
A-LEVEL POLISH

Unit 2 Reading and Writing
Report on the Examination

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General comments

PLSH2 grade A* was set at 80 and grade A was set at 72. The total number of students was 1117.

As last year, the ability of the students was wide ranging. There were a number of well- prepared students with excellent Polish, who knew what was expected of them and who produced good quality papers. Most of them had attended Polish Saturday schools, or had had some form of tuition, or had studied the text thoroughly. Some of them had an excellent command of Polish and some did not, but both groups knew the requirements of the exam and were well prepared.

There were many students (more than last year) who arrived in England some years ago and missed part of their schooling in Poland. They have subsequently neglected their Polish since being in England. Some believed what knowledge they had brought with them would be sufficient to succeed in the exam. This was not so. Many of them did not study for the exam or even familiarise themselves with the specification. They produced very weak papers, especially in section 3 which requires to write two essays on literary or non- literary topics.

There were many untidy, badly written scripts which made scrutiny difficult. Some just did not attempt to answer section 3 (the essay section) and left blank pages. These students usually failed to achieve a pass grade, or achieved grade E.

It is of paramount importance that schools make sure that the students they have entered read the specification and know what the exam requirements are.

Section 1 – Comprehension

The PLSH2 comprehension questions were set to a text about the modern family. Most questions were answered correctly by the majority of the students. Generally, incorrect answers were few in number and there was no clear underlying trend to indicate a possible cause for mistakes which were mostly of a careless nature, mainly not supplying enough information.

There were no particular problems with any of the questions but some students in question **1(a) (ii) Co zmienia tradycyjne relacje rodzinne?** based their answer on their life experience and not on the text and suggested – *kobiety i mężczyźni prowadzą kariere zawodową*.

1(b) True or False

There were no problems with this section but some students for **1(b) (iv) W Polsce pod jednym dachem żyją często trzy lub cztery pokolenia** - gave their own answer and not one based on the text, and answered **P** instead of ?

Section 2

Translation

The passage for translation into Polish was *Collector's corner*. In general, students did very well and most students managed a high score. Where there were gaps in vocabulary, students often improvised. This is the right approach. Leaving a blank does not score any marks and by improvising or offering a cognate or synonym, there is always the chance of some success.

There were some words that caused challenges and one of them was 'stamps'. Another was 'coins', 'fine china', 'match boxes' and 'junk shops' none of which justified the challenge they presented.

Below are some examples of some students' translations

- 'Collector's corner' - *koncik kolekcjonera, zakątek kolekcjonera, kąt zbieracza, narożnik kolekcjonera, róg kolektora, kolekcjonarstwo.*
- 'Coins' – *pieniężki, drobne.*
- 'Match boxes' – *meczów bokserskich, meczowe pudelka, pudełka od podpałków.*
- 'Stamps' – *pieczętki, naklejki, koperty, kolorowe naklejki.*
- 'Beer bottles' - *alkoholiczne butelki.*
- 'Paintings' – *namalowane obrazy, obrazów farbowanych.*
- 'Junk shops' – *ciucholandy, sklepy ze śmieciami, ze złomem, z rupieciami, z gratami, z pierdołami.*
- 'Car boot sales' – *aukcjach samochodowych wyprzedażach samochodowych*
- 'Bus tickets' – *paragony za transport publiczny!*
- 'Fine china' - *zestawów chińskich, talerzy, rzeczy chińskich, chińszczyzny.*

There were many mistakes regarding the use of tenses. Students did not read their translations to check whether the text they translated had any logical meaning. By doing this they might have been able to correct some of the mistakes.

Section 3

Students are required to write two essays of at least 200 words. There is no word limit as some thought. 200 is a required minimum but this rarely produces a top mark. No two questions from the same topic should be attempted.

This year the performance in the essays was of rather poor quality and in some instances very poor. Many students, and more than last year, took the exam without any preparation at all. In addition, students used language which was completely inappropriate for a literary essay.

To illustrate this point – *Niestety nie będę pisać o Polskiej książce ponieważ nie zostałam poinformowana, że do odpowiedzi niektórych pytań będzie potrzebna wiedza o książce napisanej przez polskiego autora więc napiszę o książce, którą niedawno przeczytałam Pipi Langstrum.* Hamlet was used as a point of reference in the drama section and also Romeo and Juliet.

Some students chose the wrong question for the wrong topic. Questions on drama apply only to Polish drama as questions about films must be answered in relation to to Wajda's films ie Questions 6(a) and 6 (b). Some students wanted to cover Wajda's films in their answers to questions 3a and 6a.

The fight for independence as a theme in Polish literature.

Kamienie na szaniec was the most popular choice but there were some essays on *Wierna rzeka* and poems. It is usual for good essays to be written on *Kamienie na szaniec*, sometimes even very good ones. Unfortunately that was not the case this year. There was a great deal of verbosity, generalisation and insufficient reference to the text was 'the norm'. It appeared sometimes that the

student had not read the book but just relied on a synopsis from the cover. This is regrettable as the book is usually enjoyed by the students who have read it. The book is short and easy to read, describing the fate of boys who have just finished their schooling and living through World War II. There were many essays based on the film and students made reference to characters who are not in the book. If a criticism can be made of those who attempted *Wierna rzeka*, it is that these essays focused mainly on the human drama rather than being centered on the topic. Students mostly wrote about the doomed relationship between Salomea Brynicka and Józef Odrowąż. Hubert Olbromski, Salomea's father was rarely mentioned. It is the sacrifice and heroism of all these people which Żeromski presented in his novel as an example of patriotism and heroism in the fight for the independence of Poland.

Moral issues as presented in Polish drama

With reference to *Moralność Pani Dulskiej*, many students thought it was sufficient to write that Dulaska was mean and Zbyszko a spendthrift. Beyond that observation, there was little further analysis and little indication that students had engaged with the text and understood the author's message. Rather than find fault with Dulaska, some defended her, portraying her as a caring mother who wanted to protect her children, completely missing the author's message.

Students do not seem to understand the words they are using, for example *dulszczyzna*, *kołtun*, *fillister*. It is recommended that they read the play in class and discuss the issues in depth. It might be helpful to explain to students what morals are, to facilitate their understanding of the play. Zapolska's life is also a good example of a woman suffering prejudice from people like Dulaska.

Below are some good and poor examples of students' treatment of the texts:

Dulaska często poniżała sprzątaczkę, to właśnie ją uważała Dulaska za filistra sztuka jest napisana w stylu tragifarsy kołtuńskiej.

Poprzez głupotę i upartą naturę Zbyszka, jego przekorność nie tylko kosztowało Hankę wielkie cierpienie, ale również kosztowało rodzinę w pogarszającej w pogarszającej się sytuacji finansowej, ogromną sumę pieniędzy oznacza, że to właśnie Zbyszek wywarł na rodzinę i otoczenie najbardziej destruktywny wpływ.

Dulaska zgadza się dać Hance tysiąc koron bo jej bardzo zależy na tym, żeby siedziała cicho. Widać tutaj jaka Dulaska jest destrukcyjna ponieważ to był jej pomysł, żeby Zbyszko i Hanka się do siebie zbliżyli, mogła w sumie taką sytuację przewidzieć.

Poland and the Poles during World War II

Essays written in response to Questions 5(a) or 5(b) have never been outstanding. There were some good essays and one or two excellent ones. Only a handful of students writing on the history topic, however, appeared to have studied Polish history. The rest relied heavily on narrative, and general knowledge that is known to everybody. This was especially evident in **Question 5(a).**

Opisz przebieg kampani wrześniowej. There were no dates, facts or names mentioned. After giving the date of 1 September, some students went on to describe the Warsaw uprising and the difficulties of life under occupation.

Question 5(b): Students were asked to write about the consequences of the Teheran and Jałta agreement. Most of them failed to discuss the change in Polish borders and what effect this had on the lives of thousands of Poles living in these areas. The marks were very low which is regrettable

because students can find information on this subject in many Polish and English reference books, and on the Internet.

The films of Andrzej Wajda – “Ashes of Diamonds” and “Man of Marble”

This section was the most popular with students but unfortunately good essays were few and far between. The results were very disappointing. Students either did not watch the films and seemed to be making up their answer or had watched it once and had forgotten it. They mixed up the facts, names and events. Most importantly they did not understand the problems raised in both films and nor did they understand and know the historical and political background.

Questions on films should not be seen as an easy option. ‘Man of Marble’ in particular is a very dense, and in some ways, subtle film. It is easy to miss the detail. These films should be watched in class over a number of sessions and the history of post war Poland should be explained. Without a thorough knowledge of the historical background it is impossible to understand these films. Students described Maciek as a murderer, a terrorist or a bandit, indicating their misconceptions about him.

6(a) Wybierz i omów postawy bohaterów filmów A.Wajdy „Popiół i diament” i „Człowiek z marmuru”. Co Twoim zdaniem, ich dzieli a co łączy? Omów, podając liczne przykłady z filmów.

There were some very weak responses to this question, mostly summaries of the plot, culminating in wrong conclusions eg.

Cechy, które ich dzielą, że mają inne podejście do sytuacji Maciek jest mniej nerwowy.

Maciek należy do pokolenia Kolumbów od samego urodzenia był skazany na walę w młodym wieku.

Maciek był postacią naiwną Birkut był wychowany po wojnie gdzie była nadzieja na lepszą przyszłość.

Dlatego, że byli mężczyznami oznacza, że oni muszą być ważni dla filmu ponieważ oni pokazują jaką siłę mężczyźni mieli.

Maciek jest pokazany jako morderca pracujący dla kraju, a Mateusz jest pokazany jako pomocnik kraju którym wszyscy chcą być.

Maciek był bandytą podziemia.

6(b) Na czym polegał tragizm losów bohaterów filmów Wajdy „Popiół i diament i „Człowiek z marmuru”?

To produce a good essay on this topic, students must understand the historical and political background to these films and the lack of this knowledge was the main reason for some weak essays. The two characters of Maciek and Mateusz were completely misinterpreted by the majority of students who mainly narrated the plot and did not understand the tragic situation of all the main characters of Wajda’s films.

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](#)