

Principal Examiner Report

Summer 2012

Primary and Lower Secondary
Curriculum (PLSC)
Year 6 English Achievement Test
(JEH01)
Paper 01

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General Overview

Students complete two reading tasks (two texts and 14 questions with a total mark availability of 30) and two writing tasks with a further 15 marks available for each.

The first reading task is an extract from a guide book about visiting Antarctica. The second is an extract from a narrative text 'Journey To the River Sea'.

Within this test the assessment of reading was focussed on recognition of the student's skills in:

- retrieval from text (AF2)
- inference and deduction (AF3)
- understanding of writer's purpose (AF5)
- recognition of grammatical features (AF4)

The first writing task is in the form of a letter to explain why the writer's family should be selected for the prize of a holiday and to persuade the competition judges that the family is an ideal choice. Some element of description is also required.

The second writing task is a description of a place which has had an impact on the writer.

The assessment of writing was focussed on recognition of the student's skills in:

- sentence structure and punctuation (AF5/ AF6)
- text structure and organisation (AF3/ AF4)
- composition and effect (AF 1/AF2)

Vocabulary choices contribute to the overall effect and are credited across all of the AFs.

Both tasks are set by Pearson and paper copies were ordered by the schools. Students complete this after following the newly introduced PLSC curriculum. This is the first time this test has been available to schools. There were nearly 300 entries. The year 6 paper was designed to award National Curriculum Levels 3, 4 and 5.

Reading

The reading paper was highly structured and scaffolded with 11 of the 14 questions based on a multiple choice format. These provided good opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding of the text without reliance on their own explanation or writing skills. These were generally well answered although

the level of difficulty of the reading papers, the introduction of unfamiliar vocabulary and the wording of the questions was instrumental in differentiating between the students working at the levels targeted by the test.

There was a tendency to quote huge passages of text in response to questions which required an explanation. Although this demonstrated an ability to select the appropriate section of text the responses were not creditworthy without the additional evidence which demonstrated understanding of the writer's purpose and impact on the reader.

Some responses relied on key information from the text which was misconstrued. For example many responses to question 14 which asked '*What impression does the writer give us of Miss Minton*' indicated that '*She doesn't look fierce*'. Others quoted the text '*looked more like a rake or a nutcracker*' without providing the additional information '*which showed that she was very thin/ angular/ bony*'.

Responses to question 8 also tended to concentrate on copying chunks of text without any addition explanation. It may be useful for centres to guide the students in looking for key words in the question which would support them in providing a personal response based on textural evidence. For example, many students quoted '*getting too close could cause a frightened seal pup to crush its pup*'. For credit this text reference would need to have an explanation which indicated understanding that tourist presence endangers wildlife. Also many were able to locate and quote various text references which demonstrated the danger to humans on board ship ('*break a limb/fracture your skull*'), but these were not supported with an explanation demonstrating an overview understanding of the risk of serious injury or possible death.

Question 12 focussed on presentational features of text. The majority of students selected a response which suggested volume of speech rather than manner.

Writing

Task 1 – Many students showed an understanding of letter presentation and format and were able to provide responses with an opening and simple conclusion. Some were over reliant on appeal with little information provided to support the request to be selected (*please, please choose my family*). Some gave detailed descriptions of the family (*my father has brown hair*), while some honed in on the notion of a '*writing competition*' and explained what good writers they are.

Generally the mechanical writing skills (spelling and punctuation) were of a good standard and many students achieved a higher level in this than in form, communication and purpose.

It may be helpful for centres to guide the students in 'unravelling' writing prompts and to identify the intended reader and purpose before they start writing. The time allowed for this task is limited and the students are to be congratulated for the quality of their responses under such time constraints.

Task 2 – This was very well answered by students who had clearly visited a place which had made an impression. All of these students wrote of a positive impression (viewpoint) which contributed to composition and effect. There was some recognition that the chosen place could be very familiar (school) or somewhere quite distant (London/ New York). Some students clearly wrote of a place that they would like to visit, but demonstrated sufficient awareness of its features (*red buses/ big buildings*) to gain marks.

A number of students copied out the reading texts with no additional contribution.

Students were able to structure their writing logically and generally to write with accuracy of syntax. Sentence boundaries were usually clearly marked and punctuation supported the reader in accessing the text.

It was noticeable that narrative/diary responses were common with students describing the events which lead up to the day (*When I woke up my mum said, "We are going to the beach today."*) or detailing erroneous aspects of the experience (*The journey was over so quickly*).

The students completed the total test in 1 hour (with an additional 15 minutes reading time). There were very few incomplete papers submitted and the centres are to be congratulated on the standards achieved in the very early days of this initiative.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>