

## **A LEVEL**

*Examiners' report*

# **ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (EMC)**

**H474**

For first teaching in 2015

## **H474/01 Summer 2018 series**

Version 1

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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.

## Paper H474/01 series overview

In this second series, the two texts featured in the exam were deemed accessible and readily comparable. Given two texts by the same speaker/writer, and an opportunity to make connections not only through their voice and representation but also through language features associated with written and spoken modes, all candidates seemed to feel confident about some aspect of language, context and meaning. Every level of the mark scheme was represented in the responses marked.

## Question 1

- 1 Carefully read the **two** texts and compare the ways in which Jamie Oliver, as the speaker in **Text A** and the writer in **Text B**, uses language to express his opinions and to present information.

In your answer you should analyse the impact that the different contexts have on language use, including for example, mode, purpose, and audience. [32]

Most responses began with an introductory overview, focusing on the key contextual factors of each text, usually phrased in a comparative way. A greater number of responses than last year used this kind of opening concisely and efficiently, writing a meaningful introduction of no more than two to four sentences. Fewer candidates than last year disadvantaged themselves by taking a long time to get into their analysis of the texts. Of those that did, some responses began with more than a page discussing what each text was about, or giving a potted biography of Jamie Oliver and outlining his work in recent years, in ways that did not gain credit in relation to the assessment objectives.

Some candidates used their first few sentences to repeat verbatim the information about the texts given immediately above the question. Conversely, a significant number of candidates appeared not to have read this information, or not to have taken on board the phrase 'Jamie Oliver's cookbook'. Some referred to Text B as 'a speech'; others speculated that it was written for the web. Several did not realise that it was by Jamie Oliver; one or two candidates worked this out only after they had written most of their response. In all of these cases, this slip in examination technique prevented candidates from really getting hold of Text B, and likely led to underachievement.

For a few candidates, the wording of the end of the first sentence of the question, 'to express his opinions and present information', provided a helpful steer in relation to the texts. Some responses selected and applied fact-vs-opinion as a relevant framework, exploring the tentativeness of Oliver's opinions in Text A, and contrasting it with his assuredness in Text B. One candidate made a sequence of excellent points suggesting that Oliver hesitantly presents facts as opinions in Text A, and confidently presents his opinions as facts in Text B. More often, however, evidence of direct use of the question tended to be a limiting rather than facilitating factor. Candidates who struggled to find their own words for meanings in the text tended repeatedly to invoke the words of the question, for example repeatedly saying that Oliver 'expressed opinions easily' or 'gave information in both texts', without specific exploration of what or how. In most of the highest level responses, the question was implicit rather than referred to directly. In these cases, the candidates' direction came from the texts themselves, the connections they made between them, and the frameworks they selected in response to them.

Many candidates ended their response with a concluding paragraph. As was the case last year, these usually offered no value in terms of the mark credited, tending either to be very generalised in their claims or to restate points already credited earlier in the response. The nature of the task and of the timing suggests that candidates would usually be better served by not writing a conclusion at all. For a number of candidates, any gained time would be well spent on planning. Some candidates seemed to launch straight into their writing; this seemed to be a significant factor in underachievement at all levels of the mark scheme. Such responses were characterised by a lack of control at sentence level and a lack of cohesion at whole-text level, with a tendency towards self-contradiction and a less than considered response to the texts.

A number of candidates structured their response around discussion of lexis in each text, then syntax, then discourse structure, then phonology. This approach was used by a few candidates in a way that helped them to access the higher levels of the mark scheme; in most cases, however, it tended not to facilitate the sensitivity in applying concepts, the selection of quotation or the detail of connection necessary for Levels 5 and 6.

**Connections and comparisons (AO4)**

Some of the connections made by candidates were too broad to gain any credit. For example, responses offering recognition only that both texts are about cooking, or both by Jamie Oliver, were regarded as showing 'very little attempt to make connections', even where analysis was structured around these connections. Comparisons and contrasts made with only slightly greater specificity – such as assertions that one text contains non-fluency features and the other does not, or that one text focuses on Oliver's cooking whereas the other focuses on Oliver himself – tended to develop into analysis which took candidates away from rather than into the connecting idea. Where these were the only connections made, responses tended to be judged as evidencing a 'limited attempt to make connections'.

Some broad frameworks did enable candidates to explore connections between the texts with some success. One response, for example, analysed the two texts in relation to Oliver's use of ethos as a mode of persuasion in each, selecting quotations which made this a convincing line of inquiry. More often, for responses to achieve highly in relation to AO4, it needed to be clear which aspect of one text was being compared with which aspect of the other, and there needed to be a genuine connection between the two. In some cases, the coincidence of specific words across the two texts helped candidates to make connections, for example Oliver's use of the phrase 'a bit' in both texts, or the nonce words 'pantomimey' (Text A) and 'curdy' (Text B). More often, when connections were explored effectively, candidates' conceptual knowledge about language was central to the comparison. Many candidates effectively explored connections between the spoken mode of Text A and the ways in which the voice in Text B was crafted to sound spoken. Others used word class selectively and productively, exploring similarities and differences between the use of empty adjectives in Text A ('mad', 'brilliant') and the more elaborate adjective choices in Text B ('incredible', 'spectacular'), and relating each insightfully to the different contexts.

A small number of candidates used parts of their responses to compare Text A to other texts in the Anthology, for example making connections between Jamie Oliver's idiolect and that of Russell Brand or Dizzee Rascal. These points did not answer the question ('compare the use of language in Texts A and B'), and as such were not credited.

**Concepts, methods and terminology (AO1)**

The non-fluency features in Text A helped most candidates to deploy a number of linguistic terms accurately and purposefully. Many candidates accurately identified and purposefully discussed fillers, hedges and repairs. In all cases, apt quotation evidencing the terms used was essential to recognising achievement in relation to AO1; without it, terminology felt as likely to be inaccurate as appropriate. When consistent with the 'secure' and 'excellent' descriptors in Levels 5 and 6 of the mark scheme, responses were characterised by the evaluative handling of concepts as well as consistent use of terminology, often in ways that were integrated with AO4. For example, some candidates combined analysis of Oliver's clichés and high-frequency lexis in Text A with a discussion of the way idioms and colloquialisms in Text B contribute towards a similarly casual register despite the contrast in mode.

Some theoretical frameworks, such as Grice's maxims, were used to good effect by a few candidates, but less successfully by others who struggled to make them relevant to the texts. Little credit was given for terminology used to identify neutral, expected aspects of language, for example in assertions such as 'the semantic field of food makes it extremely clear to the audience what subject is being discussed'. Some candidates' approach relied on spotting features with little regard for sense. A number of candidates applied phonological terms for large parts of their responses, despite phonology not being the most suitable framework for these non-literary texts. The fricatives in Text B's 'fussy about my frittatas' was the subject of some sound analysis; other claims were less convincing, e.g. 'the alliteration "sea salt" gives the recipe a lyrical feel'. A number of candidates' feature-spotting approach led to misapplication of terms and/or misquotation at the expense of sense, for example identifying '[you can serve frittatas] cold as antipasto or hot as a snack' as a use of similes.

### **Understanding of the significance of contexts (AO3)**

There is a distinction to be made between, on the one hand, evidencing contextual knowledge which is more or less relevant, and, on the other, showing understanding of the significance of contextual factors. Some candidates devoted a significant proportion of their response to the former, gaining little credit for explaining (for example) Jamie Oliver's healthy eating campaigns in ways that were not brought to bear on either text. Higher-scoring candidates tended skilfully to slot each text back in its original context, and to consider different aspects of these contexts throughout their analysis. A number of responses showed 'clear and relevant understanding' of the significance of the context of Text A: they explored the niche audience of fans who would not only buy the DVD but also watch the extra; they discussed the craftedness of the text as a promotional construct consistent with Oliver's brand, but also the lack of lexical and syntactical craft as a result of the likely spontaneity of the interview. Similarly, many candidates considered the instructional genre of cookbooks, and analysed the ways Oliver's language and structure in Text B both conforms to and deviates from its expectations.

In general, the context of Text B seemed more straightforward (if not more familiar) to candidates. Given that Text A was the prepared text and Text B the unseen, a number of candidates had a more secure grasp on Text B with regard to AO3. Some candidates made a kind of category error with Text A, focusing on the transcript itself rather than the spoken text: there was exploration of how the text would work for 'readers' rather than viewers; points were made about graphological and orthographic features, including paragraphing, layout, punctuation (including many references to 'hyphenation') and spelling; there were also references to 'stage directions'. A greater number of responses made inaccurate inferences as to the circumstances of the production of Text A. The phrase 'Happy Days Tour Live!' led many candidates to conflate the content of Jamie Oliver's talk with its context, and assume that the transcript is of Oliver on stage talking to an audience of thousands; the word 'live' was deployed in ways inconsistent with the editing, which some attributed to the transcriber rather than the creators of the DVD. A number of responses, perhaps misled by the mention of the BBC as distributors of the DVD, assumed that the transcript was of a television programme which had been broadcast nationally. Some argued that Oliver's purpose was to encourage people to buy the DVD, others that his aim was to inform viewers about a show that was going to take place; these and other comments suggested a lack of awareness that viewers would likely have seen the extras only after the main DVD feature. Even candidates who avoided these miscues showed less sensitivity to the context of production of Text A than they might have done. For example, most who quoted '[you could say] cooking's the new rock'n'roll' seemed not to have considered that Oliver might be echoing the question put to him rather than expressing his own sentiment. Overall, while many candidates evidenced skill in putting Text B back into its original context, it also seemed that some would benefit from more careful thought about the Anthology texts, and perhaps greater access to video clips where relevant.

In some lower level responses, the only references to contexts were vague, sweeping summaries of audience and purpose. For some with 'limited awareness of the significance of contexts', sensitivity to audience consisted of an assertion that the texts were for adults rather than children, and exploration of purpose consisted of one word for each text, i.e. the purpose of Text A is 'to entertain' and the purpose of Text B is 'to inform'. Even in responses which showed insight into the relationship between context and meaning, some candidates limited their achievement with respect to AO3 and AO2 by using each section of analysis to build up to the assertion that the function of the features they had identified was merely 'to entertain'.

### **Analysis of ways meanings are shaped (AO2)**

Responses which were rewarded highly in relation to AO2 were characterised by a careful selection of quotation and apt use of candidates' own vocabulary. The nature of the texts seemed to make it more difficult for some candidates to make strong meanings. This was most evident in their handling of the non-fluency in features in Text A: numerous points were combined in extended analysis which argued little more than that the speech is spontaneous. At the mid-level of the mark scheme, candidates tended to find a few interpretive words for Oliver's feelings, most often using 'nervous' (his own word) or 'overwhelmed' to comment on the meaning shaped by his non-fluency in Text A, and 'passionate' to describe his attitude in Text B. Higher level achievement in relation to AO2 tended to rely on insightful, critical interpretations of the purposes of the texts, which needed to be developed through close analysis. Awareness of the Jamie Oliver brand helped some candidates, who analysed features which helped to present Oliver as humble and ordinary, particularly in Text A. A sense of the need in Text B to make the food sound attractive and to convey an authoritative tone tended to inform more successful analysis of the ways meanings are shaped.

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