



# Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2015

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
in English Language A (4EA0)  
Paper 01

Edexcel Certificate in English  
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Paper 01

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## **Section A: Reading**

### **Introduction**

The paper is organised into three sections. Section A tests only reading and is based upon an unseen passage. The passage studied in Section A was adapted from *Ghosts of Everest: The Authorized Story of the Search for Mallory & Irvine* by Jochen Hemmleb, Larry A. Johnson and Eric R. Simonson. The passage describes the circumstances prior to the climbers departing for the summit of Mt Everest and then speculates upon the manner of their deaths. Section B tests both reading and writing by asking candidates to respond to one of the non-fiction passages from the Anthology, in this case, *Explorers, or boys messing about? Either way, taxpayer gets rescue bill*. Section C is a single writing task that is not connected to either of the reading activities already undertaken on the paper. The paper was well received with most candidates finding it very accessible.

### **Questions 1-4**

Examiners reported that the choice of reading extract was “gripping and interesting” and that this could be seen in the manner in which candidates responded. The passage was accessible to almost all candidates, with very few experiencing any real difficulties in reading comprehension. Question 1 was a single mark question and asked candidates to give two words to describe the oxygen equipment used by the men. Candidates needed to give two words in order to gain the mark. Most candidates scored well on this question and recognised that the equipment was primitive, unreliable and brutally heavy. Question 2 was generally well answered, with the majority of candidates gaining the full 2 marks for giving two phrases that the writer used to show how amazing this particular climb was. Most read the question carefully and extracted relevant phrases from the passage. However, examiners report that some candidates may have lost time by writing a detailed answer and commenting on and explaining the choice of the writer’s language. Question 3 asked candidates to explain what we learn about the characters of Mallory and Irvine, using their own words. There were five marks available with the mark scheme identifying eight possible responses. Many candidates did well on this question, often picking out the men’s bravery and determination and their desire to succeed. Weaker answers described what happened to the two men or simply summarised parts of the passage instead of making focussed comment on character. More able candidates distinguished strongly between the two characters, noting the contrast between Irvine’s more relaxed stance in contrast to Mallory’s organised, even obsessive equipment checks, and also the differing ways in which both men died. However, some candidates lost time here as they used quotations to support points, which was not necessary.

The key discriminator in Section A is the higher mark tariff question 4 and its focus on the writer's technique. In this instance candidates were asked to focus upon how the writer tries to interest the reader in the events described in the passage. Bullet points offered further support for structuring an answer around the weather on the mountain, the deaths of the two men and the writer's use of language. Almost all candidates were able to attempt this question and used the bullet points to helpfully structure their answers into three parts. Virtually all candidates were able to make some comments on the harshness of the weather. Some took "conditions" to refer to such matters as primitive equipment but argued their points quite successfully. Most were able to look at some aspect of how the deaths were described very differently. Better answers recognised the deliberate contrast between the brutal death of Mallory and the slow death of Irvine. They also recognised the use of short, abrupt sentences to describe Mallory's death compared the complex sentence used to depict Irvine's death. In terms of language, examiners felt that the text contained an array of language features accessible to all abilities and that many candidates were able to make some language comments, with many recognising the use of rhetorical questions in the early part of the passage as a way of drawing the reader in. The wording of the question is clear in that, "You may include brief quotations from the passage to support your answer", and that this is not a requirement. However it is true to say that better answers often use key quotations as a support to structure their response to the question, and this is an approach that can be recommended to centres.

## **Section B: Reading and Writing**

### **Question 5**

This question is based on a prepared text that almost all candidates seemed to have some knowledge of. However there seemed to be some uncertainty in weaker answers about how the men are presented and what the writer's views are with some claiming that the men are perceived as brave, or that the writer creates sympathy for the men and their predicament. Better answers had a general understanding of immaturity but did not always support these or develop them very effectively. The best answers showed a perceptive understanding and were able to explain the range of feelings that the writer conveys, from scorn, to sarcasm, disbelief and plain anger. Some also recognised that the writer did not reserve his criticism to the two men, but also describes Mrs Vestey as recklessly indulgent in her response to what happens.

### **Question 6**

The writing task in Section B is intended to be thematically linked to the reading task in Section B. In this paper candidates were asked to write a letter to their local newspaper giving their views on how to improve road safety. The title was accessible to almost all candidates and almost all candidates were able to make a response to this question. Many candidates

adopted an appropriate tone and form for the letter with some setting out the sender's and recipient's addresses although this is not required. Those attaining higher marks were often quite forceful about what needed to be done and offered a clear perspective and a range of ideas, including lollipop ladies, speed humps and improved driver/pedestrian education. The weakest responses were often incomplete, communicating at a basic level that showed little awareness of the reader. The best responses wrote with a skilful command of language and technique that showed a sophisticated control of technique for deliberate effect and an acute understanding of audience and form.

## **Section C: Writing**

### **Question 7**

This question asked candidates to write a contribution for a magazine about what makes them happy, with further support offered through bullet points. This question proved to be accessible to most candidates. Weaker responses were often lacking in paragraphing and a sense of structure, often failing to make effective use of the bullet pointed list, intended to help candidates. A feature of these answers was they often adopted a list structure with little explanation or expansion of any sort. They were often brief and tended to be limited in their ability to clearly explain their thoughts. In contrast more able responses were able to demonstrate an understanding of how to create and sustain a piece of writing that addressed the question and which demonstrated a high level of accuracy combined with sophisticated control of expression and structure. The importance of family featured in many answers and more able answers showed how they were able to use emotive language and other techniques to create a real sense of relationship and an emotional connection with the reader. There were also many lively and engaging responses that explored the nature of happiness itself and wrote about how they were inspired by music, sport, nature and academic achievement. Most had a clear structure and were reasonably accurate. For some, timing was once again an issue with some candidates still not giving sufficient time to Section C, which is worth one third of the marks for this paper.

