

GCSE

Examiners' report

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

J351

For first teaching in 2015

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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. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. 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.

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Paper 1 series overview

There was clear evidence in this November session that centres are using advice from previous examiners' reports to support their candidates. At all levels of attainment, for example, candidates are organising their responses to Questions 2 and 4 in ways that allow them to demonstrate what they can do. There are also far fewer examples of scripts in which candidates did not answer some, or all, of the questions. Almost all relevant attempts at a question are likely to receive at least 1 mark. There was, as always in the November session, a greater proportion of middle attaining candidates but very few of them did not respond to all the questions and almost all used helpful approaches to each of the questions.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> selected material from the specified lines engaged with metaphors to show perception read writing task carefully. <p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> addressed a specific audience organised their response effectively used punctuation within the sentence. 	<p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> did not comment on quotations used terminology inaccurately did not compare in comparison questions. <p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> did not adopt features of the specified form used paragraphs haphazardly – or not at all punctuated inaccurately between sentences.

Section A overview

The two texts set in this series worked well. Candidates understood that the writer in Text 1 was impressed by Tesla and showed understanding of what Tesla was doing to impress his visitors. Most thought that the writer of Text 2 was impressed by Bill Gates so the ability to detect the reservations she expressed became a key differentiator.

The vocabulary of both texts was accessible and there were no misunderstandings. Centres have clearly prepared their candidates well as almost all were using successful approaches to each of the questions that have been suggested in previous examiners reports. Question 3 is still a challenge for many students and higher attaining candidates do not always do themselves justice in their responses to this question.

Question 1 (a), (b) and (c)

Question 1 is about **Text 1**, *The New Wizard of the West* by Chauncy Montgomery McGovern.

1 Look at lines 1–3.

(a) Give **one** word that describes what the room looks like.

..... [1]

(b) Give **one** phrase that suggests that there is a lot of machinery in the room.

.....
..... [1]

(c) Explain **two** things that are surprising about what Tesla does with the ball of flame.

1
.....
2
..... [2]

Question 1 is a gentle start to the paper. It allows candidates at all attainment levels to gain some marks and get started on the paper. For the first 2 marks candidates are simply asked to select specific words or phrases from the first text. In this session almost all candidates were able to give a relevant response to Questions 1(a) and 1(b). Most candidates were also able to give appropriate responses to Question 1(c) even though it required more interpretation than the first two questions because candidates had to make a judgement about which details might be seen as 'surprising'. The candidates who did less well on this question were often those who selected material from outside the specified lines. Candidates should be advised to read the question carefully so that they know from which lines they should take their evidence.

Question 2

Question 2 is about **Text 1**, *The New Wizard of the West* by Chauncy Montgomery McGovern and **Text 2**, *Net Prophet* by Lesley White.

2 Both texts describe a meeting with a famous person.

What are the **similarities** between these famous people?

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

..... [6]

Candidates were able to identify a range of similarities between the two famous people. The most common points made were that both people were exceptional in some way, were inventors, or were godlike.

Most candidates at all levels of attainment now understand how to organise a response to this question. Lower attaining candidates are usually able to explain one relevant similarity with appropriate supporting evidence. These candidates often use the whole page to explain one similarity in detail and would benefit from learning how to provide their evidence more concisely.

Too many rely on copying out at length what they hope are relevant quotations but offer no explanation for their choice of evidence and leave the examiner unclear on how the evidence supports the point of similarity. Explaining in their own words, or explaining with a short, embedded quotation, is often a more effective way to give evidence to support a similarity.

A common error is to start a paragraph with a statement that identifies two similarities. The evidence then provided may match just one of the points of similarity, or, sometimes, the evidence from one text supports one point, and the evidence from the other text supports the other point, and no clear similarity is established. Candidates would be well advised to start each paragraph with a clear statement of one similarity.

Question 3

Question 3 is about **Text 2**, *Net Prophet* by Lesley White.

3 Look at lines 16–29.

Explore how Lesley White uses language and structure to present Gates's vision of the future.

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

[12]

It is surprising that, despite a relentless focus on word level analysis, candidates often find this question the most challenging. There is a range of accessible features of language and structure in the text, such as alliteration and listing of 'keys, cash, and camera'. It seems that higher attaining candidates sometimes select these more straightforward features for commentary but find that there is little to say about them.

They would be well advised to focus their attention on features that do require more explanation, such as metaphor, connotation, and irony. A key differentiator in this text, for example, is the extended metaphor in lines 16 to 19 comparing the development of the internet to the 'pioneering past' of America. This gave many candidates the opportunity to explore the different elements of the metaphor and the impact they might have on the reader.

It was encouraging to see that very few candidates used material from outside the set lines. There were, however, some other common errors in less successful responses. Many simply listed features of language and structure in the sometime vain hope that they might be somewhere in the text. Those who did identify specific examples often offered little analysis or explanation of why this example was significant.

OCR support



Very few candidates were able to make meaningful comments about language and structure in Question 3. There are two useful resources available on Teach Cambridge: The Student Guide to Language and Structure and The Teacher Guide to Language and Structure. Both guides contain useful activities for students and guidance on how to approach writing about structure.

Exemplar 1

One way White presents Gates' vision of the future is ~~as~~ that his plans are innovative but also brave. She ~~uses the idea of~~ ~~of~~ ~~uses~~ a tricolon to list the historical events that are similar to Gates plans to show that his vision of the future is similarly innovative. However she also describes 'the wounded' and those that are 'left behind' which when first read seems to suggest that Gates is taking a huge risk that could leave him 'wounded' but the remainder of the sentence presents him as a leader who will 'march on'. This paragraph can be seen as an extended metaphor related to the Californian gold rush ~~as~~ presenting ~~of~~ Gates vision of the future as being a step forward for mankind that will lead to many becoming wealthy from the profits of the gold ~~as~~ in Gates' case the 'wallet PC'.

Another way White presents Gates' vision of the future is that they are exciting. She describes Gates' own excitement as 'childlike' which suggests that it an intense excitement as children have very powerful emotions. She also appears to be ~~thoroughly~~ excited about the ~~pro~~ vision that Gates has as she writes a lengthy sentence to describe ~~than~~ the marvels

of the 'pocket PC'. She uses multiple tricolons to excitedly list all of the features of this device, the tricolons showing that she ^{finds} many features of this device are exciting but separates them into tricolons to maintain a formal style of writing. This is to excite the reader about these visions.

Finally she presents Gates' visions as realistic. The anecdote she writes about the professor who denied electric lighting shows that she truly believes in Gates' vision and is trying to persuade the reader the same thing. She describes Gates as being 'absolutely, arrogantly certain' that he is right about his vision. While the adverb 'arrogantly' suggests a false confidence, she also describes this belief as 'Genius' which once again presents the vision as realistic.

This is a good example of a candidate who approaches this question successfully. A wide range of features is identified, and perceptive comments are made about what is conveyed by the writer's choices of language and structure. There is some interesting discussion of the connotations of words like 'wounded', 'childlike', and 'arrogantly'.

Question 4

Question 4 is about **Text 1**, *The New Wizard of the West* by Chauncy Montgomery McGovern and **Text 2**, *Net Prophet* by Lesley White.

4 'In both texts the writers are impressed by the inventors they describe.'

How far do you agree with this statement?

In your answer you should:

- discuss what we learn about the inventors
- explain how far both writers are impressed by the inventors
- compare the ways the texts present the inventors.

Support your response with quotations from **Text 1** and **Text 2**.

[18]

This task proved very accessible. Almost all candidates were able to identify ways in which the writers were impressed by the two inventors. Most provided relevant evidence and made clear links between the texts. Very few, however, considered the methods used by the writers to present their views and the contexts within which the writers were working.

Candidates at all levels of attainment continue to use helpful approaches to this task. The most successful candidates organised their response as a sustained comparison, moving back and forth between the two texts. The use of 'less' and 'more' as prompts for more nuanced evaluation is becoming more common as centres take on board the advice offered in previous reports.

The key differentiator was the degree to which candidates understood that White was far less impressed by Gates than Montgomery McGovern was with Tesla. Some tried to stretch the material in Text 1 to suggest that Tesla was also not completely impressive but with little success. There was also some misunderstanding about who 'had no doubt' that Tesla would succeed.

Centres should advise candidates to plan their response carefully and set out their argument in their opening paragraph. In their discussion of what the writers are saying candidates should also comment on how the writers are presenting their ideas using relevant subject terminology. Presentation could include the way the writers deploy information, structure the text, and use linguistic methods.

Section B overview

Both tasks were popular but more candidates chose the letter writing task than chose the magazine article task. There was evidence in the responses to both questions that most candidates are planning and most responses had at least some sense of structure. Paragraphing, however, remains a problem with even higher attaining candidates using excessively long paragraphs which lack coherence. Sentence structure is a strength with very few candidates writing in a style that is hard to understand or grammatically inaccurate. Very few candidates, however, use punctuation within the sentence, and those that do tend to use it sporadically, e.g. opening commas around a subordinate clause but not closing them. Punctuation for effect was used more frequently than in previous sessions, perhaps in response to earlier examiners reports.

Question 5*

- 5*** Write an article for a magazine for young people to describe a new invention or idea that will change their lives.

You should:

- describe the new invention or idea
- explain how this new invention or idea will change the lives of young people
- describe what you think about how it will change lives.

[40]

There were lots of interesting ideas for inventions. Many were related, perhaps understandably, to making learning and revision easier. The inventions were usually clearly, and sometimes effectively, described by the candidates. Many chose to use a more persuasive style, which was accepted by the examiners, and often led to very effective responses. Too few took advantage of the opportunities offered by the magazine article format. There were few examples of headings and subheadings and little sense that this text was appearing in a magazine. Very few candidates attempted to establish a relationship with their audience or take account of the fact that they were addressing young people.

Question 6*

- 6*** Write a letter to persuade a well-known person to visit your school or college. You would like them to give an inspiring presentation about the future.

You should:

- explain why you have chosen them
- describe how students would benefit from the presentation
- explain what you would like them to talk about.

[40]

Most candidates found the letter format supportive and most used it accurately. Many of these responses drew on the reading texts and wrote to tech pioneers like Bill Gates or Elon Musk. There were also a wide range of more idiosyncratic choices which were all accepted by the examiners. Some candidates, however, did misinterpret the task: some described the school without inviting their guest and others thought they were inviting students to come to the school. It is important to read these writing tasks carefully as they are 'complexly contextualised'.

Exemplar 2

Turning point

Robot Says 'Hello'

Today, ~~was~~ this Shrewd, amusing robot has been successfully launched for the beautiful young people out there to raise the corners of their mouths. These robot's assist young people's lives.

~~Appreciate~~ Homework.

Your parents are at work and you have tons and piles ~~of homework~~ indignant homework, this dazzling, squared, 6'3" & six foot

three tall, wide shouldered robot reaching your door frames is willing to plunge those antlers in for you. ~~Insert~~ This AI featured program is able to solve the most complex equations, such as ~~xx~~ higher level ~~xxx~~ expanding sweets, trigonometry, Pythagoras and many more. This ~~will~~ ^{program} incredible ~~to edit~~ will not leave you befuddled.

~~And~~ Is the battery on twelve percent?

Do not worry! This AI robot ~~is able~~ can be charged by inserting ~~one~~ ^{four} different unique ~~charge~~ ^{coloured} chargers in the brain. ~~when~~ First, you open the ~~to~~ ^{two} ~~den~~ minuscule door ~~at~~ ^{it} located at the back ~~of~~ with the area of ~~3~~ ^{thirty} centimetre squared. Then you co-ordinate; each in every wire to ~~As~~ ^{its} colour. ~~to~~ ^{xxxxxx} Suddenly, you will hear the robot muttering 'Life is a rollercoaster' five times. Do not freak out, as this ~~then~~ phrase signal ~~you~~ that it is being charged.

Although this response is relatively short, it is a useful illustration of how to use the magazine format. It has a clear headline and three subheadings to guide the reader through the text. In the first two sub-sections it also shows an understanding of its audience of young people by addressing their concerns and specifically addressing them. There is also direct address in the third sub-section but it is less clearly aimed at young people. This is not a high-attaining response in some ways but it successfully addresses the task.

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