

GCSE (9–1)
Candidate Style Answers

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

J351
For first teaching in 2015

Communicating information and ideas

Component 01

Version 1



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Introduction

These candidate style answers accompany the OCR GCSE (9-1) English Language J351 specification for first teaching from September 2015.

OCR has produced this resource to support teachers in interpreting the assessment criteria for the new GCSE English Language specification and to bridge the gap between new specification release for first teaching from September 2015 and availability of exemplar candidate work following first examination in summer 2017.

This content has been produced by OCR examiners to illustrate how the sample assessment questions might be answered and to provide some commentary on what factors contribute to an overall grading. The candidate style answers are not written in a way that is intended to replicate student work but to demonstrate what a high level response might include, supported by examiner commentary and conclusions. The questions addressed in this document are taken from the sample assessment materials for Component 1, Communicating information and ideas: Section A: Reading, questions 2-4 and Section B: Writing, question 6.

As these responses do not replicate student work and have not been through full standardisation ahead of formal grade setting for the new specification, they have not been graded. There are instead, indications of what a high level response might include, in accordance with the mark scheme.

Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of grade boundaries or endorsed answers.

SECTION A: READING INFORMATION AND IDEAS

Question 2

Question 2 is about Text 1, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave and Text 2, President Obama’s statement on the death of Nelson Mandela.

Frederick Douglass and Nelson Mandela were both respected for their strength of character.

What other similarities do Frederick Douglass and Nelson Mandela share in these texts? Draw on evidence from both texts to support your answer.

AO1ii Select and synthesise evidence from different texts

This task extends the straightforward location and reorganisation skills tested on Text 1 in Question 1 across both the texts.

Candidates should plan their answer before starting to write it to ensure that their choices of “similarities” work.

There are plenty to choose from:-

	Douglass	Obama
would fight for a cause	“I resolved to fight”	“fought against white domination...”
put their intentions into action	“suiting my action to the resolution”	“Mandela lived for that ideal, and he made it real.”
were persistent and resolute	“persist in my resistance”	“unbending will”
were very determined	“was determined...no longer”	“resilience”
cherished freedom	“few expiring embers...”	“a democratic and free society”
defined a kind of manliness	“sense of my own manhood”	“more than could be expected of any man”
were prepared to face death	“triumph...death itself”	“I am prepared to die”.

And so on.

Exemplar Response

The first similarity between Mandela and Douglass is that both men have flaws, despite being good people with sound morals. The fact that Mandela describes himself as “not a saint” implies that he is not a godly figure who only does good. Instead, he implies that he has done bad things, or at least has not always been the perfect man he appears later in life. Similarly, Douglass refers to his flaws. The fact that he says “I seized Covey hard on the throat” suggests that Douglass has a violent nature but the quote “bold defence” suggests that Douglass uses violence in order to achieve a greater good. The violence of the words “seized” and “hard” increases the sense that he fully intended to hurt Covey but at the same time, he was acting in difficult circumstances but with good intentions.

The next way both men share similarities is that they are both depicted as being committed to their cause for freedom. Mandela said that it was “an ideal for which I am prepared to die for”. This implies that he is such a strong believer in bringing about the end of apartheid that he is willing to give everything, even his life. In Text 1, Douglass says “whatever else might follow” connoting that he feels so passionate about his cause for freedom and about bringing about the end of slavery, that he is willing to accept whatever might happen to him. The fact that he describes these consequences as “whatever” might suggest that it is impossible to know the trouble he will face, but he is prepared to face anything.

Another similar character trait that both Mandela and Douglass share is that they are both not afraid to speak their minds. Obama refers to Mandela speaking “from the dock” which suggest he was using his trial to publically broadcast his opinions and was brave enough to make a political statement whilst standing trial even though this might have meant harsh treatment. Similarly, Douglass hopes that “it be known” that he had fought against his imprisonment implying that he is brave and wants other slaves to know he has been prepared to fight. It might be that he hopes this encourages others to stand up against their imprisonment.

Commentary

This is a well-rounded response demonstrating good synthesis of the texts to draw out the characteristics of both individuals (AO1ii). The comparisons made are perceptive: neither are perfect, both have flaws; both share commitment to a cause and both share an inner sense of bravery that means that they are prepared to speak out or be heard.

The opening of the response slips into close language analysis (AO2) which is not rewarded for this question, however, elsewhere focus on interpreting evidence from the text is sound.

Details are precisely selected and are generally well-embedded in the response. The response itself is fluent and assured and, as such, represents a high level answer.

Question 3

Question 3 is about Text 2, President Obama's statement on the death of Nelson Mandela.

Explore how Obama uses language and structure in this speech to present his feelings about Nelson Mandela.

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

AO2: Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views.

Exemplar Response

The passage becomes a eulogy to Nelson Mandela twice over: once in his own words and once again as re-stated by Obama. Statement thus becomes understatement and not only is Mandela given what many would argue is an appropriate eulogy but also the second intention: to further Obama's credentials, is achieved by the close associations that are established.

The opening reference is a substantial one.

It begins with a specific reference to a time and place, which suggests the contrasts that are developed. The first of these is the overall one of Mandela speaking out in the name of freedom and democracy "from the dock" which combines both the legalistic and the colloquial suggestions guilt. The distinction between this suggestion and the huge tri-colon "I have fought/ I have fought/ I have cherished" which follows is emphasised by the key verb "cherished" which suggests both powerful emotional attachment and long perseverance in his cause. Powerfully convincing emphasis comes from the balance and repetition of the first two phrases and is developed in the secondary triple of "democratic and free/ live... in harmony/ equal opportunities. This is built to a resounding climax with the further balance and repetition of "It is an ideal" punctured by the deliberate breaking of a grammatical rule "...to achieve. But if needs be" to add conviction to the conclusion that rules sometimes need to be broken to achieve a greater good.

All these rhetorical devices are used lavishly in what follows so as to develop the sense of hearing Mandela as impersonated by Obama powerfully and directly.

In the second paragraph not one but two sentences begin with a conjunction: "and". Furthermore the sentence lengths are carefully modulated to create the maximum effect. The first three of these are short, so as to prepare us for the eulogistic tri-colon "most influential...profoundly good human beings" which, just like the first paragraph has its own sub-tri-colon to conclude. The impact of this is further enhanced by the use of internal rhyme: "ideal/ real" and as a contrast with what is direct and unequivocal, the more mysteriously challenging "he has gone home" offers a far wider range of subjective interpretations. Finally we are given a sense of Mandela as superman "could be expected of any man" which is amplified by the concluding "he belongs to the ages".

The third paragraph takes a slight rhetorical step down with the oxymoron "fierce dignity" only to build to a greater climax asserting that not only individuals but whole countries "can change for the better". Obama employs two powerful devices here: the concept of "sacrifice" is deeply rooted in all cultures: and is perfectly correct in this context. And the familiar term "Madiba" suggests a family style kinship between the two men. The historical perspective established at the outset is picked up in the sense of "journey" which is further emphasised by the emphatically alliterated "pr/pr/pr".

Several of these devices are repeated in the fourth paragraph. "Those who jailed him" follows the layers of meaning inherent in "from the dock" with increasingly ironic effect and the macro/micro juxtaposition of "nations/our own lives" is amplified. All this builds up to the quotation of one of Mandela's most famous sayings "I am not... keeps on trying" which sustains the sense of hearing him directly and repeats the understatement noted at the outset.

Obama then moves on to his personal tribute with the huge hyperbole of “one of countless millions” via repeated, and the cleverly focused alliteration “politics/protest/apartheid” to the challenging paradox of “their hopes and not their fears.”

In the final paragraph the fourth alliterated r, “real” has been carefully prepared for in line 6 and the concepts gathered here are so aspirational that it is easy to ignore the fact that this is a huge assertion masquerading as a statement of fact. It is still not entirely clear what “real” actually signifies. The final repetition of “Madiba’s legacy” cleverly combines the combination of legalistic objectivity and personal engagement that has been sustained throughout.

Commentary

This is a highly sophisticated response, combining sharp analysis of rhetorical devices, with a precise understanding of how the speech is structured for maximum impact on the reader. There is a clear overview of the text, which identifies the purpose of the speech as ‘an appropriate eulogy’ to Mandela, but also ‘to further Obama’s credentials...by the close associations that are established.’

The candidate analyses each paragraph in detail, using precisely selected subject terminology throughout. The observations about language and structure are consistently integrated in a detailed and knowledgeable response. For example: ‘the third paragraph takes a slight rhetorical step down with the oxymoron “fierce dignity” only to build to a greater climax asserting that not only individuals but whole countries “can change for the better”’.

This is a Level 6 response – ‘skilled analysis...sophisticated appreciation...consistent and detailed’. It also employs ‘precisely selected and integrated subject terminology’ throughout the response.

Question 4

Question 4 is about Text 1, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave and Text 2, President Obama’s statement on the death of Nelson Mandela.

‘These texts are powerful because they show the importance of having freedom and strong personal beliefs.’

How far do you agree with this statement?

In your answer you should:

- discuss what you learn about the importance of having freedom and strong personal beliefs
- explain the impact of these ideas on you as a reader
- compare the ways ideas about freedom and personal beliefs are presented

Support your response with quotations from both texts.

AO3: Compare writers’ ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts

AO4: Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.

Exemplar Response

Both of these texts are powerful because they show how strong individuals have made a difference in the fight against racial oppression. Douglass appears to be made a man through his own struggles, the implication being that without a cause to fight for, as humans, we are nothing. His suggestion that it “revived within me a sense of my own manhood” perhaps also contrasts with the lack of bravery and humanity that was evident at the time in the slave trade and shown in people like Mr. Covey.

Similarly, it is clear that Mandela revived or created a sense of humanity in individuals around him. The fact that he was, as Obama says, prepared to “reconcile” with his jailers shows that he was a man of significant spirit and courage. He was prepared to meet his jailers on equal terms, and to “transfer power” to others after his release. This highlights what a humane individual Mandela truly was. He was a greater human being than those who attempted to restrain him or jail him: like Douglass, he is even more of a man because of his troubles.

I also agree that the texts are powerful because they are inspiring and they show the importance of having leaders that we can look up to and who can guide humans towards freedom. Barack Obama clearly admires Mandela and he is humble when he talks of Mandela. It is inspiring that the President of America, who has been classed as an incredible world leader, talks about something he can “aspire to”. He is already a world leader but Mandela clearly showed him a way to behave that he admires.

In the same way Douglass himself shows awareness of the significance of having heroes in the fight for freedom. He speaks of the “deep pride” that he felt after confronting Covey and speaks of his “bold defiance”. For both Mandela and Douglass to defy white oppression in the way they did appears to be the actions of selfless heroes and the force of will which both men appear to have demonstrated with Douglass ending in a “glorious resurrection” is on a level with the forgiveness that Mandela demonstrated.

Douglass is also inspiring because he inspires the reader to see that, however harshly he has been treated, he is himself inspired by his situation. Douglass moves beyond being “a slave in form”, as his own strength and ability to fight back give him a sense of freedom, even when imprisoned. The text is effective because it is a personal account of one man’s physical fight for freedom. It gives us a sense of history because of the old-fashioned language, such as “I obeyed and was glad to obey”. But this historical perspective also reminds the reader that slavery is in the past - thanks to men like

Douglass.

In the same way, Obama connects Mandela with history. He tells the reader that “he belongs in the past” and this suggests that he has become a part of the history of his country. It may also suggest that his troubles are in the past and that the problems he faced, against racial oppression are gone forever.

It is possible, therefore, to agree very strongly with the statement.

Commentary

The candidate produces an informed response to the statement, demonstrating sustained critical evaluation, (AO4). The effects on the reader are understood and explored through a range of precisely selected textual details. This exploration is usually very well developed with comments critically evaluated. A strong sense of the impact of both texts on the reader is felt and implied in the discussion throughout. The candidate does not address the first bullet point, which invites generalised reflections on freedom and strong personal beliefs, but a personal response to these ideas is implied through the discussion of the texts.

Texts are interwoven (AO6) but comparison does tend towards switching from one text to another. However, there is a clear sense of both writers, Obama and Douglass, as well as a sense of Mandela and the candidate has carefully managed the complexity of Text 2 which presents both Obama’s reflections as well as Mandela’s very effectively.

This is a high level response showing sophisticated understanding.

SECTION B: WRITING FOR AUDIENCE, IMPACT AND PURPOSE

Question 6

Write an article for a teenage magazine which gives advice to young people on how to cope with the pressures and stresses of modern life. You are not required to include any visual or presentational features.

In your article you should:

- identify some of the pressures and stresses that young people face
- suggest why these issues may be difficult to deal with
- explain some of the ways in which these can be managed.

AO5: Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences.

AO5: Organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts.

AO6: Candidates must use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

Exemplar Response

Being a teenager in the twenty-first century is no picnic: you wouldn't wish it on your own worst enemy. This article is designed to ease those pressures for you and to show you how to navigate your way through the strains and stresses of modern life.

One of the main pressures that young people have to face today is the relentless onslaught of assessment and target grades. Our parents never even knew what a target grade was, let alone did they know how to meet one. But today, this has all changed. Now, from the moment we arrive in Year 7, we are assessed continuously, measured incessantly and the consequences of this pressure are all too apparent in the increase in anxiety and stress disorders that students suffer from.

How can you protect yourself from the distress that comes with such pressure? Firstly, you need to remember that you are not alone. Everyone in your year group is probably undergoing similar feelings of self-doubt. We all go through periods when everything we do is wrong, when the grades are constantly disappointing. We have all experienced those moments when we open that report or progress check and see the letters staring starkly back at us from the glaring white page: "Below target. Could do better." Grades are important, but keep a sense of perspective.

Secondly, being organised is a fantastic way to crush those anxiety gremlins. Get your revision timetable started early and think about doing little and often. You also need to tackle issues quickly. If you come across a topic that appears impossible, then confront it head-on: don't hide your head in the sand hoping for that nasty module on population and settlements to go away. It won't. Start early, find out what the problems are and seek help when you need it. Teachers are often really approachable, if they know that you are struggling.

Another very significant pressure that young people have to address these days is the issue of living in an online world. Today, young people are leading the way in networking through Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp and these social networks are part of our everyday existence. I, for one, couldn't do without my daily trawl through tweets and updates. But online bullying is becoming an increasing threat to young people as we share more and more details about our lives. People are cruel to each other online in a way that doesn't happen on the school corridor.

Students need to learn to take their online safety seriously. Report online bullying whenever it happens, using report abuse functions but also school systems like bully mentors. Also, think about what you are sharing and only put personal information online that you would happily share with the general public. Don't lay yourself open to online abuse by giving abusers ammunition against you. It's not worth it.

If you do find yourself a victim of online issues, however minor they may be, the most important thing to do is to share your worries. Schools often have excellent facilities in place to report abuse, but there are plenty of other places to go to seek out help such as Childline.

Finally, the very best way of seeking help – although not always the easiest – is to talk to your parents at home. None of us want to share our darkest secrets with mum and dad and you may well feel embarrassed about having to reveal photos and information that you'd rather they didn't know about. But they are still the best people to take control of a situation when you've got yourself into an awkward situation and it really is a case of being better safe than sorry. In this instance, mum definitely knows best!

So there you have it. Organise yourself, share your worries and be safe. And for goodness' sake enjoy yourself along the way too!

Commentary

There is a very strong sense of form throughout. The candidate exploits generic conventions in an assured way and details are dealt with in a light, but encouraging, manner.

The tone is appropriate for the teenage audience with just enough informality evident. The register is well-suited to the task with a subtle combination of figurative language as well as brief colloquialism, ("lay yourself open"). The inclusive 1st person plural is deliberately manipulated throughout to convincing effect, showing a sound sense of purpose.

The candidate addresses all three bullet points in the writing. The text is highly cohesive with clarity of organisation and connectives provide signposting to support the reader. Paragraphs are linked and the structure is controlled throughout.

Sentence constructions are ambitious and sophisticated with an effective use of a full range of structures to excellent effect. Punctuation is accurate and aids the creation of meaning. Vocabulary is precisely selected and there are no lapses in spelling.



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