

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

J351

For first teaching in 2015

J351/01 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

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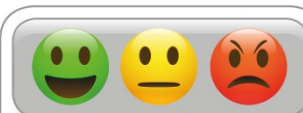
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Introduction

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 1 Series Overview

J351/01 – Communicating Information and Ideas is one of two examined components for the new GCSE (9-1) English Language examination which was first examined in 2017. The other component is J351/02 - Exploring Effects and Impact.

The main difference between the two components is that J351/01 bases its questions on non-fiction texts whereas J351/02 uses literary texts. Both components follow a similar structure and, with one exception, test the same assessment objectives.

The only exception is that in Question 2 of J351/01 candidates must synthesise information from two texts. Candidates often forget this and treat Question 2 as a language analysis question. The skill of synthesis is part of AO1 and is not tested in J351/02.

To do well in this component candidates must be able to read unseen texts with confidence and understanding, selecting relevant details from the text and explaining features of language and structure. They must also be able to compare and contrast texts and evaluate their impact on the reader.

This is the third year in which this component has been examined. As this component is examined in both June and November each year, it is also the fifth time that candidates have taken an examination which follows this format.

Candidates and centres have clearly learned from their experience of previous sessions and from previous examiners' reports. Responses to the questions in this session show that the requirements of each question are understood by most candidates.

Candidates are also making much better use of the time and space allotted for each task. Very few candidates write excessively long responses because they recognise that it is more likely to lower their mark than increase it.

There is still some concern, however, that too many candidates do not leave themselves enough time to respond adequately to Question 4. Candidates should leave themselves at least 25 minutes to plan and write a response to this question. Less able candidates who use this approach can do well.

Many examiners expressed concern about the quality of many candidates' handwriting. It was sometimes impossible to read what a candidate had written and, therefore, impossible to award the marks the candidate may have deserved.

Centres must make sure that candidates with poor handwriting can use a scribe to record their work or type their work out themselves. In such cases, to avoid allegations of malpractice, it is essential that centres follow the JCQ guidelines for typed work and complete the correct record sheet.

<i>More successful candidates:</i>	<i>Less successful candidates:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> used their time well wrote legibly identified key words in quotations planned their response to Question 4 planned their response to the writing task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wrote illegibly spent too long on questions with few marks missed out some questions completely wrote too little or too much spent no time planning longer responses

Section A Overview

The reading section contains two unseen texts which have a thematic link. The first text will always be from the 19th century and the second from either the 20th or 21st century. As this is an untiered qualification, the texts may be slightly edited to make sure accessibility for candidates as well as challenge.

Candidates responded well to the unseen texts chosen for this session. All candidates were able to engage with straightforward ideas in each text and higher ability candidates were challenged by the more complex ideas in each text.

The first text was from a contemporaneous eyewitness report of a famous battle from the Crimean War written by William Howard Russell in 1854. All candidates appreciated Russell's description of the soldiers' bravery but many also understood Russell's reservations about the wisdom of their attack.

The second text was from a speech given by the American president Ronald Reagan on the fortieth anniversary of D-Day. All candidates understood Reagan's admiration for the soldiers who carried out the attack and some understood how the passing of time influenced Reagan's view of events.

Candidates who understood that the texts raised several key issues usually performed well. There was, of course, the issue of whether we could admire equally both groups of soldiers, the issue of whether the attacks were worthwhile and the differing perspectives of each text.

Most candidates were able to find similarities and differences between these descriptions of soldiers in battle and many could identify some differences. Candidates understood that Reagan, with the benefit of hindsight, could see more clearly than Russell whether the attack he described was worthwhile.

A small number of candidates made comments that showed prior knowledge of the historical events described in the texts. There is no evidence, however, that this gave them any advantage as the questions were about how these particular texts presented those events.

Question 1 (a)

Question 1 is about **Text 1**, *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by William Howard Russell.

1 Look again at lines 1–6.

(a) Identify **two** phrases from these lines which show what time of day it was.

.....
 [2]

Question 1 (b)

(b) Give **one** reason why the writer is surprised that these soldiers have been sent to attack the enemy.

.....
 [1]

Question 1 (c)

(c) The writer calls the soldiers' bravery 'desperate valour'. Explain why he chooses the word 'desperate' to describe their behaviour.

.....
 [1]

Question 1 is designed to be an accessible start to the examination. It should help all candidates, including the less able, to achieve some marks at the start of the examination. The question tests candidates' ability to select and interpret information. In this session both marks for 1a could be gained simply by copying out relevant quotations from the text. The only candidates who did not achieve two marks for 1a were candidates who did not offer a response to the question. A small number quoted 'twenty-five to twelve' which came from outside the specified lines at the end of the text and was not accepted. Question 1b and 1c are designed to be slightly more challenging because they focus on the second skill in AO1 which is the interpretation of information from the text. The command word 'explain' asks candidates to give the answer in their own words or use an embedded quotation to show understanding. Many candidates were able to respond to 1b correctly but only the most able explained correctly that the word 'desperate' suggested that the soldiers' valour was hopeless because they would inevitably be defeated. Too many candidates assumed that it meant eagerly desiring something because they did not interpret the word in the context of the text. Candidates would be well-advised to read the whole of Text 1 before attempting Question 1 even though the question only focuses on a small section of the text.

Exemplar 1

- (a) Identify **two** phrases from these lines which show what time of day it was.

'At ten past eleven'

'Glittering in the morning sun' [2]

- (b) Give **one** reason why the writer is surprised that these soldiers have been sent to attack the enemy.

Because they were greatly outnumbered [1]

- (c) The writer calls the soldiers' bravery 'desperate valour'. Explain why he chooses the word 'desperate' to describe their behaviour.

Because they had a very small chance of survival but marched on proudly anyway. [1]

1a. The candidate has correctly identified phrases which contain the relevant information. Examiners were instructed to accept the whole phrase even though the key word in the second example is 'morning'. Candidates should be advised, however, to be as selective and precise as possible.

1b. The candidate answers in their own words and sums up precisely what made the writer so surprised. The response is economical, saying only what needs to be said. A quotation would add nothing to the answer.

1c. The candidate sums this up clearly and accurately in their own words – 'they had a very small chance of survival' – perhaps informed by reading the whole text which describes only a 'miserable remnant' returning from the charge.

Exemplar 2

- (a) Identify two phrases from these lines which show what time of day it was.

"At ten Past eleven"

"glittering in the morning Sun"

[2]

- (b) Give one reason why the writer is surprised that these soldiers have been sent to attack the enemy.

because the Army they was attacking had ~~was~~ fortified their position.

[1]

- (c) The writer calls the soldiers' bravery 'desperate valour'. Explain why he chooses the word 'desperate' to describe their behaviour.

because they know this attack will fail but they go anyways ~~that~~ ~~which~~ which shows desperation

[1]

1a. The candidate has again correctly identified phrases which contain the relevant information. Examiners were instructed to accept the whole phrase even though the key word in the second example is 'morning'. Candidates should be advised, however, to be as selective and precise as possible.

1b. The candidate chose a popular alternative to the correct response. It seems plausible but the key point is that an attack on 'an army in position' could succeed with adequate numbers but Russell's surprise is because there are so few attacking an enemy in position.

1c. The candidate sums this up clearly and accurately in their own words – 'they knew this attack will fail' – and adds a comment about how they go anyway which shows more understanding of the text than is required to get the mark.

Question 2

Question 2 is about **Text 1**, *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by William Howard Russell and **Text 2**, *Let Us Make a Vow to the Dead* by Ronald Reagan.

- 2 Both texts describe soldiers attacking enemy guns.

What are the **similarities** between the two attacks?

Draw on evidence from **both** texts to support your answer.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [6]

Question 2 is more challenging than Question 1 but should be approached in a straightforward way. It is designed to help candidates see the connections between what the texts are describing. It also sets the scene for Question 4 which is designed to help then explore the differences between the two texts. Candidates do not have to analyse how ideas are presented but too many still end up identifying features of language and structure. Examiners do not penalise candidates for such comments but cannot reward them, so candidates are wasting valuable time.

Both texts should be read carefully and thoroughly before candidates attempt this question. The question asks candidates to identify similarities between the texts and give evidence for the similarities by referring in detail to each text. The similarities, however, must be relevant to the question so the similarities described must be to do with the attacks. Candidates must be careful not to make the point that in both texts soldiers are attacking enemy guns because they have already been told that by the question.

The best candidates explained three similarities between the texts. They gave evidence from each text to support each similarity. The best evidence was usually a short, relevant quotation but detailed references were accepted. The most popular similarities were about the conditions in which the attack took place – in the morning, in a smoky atmosphere, under fire from enemy guns – and about the personal qualities of the soldiers – their bravery and their determination.

Less successful candidates varied between two extremes. Some identified just one good similarity and gave relevant evidence but did not try to identify any further similarities. Other candidates listed more than three similarities but did not give enough evidence to support the similarities. Yet others quoted evidence which clearly could be linked but did not explain clearly what the link was. Too many identified a relevant similarity but produced no relevant evidence to support their point. They either gave no evidence at all or provided evidence that did not support the similarity they had described.

The expected similarities are listed in the mark scheme, but the list is not exhaustive. Examiners were instructed to be open-minded and many other valid similarities were identified by candidates – and rewarded by examiners – during the marking of this question.

Exemplar 3

Both attacks are described as heroic by each author. In Text 1, the manner in which the brigade 'never halted or slacked its speed' shows the bravery of the soldiers to continue forwards. In Text 2, the veterans are described as 'champions' and 'heroes who helped end a war' showing they were revered as heroic.

Both attacks are described as difficult and being ~~out~~ ~~over~~ against the odds. In Text 1, the author is surprised that a 'handful of men' charge on 'an army' showing the attack is unlikely to succeed. In Text 2, Reagan describes 'two hundred and twenty five' men partaking in 'one of the most difficult missions' showing how the battle would be difficult to win.

Both attacks take place in the morning. Russell describes the scene as 'glittering in the morning sun' and Reagan describes the attack as taking place ~~at~~ 'At dawn, on the morning of 6th June'.

Both attacks resulted in huge losses for the attacking side. In Text 1, 'not a British soldier was left in front of those bloody guns' showing all were mown down by the ~~a~~ Russian artillery. In Text 2, 'only ninety could still bear arms' from the 'two hundred and twenty five' at the start, showing huge loss. [6]

Turn over —

The candidate identifies four possible connections but the first one is not clearly made; is the candidate saying they are brave or heroic? The quotations used as evidence do not clearly connect and so no marks can be given for this first point. Fortunately, the candidate makes three more points, each of which is valid and each of which is supported by relevant evidence. The points made are straightforward, but the candidate's skill is demonstrated by the range of examples given and by the ability to explain the connections precisely and clearly. The examiner does not penalise the candidate for making a false start but making a fourth point would usually be unnecessary unless the candidate is unsure about one of their ideas.

Exemplar 4

In text 1 it mentions soldiers being attacked by guns when it says, 'the enemy gun batteries belched forth, from thirty iron mouths, a flood of smoke and flame, through which hissed the deadly cannon balls.' Also in text 1 it says, 'with its diminished ranks thinned by those thirty guns, which the Russians had laid with most deadly accuracy.' However in text 2 it says, 'and saw the enemy soldiers, in position at the edge of the cliffs, shooting down at them with machine guns and throwing grenades.' It also says, 'they climbed, shot back, and held their footing.'

The similarities between the two attacks are that they both are in serious deadly danger that they have to shoot their way to survive.

The candidate correctly identifies the fact that in both texts the soldiers are being shot at by the enemy. However, the candidate includes several lengthy quotations from each text to support the point and leaves no time to move on to a second or third point. The candidate needs to express their ideas more concisely and use their own words or embedded quotations as evidence to support the connection.

Question 3

Question 3 is about **Text 2**, *Let Us Make a Vow to the Dead* by Ronald Reagan.

3 Look again at lines 17–29.

Explore how Ronald Reagan uses language and structure to persuade his audience that the soldiers' bravery was worthwhile.

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

[12]

The first part of this question asks candidates to look at a specified number of lines. This is designed to help candidates by giving them a smaller amount of material to focus on so that they can write a reasonable response within the time constraints of the examination. Although the majority of candidates worked within these lines, there were still a significant minority drawing on material from elsewhere.

The question asks candidates to explore the use of language and structure. The analysis of language is familiar territory for most centres, but candidates are expected to send an equal amount of their response analysing structure. For this qualification structure includes any feature of a text beyond word level, e.g. alliteration, repetition and listing at sentence level and contrast and build-up at text level. Candidates continue to struggle to write sensibly and meaningfully about sentence length.

The key to this question was understanding how Reagan developed his argument. In the first part of his speech he had already described the challenges the soldiers faced and how they overcame them and now he turns to consider their motivations for making such a heroic sacrifice. The better candidates showed an overall understanding of what Reagan was trying to do and summed this up effectively in an opening paragraph.

The better candidates understood how Reagan used structural features such as listing and repetition to emphasise key words. For example, the rising tricolon which built up from 'men' to 'champions' to 'heroes' and, more significantly, from taking the cliffs to freeing a continent to ending a war. In a similar way, more successful candidates pointed out how Reagan uses contrast between the abstract nouns 'liberty' and 'tyranny'.

Some more able candidates used obscure and arcane subject terminology which rarely enhanced their response. Examiners were more excited by rare sightings of a correctly identified verb or adjective than references to parataxis and hypophora. Subject terminology is useful in helping candidates understand how texts work but can sometimes leave them feeling that they have done enough when they have identified a feature rather than using such identification as a springboard for explaining the impact.

Less successful candidates often quoted examples of linguistic and structural features but did not use subject terminology to identify those features. These candidates also tended to explain what the quotation meant rather than commenting on its relevance to the question or the effect on the reader. Some might label the quotations correctly but make general comments about how it shows the soldiers' bravery. Discussion of whether that bravery was worthwhile was often a mark of better responses.

Exemplar 5

Reagan begins this part of his speech, his eulogy to these men before him and ~~his~~ ^{their} dead comrades, by referring to the 'Memorial' behind him, emphasising its symbolism of 'Ranger daggers' that were 'thrust' - a verb that here emphasises the glory of the violent movement in the context of bravery in war - into 'these cliffs'. By pointing ~~and~~ to a physical ~~&~~ monument, he is able to ~~use language~~ structure his allusion to the invasion of Normandy, as he then leads onto the 'men who put them [the daggers] there', describing them as being physically 'before me', directly paralleling the sentence before (syntactic parallelism) to ~~and~~ connect the two. Equally, Reagan ~~as~~ repeats his usage of syntactic parallelism in the penultimate and final sentences of the paragraph as he calls the men 'champions who helped free a continent' and 'heroes who helped end a war', the ~~past participle~~ simple past present verb being repeated to ~~&~~ make the point to the audience that the soldiers' bravery was a help to an entire mass of land and its people and help to alleviate the suffering of war; thus, he persuades ~~them~~ those listening that it was worthwhile.

The candidate traces the development of the extract indicating how Reagan moves from one section to the next. Key linguistic and structural features are identified, and precise quotations are selected. There is some focus on the question about whether the soldier's bravery was worthwhile and a clear sense that Reagan is presenting events from a specific point of view. The effect of the devices that the candidate refers to, however, should sometimes be explained more clearly.

Exemplar 6

In the text, there is a repetition of, "There's are the men". So this has the effect that gains the readers interest to show how the Soldiers' bravery was worth while. Also there is a repetition of "You". So this implies that you were where there, in there boots, helping to fight, and showing you how the bravery of the Soldiers was worth while.

There is a use of question marks in the text, "why did you do it?" So this makes you think about what why they went to war, and it also makes you read on to find the answer further in the text.

The use of long sentences in the text, "All of you were behind you." this is giving us layers of extra information about the text, and has the effect of holding the readers attention with the layers of description.

The language used to describe the Soldiers that fought for us, "Champions who helped free a continent.", the adjective 'Champions' have the effect of amplifying exaggerating the topic = bravery from the Soldiers.

The candidate uses a clear structure to organise this response. Each paragraph identifies a feature of language and structure and sometimes labels it accurately. The comments, however, tend to be quite empty such as 'gains the reader's interest' and 'makes you read on'. The candidate needs to explain more clearly how the quotations relate to the question.

Question 4

Question 4 is about **Text 1**, *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by William Howard Russell and **Text 2**, *Let Us Make a Vow to the Dead* by Ronald Reagan.

4 'Both texts powerfully persuade you to admire the bravery of the soldiers.'

How far do you agree with this statement?

In your answer you should:

- discuss what each text says we should admire about the soldiers
- explain how far the texts do present the soldiers as admirable
- compare the ways the texts present their ideas about the soldiers.

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

[18]

All the questions candidates have responded to so far lead up to this question. This question requires candidates to make independent judgements about the two unseen texts. This question builds on the similarities candidates have already identified for Question 2. In this question, however, the candidates begin to explore the differences between the texts. The key issue in this question is whether both texts intend to persuade us to admire the bravery of the soldiers. The best approach was to make a sustained comparison of the degree to which each text presents the soldiers as admirable.

Although most agreed that Reagan was clearly trying to persuade his audience to admire the soldiers, many felt that Russell had mixed feelings about the soldiers' attack on the Russian army. Candidates referred to details which showed him admiring the soldiers but contrasted them with other details which suggested he felt the attack was futile.

More successful candidates discussed the contexts in which each text was produced. Russell's was an eyewitness account written at the time without any sense of the bigger context of the battle or the long-term impact it may or may not have had. There was much more detail in Russell's account about the horror of the attack whereas Reagan, it was felt, tended to focus more on the effect the soldiers' attack had on the war effort as a whole.

Less successful candidates tended to discuss each text separately and make no explicit links between them. Others began to make apparent links by using a phrase that indicated a general connection between the two. The most successful, however, made detailed connections between the two texts, placing quotations from each text side by side to show the differences between them. They alternated between the two texts. They wrote one paragraph about the first text and then used a linking sentence to move to a paragraph explaining a comparison or contrast with the other text. They were rewarded for clear comparison but not for developed comparison.

When evaluating the texts, the more successful candidates found it useful to make statements using 'more' or 'less', e.g. one text persuaded more powerfully than the other. Other evaluative phrases included adjectives or abstract nouns or 'not' statements, e.g. Text 1 does 'not' persuade you to admire the soldiers' bravery.

Candidates who planned their response carefully often started by identifying which text agrees more fully with the statement than the other and ended by repeating the same point. In their introduction these candidates identified specific reasons why they believed one text agreed with the statement more fully. They used the rest of their response to explain the specific reasons in more detail.

Exemplar 7

I agree. Both texts are very euphoric pieces designed to motivate a sense of pride and honour in the actions of these men. They do this very effectively in many ways, but the clear bias and an underlying naivety to the truth of the situation detracts from the glory of the moment to some extent.

Both texts recount the dangers of their adversaries and then the strength and courage of the allies. Text 1 tells us that the Light Brigade is "rushing into the arms of death"; and describes "the line of enemy guns which belched forth from thirty iron mountains a flood of smoke and flame through which passed the deadly cannon balls". The fearlessness of the soldiers in the face of such total destruction is glorified, and their courage in this situation is unquestionable. Russell manages to drive this home with the use of personification in the enemies' guns which "belched", the list of and long sentence in his description of them, and the flaming and inherently dangerous language of "a flood of smoke and flame", a sentence which also has underlying juxtaposition of fire and water. Reagan works to achieve the same effect in his description of the American offensive. "These sheer and desolate cliffs" seems to foreshadow the difficulty of the task ahead with the looming description of the very landscape they are approaching, as well as the picture of the ^{enemies} "soldiers" shooting down at them with machine guns and throwing grenades. A stark description of the weapons and a vivid picture of the height advantage suggests the improbability of American success, which will then glorify

the achievement in the face of such difficulty. ~~Then~~ In this way both texts convincingly persuade the reader of the bravery of the soldiers.

This candidate has planned and organised the response very clearly. Following a clear overview which sums up the argument, the candidate first considers the evidence in support of the statement. Two aspects of the soldiers worthy of admiration are identified; their bravery and the extent of the challenge they faced, and then the loss of life is used to undermine the arguments made by each text. Throughout the response the candidate moves back and forth between the texts, exploring significant details. There is constant reference to the features of language and structure used in each text to persuade the reader to admire the soldiers.

Exemplar 8

Agree	Disagree
① "These are heroes who helped end a war"	④ "Why did you do [it]?"
② "Demigods could not have done what they had failed to do"	
③ "Was left in front of those bloody Russian guns"	

Both texts powerfully persuade you to admire the bravery of the soldiers. In text 2 the speech states that "these are the heroes who helped end a war." which suggests that without the bravery of the soldiers, the war would not have been ended. The word 'heroes' makes you feel strongly about the bravery the soldiers had, showing them as the 'best'.

Furthermore, in Text 1 the quote "~~was left in front of those bloody~~ "not a British soldier, except the dead and dying, was left in front of those bloody Russian Guns" suggests that the soldiers bravery payed off and that they were successful. The term 'bloody Russian Guns' suggests that although the enemy guns had become bloody from the deaths of many soldiers, the soldiers were brave and continued and were able to get away.

on the other hand, text 1 suggests that the soldiers had not been successful and that they had failed their mission. The quote "demigods could not have done what they had failed to do" infer that the soldiers were weak and unable to complete their tasks.

This response illustrates a less successful approach which is not well-planned enough. The candidate first considers a quotation from Text 2, then two quotations from Text 1 and then goes back to Text 2. There is reference to both texts, but no explicit connections are made. The candidate shows some insight into the texts in the statements about the word 'heroes' suggesting bravery and the reference to 'demi-gods' emphasising their failure but there are several significant misunderstandings. Although there is an introduction and a conclusion, neither make any substantial contribution to the discussion of the statement.

Section B overview

In this component there is a choice of writing tasks which can both broadly be described as non-fiction. Each task specifies a clear context for the writing and candidates are expected to adapt their style of writing to suit the form, audience and purpose of their chosen task.

The writing tasks are designed to build on what candidates have read in Section A of the examination. It is unwise to advise candidates to do the writing task first because candidates may be able to use what they have read to inspire the content and style of their writing.

In this year's examination the first task drew on the question of whether the difficult attacks described in the texts were worthwhile. The second task drew on the form and purpose of the second text by asking candidates to write a persuasive speech.

Both tasks were popular and both tasks were undertaken by candidates across the range of ability. There was a tendency, however, to favour the second task, the speech to students, rather than the magazine article about whether a difficult challenge had been worthwhile.

There are still too many candidates writing excessively long responses to the writing task. Three pages is enough for candidates to demonstrate their skills. A shorter piece of writing also allows candidates to spend more time planning and crafting the quality of their writing.

Examiners were pleased to see that most candidates spell most words correctly and can write coherent complex sentences. Centres should, however, teach candidates how to use accurate punctuation between and within sentences and how to use paragraphs to organise their ideas.

There were some problems with type-written scripts this year. Centres must use the JCQ sheet to indicate clearly what support candidates have had in the production of their response as marks can only be given for what candidates have produced independently.

If work has been type-written, candidates should double-space the work for clarity and the front sheet must confirm that spelling and grammar checks were disabled. If work has been scribed, the front sheet should specify whether punctuation has been dictated.

<i>More successful candidates:</i>	<i>Less successful candidates:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned their response Had an effective opening and conclusion Used connectives between paragraphs Wrote coherent and effective sentences Used extended metaphors Punctuated for clarity and effect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wrote very short or very long responses Had no clear sense of direction Repeated themselves Made no use of paragraphs Used inconsistent tenses mixing past and present Used comma splices rather than full stops

Question 5

5 "Was it worth it?"

Write an article for a magazine to describe a time when you had to do something difficult.

In your article you should:

- explain why you had to do it
- describe the difficulties you had to face
- explain whether you thought it was worthwhile.

[40]*

Although the task asked candidates to write a magazine article, examiners were open-minded about how candidates interpreted this. Most used it to write a personal account of a difficult task they had undertaken – in some cases clearly fictional – and whether it had been worth doing.

Where candidates attempted to write in a magazine form, they were rewarded. Very few candidates laid their response out in columns and, instead, indicated the magazine format simply by incorporating headings and sub-headings.

Too many candidates focused on the writing about a difficult task and lost sight of the need to consider whether it had been worthwhile. As this was essentially the purpose of the task, they had to be given a lower mark.

There were a range of topics but, as expected, many focused on the efforts required to prepare for their GCSE examinations. Other popular topics included Duke of Edinburgh expeditions, sporting events and projects designed to raise money for charity.

More successful responses made effective use of the bullet points to guide their writing. They included clear explanations of why they had to (or chose to) undertake this difficult task and detailed descriptions of what the task involved, interweaving comments about whether it was worthwhile.

Less successful responses simply gave a chronological account of what happened. There was too little exploration of their thoughts and feelings about the task and the description of the task itself lacked the vivid detail that would convey its difficulty.

Exemplar 9

Suddenly, I realised ~~th~~ that in all these years, I had never visited my mother's grave, as I was too afraid to confront my grief and sadness. ~~Although~~ Although I knew the great pain that it would bring, I silently resolved on that day, with tears streaming down my face, to visit my mother's grave every day from then on.

It was, without a doubt, the most difficult thing I'd ever done. However, it was absolutely necessary. Too often, we compartmentalise and lock away our feelings to ~~de~~ prevent us having to deal with the strength and depth of our emotions. This is because it changes us, and being human, we naturally fear change. Visiting my mother's grave every day unlocked those emotions. The ~~very~~ very first time that I visited my mother's grave, my grief^{and pain} was so raw ~~as~~ that it felt as if my mother had died all over again. ^{Each time} ~~Every day~~ was agony to see my mother's grave. Slowly, however, as ~~months~~ days, weeks and then months passed, I began to heal. The chasm in my heart began to close. The world around me started to regain its colour and vibrancy, and I was surprised

to find myself laughing along with ~~for~~ friends during school. By confronting my grief head-on, painful as it was, it allowed me to ~~to~~ move on ~~on~~, to mature and heal. ~~As~~ One thing we must all avoid is avoiding confronting our problems. The result of that is becoming unfeeling, cold and no better than dead.

Was confronting my emotions and grief painful? It was agony. Did I change? Yes ~~to~~, but for the better. Was it worth it? Absolutely.

This is a powerful response to the task. There is some sense of the magazine format in the comments towards the end which are addressed to an audience in a way that would not work in a simple narrative. The style and structure at sentence level are controlled and effective with sophisticated thoughts and feelings conveyed clearly. The candidate could, however, make more effective use of paragraphs.

Exemplar 10

The ~~Proff~~ Problem With this activity was the tower was so tall it was like there was no end. The rest of group took their turn and around 10 minutes later it was my turn I was so frightened that I completely froze on the spot. One difficulty that I had to face was that it was so high I ~~and~~ was afraid of heights so I didn't know to do. I was so frightened the body that goose bumps started appearing also I was so scared my body started shaking all over. Eventually with motivation from my friends I entered the tower looked up and all I could see was stars no exit. I couldn't turn back ^{because} ~~as~~ my teacher blocked the exit the only way was up.

After what I thought was a year I could see lights. My mouth was so so it dry it was like the Sahara ~~desert~~ desert. Eventually I made it I look down worst mistake I think I ever made. But after a few ^{deep} breaths I started to back sail down, all I thought about was not falling which helped a lot. As soon as my feet hit the ground I was ~~happy~~ ^{started} that I completed every and not failed. In the end I passed which was great.

The merits of this response are obscured by the high level of error. There is a clear sense of direction and a clear focus on the difficulty of the task but no comment on whether it was worth undertaking. There is some vivid description of the task itself and some reflection at the end but only limited evidence of paragraphing. Spelling is mainly correct, but the candidate needs to work on using more accurate punctuation between sentences.

Question 6

- 6 Write a speech for an event to congratulate young people who have achieved something remarkable.

In your speech you should:

- describe what the young people achieved
- explain why the young people should be congratulated
- explain what is so remarkable about their achievement.

[40]*

This task was clearly inspired by the speech that Reagan gave to congratulate the soldiers who took part in the attack described in Text 2. Candidates of all abilities usually respond well to opportunities to write a speech because there is a clear form, audience and purpose.

As might be expected, many candidates wrote speeches to congratulate young people on their success in preparing for and passing their GCSEs. Other speeches offered congratulations for raising large amounts of money for charity or finding solutions to life-threatening illnesses or climate change.

Most candidates were able to adopt a suitable style, but many made too much use of empty adjectives which repeated their admiration for the young people without describing in enough detail what they had actually achieved. Following the bullet points more closely would help candidates to do this.

The main challenge that candidates faced was the structure of their speech. Once they had identified the young people's achievement and congratulated them for it, too many candidates simply repeated their admiration in increasingly fulsome terms without going into any detail.

Many candidates used a good range of rhetorical devices and, drawing on Reagan's speech, there was much use – in some cases too much use - of repetition and three-part lists. It was good to see that many candidates were attempting to use metaphors and extended metaphors to convey their ideas.

Although this was a speech, there were some examples of informal language being used inappropriately. The dominant register for speeches should be quite formal with a sprinkling of informal language to reflect the growing informalisation of English even in formal situations.

Exemplar 11

6. Our planet was dying. After thousands of years of our inhabitants, it was finally giving way. Its bones, the ice caps, were melting, its veins, the green forests and trees were being brutally slashed and left to bleed, its ~~sons~~ children, the animals of our planet, left homeless. And yet, you ~~tragic~~ have saved it. You have ~~saved~~ ^{saved} it. Thousands of years from today, the people of our world will still be indebted to you, your names will be embedded in the child ^{mind} ~~mind~~ of every child for as long as our great race ~~survives~~, the human ~~race~~, ^{race} survives. History will remember you. When your bones are dust and your houses ^{are} ash, history will remember you.

We, your parents, left you with the worst problem the earth has faced, worse than the plagues, worse than the mess of the middle mess that has been left in the middle east by America, worse than ever. These two great wars, that killed so many. And still, despite everything, you have saved it. Our streets are green, the planet ~~is~~ has been released from the tight strangle hold we had on it and ~~can~~ ^{you can} breathe again, our environment, so long mangled and bleeding, has begun to heal and its scars are fading. For the first time in our history...

... our energy is entirely renewable and carbon dioxide
emissions are below emissions of steam and coal power.
All of this, thanks to you.

Although slightly hyperbolic, this is a powerfully written response with a range of vivid images to make clear the scale of these young people's achievement. The candidate makes effective use of sentence structure and vocabulary to convey appreciation for a solution to the climate change crisis. Like many more able candidates, however, the candidate could use paragraphs more effectively and should be able to punctuate between sentences accurately.

Exemplar 12

Welcome students of my Swimming Academy I am so glad to have you all here tonight to congratulate our outstanding students on the remarkable medals they have won and to explain how proud I am to have taught them all and to have seen them grow

hugely in the time they've spent here.

So I would like to start off by saying I couldn't be more proud of my students and how outstanding you've all been and the amount of effort put in to come as far as you all have your parents should be amazed!

This reward is something out of the ordinary and will put my Swimming Academy on the map. Also the kids should be known worldwide which is absolutely tremendous. The students have

made fast progress during
the passed months and couldn't
have made me prouder.
When I was told how well
the ~~the~~ students had done
and what would happen
next made me extatic beyond
measure it sent shivers down
my spine I couldn't believe it.

The candidate has a clear sense of purpose and the context in which the speech is being given is made clear. The style used is appropriate and engaging. However, the response lacks coherence and cohesion. Paragraphs are not used effectively and there is little or no accurate punctuation between the sentences.

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