connotate boredom with the boat's journey. The immediate reaction of both narrators to reaching land is one of joy but not so much something to be relieved about on Dahl's behalf. He describes the "amazing, spicy-sweet scent" on his boat and the view he has "never forgotten" after reaching land. Both of these experiences are certainly pleasant and Dahl seems overjoyed just to be away from the "boulder hats".

exposed

reverts

that journey

and "sombre grey curbs" he is more used to seeing. Both narrators are shown to be sexually stimulated when they first ~~reach~~ sight ~~of~~ their destination.

~~Both texts~~ In both texts the more undesirable features of the island are also shown. In text one Dahl only mentions one feature like the "vicious bats". This is not seen in an ~~unappreciative~~ ^{unappreciative} manner ~~and instead~~ is viewed more as another feature of the environment which he can admire. In text two the aspects of routine life which the narrator and his friend Gabriel do not understand are depicted as scary and are not appreciated when Brown sees the volcanoes he focuses ~~on~~ on how they "might have gobbled us all up in its hot belly". This view is contrasted by Dahl who does not take a morbid view of any aspects of his environment, even those with the potential to cause him harm. Therefore Dahl's experience is shown to have been more pleasant due to him being more accepting of the people and the environment he comes into contact with. He sees ~~the~~ all aspects of the experience as a chance to learn unlike Brown who seems less mature and less able to ~~appreciate~~ ^{enjoy} anything which opposes what he is accustomed to.

A full mark response to both AOs.

Section B overview

Many candidates still compensate or attempt to compensate for modest performances on reading with stronger performances on writing; sometimes significantly stronger performances on writing. There was some considerable evidence in this session that too many candidates (and especially candidates with an extra time allowance) were choosing to start (and spend the extra time on) writing lengthy essays, sometimes filling up all the relevant pages in the answer booklet before moving back to the reading. We repeat that we *do not recommend* this as a route to success. The few if any extra marks gained will almost inevitably mean marks lost when time runs out. Indeed, the provenance of quantity over quality often leads to inferior work as the demands to complete a huge and convoluted plot diminish or obliterate concerns with style and accuracy.

Very few candidates need more than three or possibly four sides to show us what they can do at their best.

To repeat the messages of the summer and the latest round of training, the best work is the best planned work and the best tasks are the ones that have been chosen from a provisional range of options. Think again if your first thought is to re-cycle a 'Lord of the Rings' style saga, a violent film or fantasy video game.

Option overview

There was a more even balance between Question 5 and 6 in this session, certainly than in the summer when the preponderance of takers for Question 5 was massive.

Question 5

5 *Land at Last.*

Use this as the title for a story.

In your writing you should:

- choose a clear viewpoint
- describe the setting
- explore your characters' thoughts and feelings.

[40]*

The vast majority of those who chose this prompt gave a literal rather than a non-literal interpretation. Despite the lack of first-hand experience (one assumes) there were terrifying accounts of being adrift (for a year in one case) without food or water and as often as not battered by enormous storms and tempests. Other popular options were catching all manner of intestinal diseases on cheap cruise ships, sea sickness and more straightforward difficulties in getting home when travel plans went awry.

Less successful (generally) were tales from the survivors of alleged transatlantic air crashes, months on uninhabited desert islands, mirages of all kinds but with eventual rescue and survival.

Even more exotic and usually less credible were stories of intergalactic space wars and recycling of events that start in somewhere called 'Camp Bastion' (sic).

Exemplar 10

5. Land at Last

Wetness seeped into my fatigued and overused muscles. Unknown fluids poured out of my battered and blistered hands. Towards the end of our journey I had become more and more conscious of the heavy weight tugging me towards the centre of the earth. But Alas, the mere inch of land in the horizon filled me up, from top to toe, with warmth and reassurance. The pain I was feeling was temporary and meaningless. It was

nothing compared to the delicate touch of my wife luscious lip upon my cheek or the surge of love and affection that rushes out of me the instant I hold my precious little boy's hand.

As I fantasize about the two lights in my life my whole body becomes numb. A good kind of numb, whereby nothing in this exact moment could deter me from thinking about my wife and child.

A large swoosh came apparent in my right ear followed by yet again a huge ~~break~~ wall of water. ^{I snapped} ~~ready~~ to out of my utopic dream and arrived back into my fairly average reality. That reality being ~~Kuxas~~ laying on the wooden deck nursing my recently bruised cheeked.

I stopped feeling sorry for myself and leaped up to rush back to whom as I knew the captain would not be pleased to see me 'slacking' as he refers to it. I strongly disagree and am convinced this beast of an ocean has something against some sort of vendetta as it attempts to almost kill me daily.

As the days went on that inch of land become more and more and eventually I felt as if I could simply reach out my hand and pull us closer to the mountainous scenery that stood before us.

There it was, the gorgeous, green and luscious long grass that I had been so eager to see. I had become used to the sparkling water that surrounded me. Initially, I became infatuated with the beauty of the sea. Later on

I soon realised the ocean was ^{a mischievous *} ~~misconceiving~~ ^{deceivingly}.
 It had a ^{stunning} and shimmering surface which
 is what ~~every~~ everyone seems to notice. Yet, if
 anyone had spent the length ^{of time} I had with the
 sea they would soon realise the darkness and
 pure evil that lay beneath it. The green grass
 was a refreshing sight and ^{surprisingly} enough
 so was the smell of the thick ^{healthy} ~~healthy~~ mud.

The mountain range above us caused shadows
 and areas of darkness yet the land ^{seemed} ~~seem~~ just
 as majestic as if the sun had its full beams
 shining on it.

* slave to mother nature.

I gradually and carefully lifted my foot
 to place it on the grass. I had been dreaming
 about this moment for three endless weeks.
 As I locked my foot in the squishy mud
 I misjudged the distance and clumsily rolled
 around in the mud. I paused for a second.
 Next I lost all ^{self-} control and my ^{emotional} laughter
 rolled out of my lungs. I was home. Finally
 home.

The central section of a response on the cusp of Level 4/5.

Question 6

6 Imagine **you** have visited somewhere for the first time and are now reporting back on **your** experience.

You should write about:

- the reasons for your visit
- what you learnt about the new place on your visit
- what you learnt about yourself on the visit.

[40]*

This generally produced the better work because it was more thoughtful, based on personal experience and therefore fresher and (much) less clichéd.

There was much on holiday destinations and visits to schools and hospitals.

Some of the best work involved visits which entailed a shock or challenge to the writers' sense of themselves, their identity and life- style. For example, there were several accounts of returning to visit relatives in the subcontinent and seeing the juxtaposition of great beauty and extreme poverty: for some a life changing experience described with great passion and humility.

Exemplar 12

There was Jonathan, he was my second mate. ~~He~~ Trusted with the beautiful St Mary when I wasn't able to. He was tall, slender and always looked immaculate. He was well spoken, not like the other crew members on board. It was a privilege to know him.

The other crew member you should know about is Robertson, short but superbly strong. An excellent leader whose job was ~~also~~ managing the other crew below deck. But on that sunny summer's morning something amazing happened.

'LAND!' said one of the crew working on deck, 'AT LAST!' much to my surprise, we saw a fabulous landscape on the horizon. India at last! Finally we could have compensation for the treacherous months carrying cargo of ~~precious~~ exotic minerals in exchange for precious gold and spice. The ~~sea~~ boat exploded with applause, ~~the~~ happiness and excitement. Land at last. Finally.

Closure of a typical Level 3 response

Exemplar 13

- 6) I boarded the Encourza at Naples, setting sail for my destination. The ship was gargantuan, ~~and~~ towering over every inch of the ocean. As we sailed through the ocean oscillations my sea anxiety was only ~~more~~ exacerbated. Sweat climbing down onto my eyelashes, ~~the~~ stomach rhythmically firming and my sandals repeatedly tapping the ground made me desperate for one thing and one thing only: To get off this boat!

I ~~had~~ had to take solace in the fact that what awaited me was truly worth it.

As the brass bell chimed, I lunged out of my seat racing to the luggage lunge, grabbed my ~~trustworthy~~ travel bag and set off to the exit. After what had seemed an eternity, we finally arrived, Capri.

Exacely I ~~breathed~~ ^{inhaled} as much of the unpolluted ocean air as my lungs could handle, letting it out in a big sigh of disbelief. ~~It was a breathless~~ ^{Breathless}. Taken aback by the ~~many~~ ^{many} people parked trees, ~~many~~ ^{many} blue ocean huts and the century-old clock tower, I savoured the ~~perfect~~ ^{perfect} ever-fleeting moment.

Why was this my first time here? How can I stay forever? These absorbing thoughts rushed through my mind like a high speed train as I attempted to comprehend the sheer elegance of the natural world. Sadly, I could not linger at the renaissance architecture or dip my toes in the turquoise dyed water repeatedly; weddings

do not wait for a year. I reluctantly went on knowing I could not stop to fully relish this opportunity.

After getting off the bus I was greeted by the warmth of one thousand smiles, offering fresh gelato and the native Limoncello. Capri's natives were in love with the art of agriculture. Passionately ensuring that all of their produce is home grown in their fields that stretch for miles across the land. Despite burning holes in all of my pockets, I was content in paying the extra price knowing that ~~what~~ the cool demerade was grown with love and the tomatoes on my ~~large~~ marghariter hand picked by skilled workers.

Leaving none about the culture and pride taken in the aesthetic ~~of~~ of the island I was filled with a warmth that is only reserved for home. Amidst the tiny pink-yellow beaches I ~~was~~ rejoiced as I pranced about my spiritual home. I had found an element of peace.

With my sea anxiety being banished
by the sun I knew this was
my new home.

A borderline Level 5/6 answer.

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