A-LEVEL
POLISH

Unit 1 Reading and Writing
Report on the Examination

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General comments

Entries for PLSH1 have fallen slightly, with 1327 students taking the exam this year. Students of all abilities were entered. This was especially evident in comprehension questions and essay writing. However, it was pleasing to see a good number of well-prepared students with excellent Polish, who knew what was expected of them and who produced good quality papers. In general, students did well in all three sections, with 78.6% of students achieving a grade A on the paper.

Section 1

This year students were required to read a text about the author Joseph Conrad. There were twelve comprehension questions based on the text, and five true or false statements. Answers were mostly correct, with a huge majority of students scoring 40 and above out of 45. A lack of exam practice, however, was sometimes in evidence in this section, as some students needlessly lost marks simply by not supplying as many pieces of information as indicated by the question. Students were also required to answer in full sentences and to be careful with their spelling so as not to lose marks for quality of language. A lot of mistakes that could have been easily avoided were made through careless reading and writing. Some students did not use capital letters for words like *Polska*, *Afryka*, *Ameryka Południowa*, *Marsylia* and the names of Conrad's parents, and others misspelled words lifted from the text. Comprehension requires careful reading, and answers must be based on what is stated in the text. Opinions should only be given when the question explicitly asks for them.

Question 1

Question 1(a)(i) was a simple question for 1 mark. The answer was in the first paragraph. In general it did not cause problems, but some students gave the answer *Anglia uczyniła go pisarzem*, presuming wrongly that, as Conrad started writing in England, this was the required answer, and failing to take note of the information in the text, that it was his travels that made him write.

Questions 1(a)(ii) and (iii) did not cause any problems, with most students offering the correct answers.

Most answers to 1(a)(iv) were correct, with only a few students failing to make use of the information in the text and writing *był dzieckiem urodzonym w kajdanach, zmarł mu ojciec i wuj jak był młody.*

The rest of the questions were mostly answered correctly, but for the last question, 1(a)(xii), *Jakie problemy porusza Conrad w swoich powieściach?* some wrongly answered, *depresja, smutek po stracie rodziców.*

Question 1(b) was well answered.

Section 2 Question 2

Section 2 required students to translate a passage about the European hotel that was opened in 1856 in Warsaw from Polish into English. In terms of exam technique, it is worth reminding students that it is a good idea to read the passage for translation through from beginning to end

before starting the translation. When translating, it is of paramount importance that students understand the sense and context of the whole text, as the overall meaning must be conveyed. This can sometimes be lost by students who translate word by word or a few words at a time. So, for example, in this passage set in the nineteenth century, the words gas lights and films stars were mistranslated as electricity and TV stars respectively. With a little bit of thought, students would have realised that these references would have been unlikely in the context of this passage.

This year's passage for translation into English contained some straightforward vocabulary as well as some more challenging items, but some students encountered numerous problems, mostly with spelling and conveying the overall sense of the text into good English. As well as reading the full text before starting their translation, students should be encouraged to read through their finished answer to make sure it makes sense in English.

There were some basic errors found in this year's translations. For example, *niewielu* was translated as 'one of many' or 'the only one'. *Plac* was rendered variously as terrace, court, avenue, ground, tower or palace. The required word, square, is a basic one which could be expected at GCSE. Examiners were also surprised that many students struggled with *intelektualiści*, *międzynarodowy* and *kuchni*, which was often translated as kitchen. It was perhaps less surprising that students found *gazowym oświetleniem i wodociągiem* challenging.

Having said this, the overall performance on this question was similar to that seen in recent years, with many students scoring 6, 7 or 8 of the 10 marks available.

Section 3 Question 3

This year the question for the essay was: *Jaką postać z życia społecznego, politycznego, kulturalnego uważasz za godną podziwu i naśladowania?* The results were mixed. Some essays were rather short, lacking any depth of thought or clear justification for the choice of person. The assessment criteria for Question 3 are clear as to what is required for an essay worthy of a mark in the top band:
- the answer focuses on the question;
- ideas are logically and clearly developed and organized;
- good personal reaction, usually justified.

These criteria were not always met. Some essays were not planned or logically developed, and students appeared to be writing whatever came to their minds, without any clear structure: there was often no introduction or conclusion, and there was little or no development of ideas. It is advisable to practise essay writing in class, making students aware of the necessity to structure their ideas clearly and in appropriate language.

The majority of students were able to choose a suitable role model. They were free to choose anyone who had made a mark in the world, from politicians and historical figures to modern celebrities, cultural icons and media personalities. The most popular choices were Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Malala, Barack Obama, Angelina Jolie, Pope John Paul II, Maria Skłodowska-Curie, Jurek Owsiak, Robert Lewandowski, and a range of rap or pop singers. Some of the subjects chosen were unexpected, for example, Salvador Dali or President Trump, but regardless of the person chosen students generally put forward cogent arguments to justify their choice. Nevertheless, some students had difficulty presenting someone worthy of admiration.

There were some essays where students clearly did not give any thought who to write about, with some stating that they did not admire anyone and that there is no need to do so. They want to be themselves, and to follow their own path, ideas and learn from their own mistakes. These responses were generally quite poor as they did not really address the question set. Other students were unable to name anyone famous and wrote instead about a relative of theirs, typically about their mother or grandmother. The quality of these essays was variable. Some were weak, but in other cases students made persuasive arguments borne of their personal knowledge of their subject. These responses were rewarded in accordance with the level descriptors in the mark scheme, although they often lacked focus on the question and were therefore unable to score above Level 3.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.
UMS conversion calculator