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# FOREWORD

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This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

## GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Paper 8693/01

Passages for Comment

### General comments

Candidates seem to be structuring their responses more cogently as a whole and understanding the progression of passages. There are still some who seem to rely on feature spotting at the expense of commenting on mood and tone in particular. They tend to rely on generalisation whilst looking for certain devices. There was an overall sense that candidates enjoyed the passages and the variety that they offered. There were many enjoyable responses to the creative writing tasks and many used the opportunities to experiment with language and imagery, often skilfully incorporating elements from the original texts. Candidates could use their commentaries more to compare their recreative pieces with the original; some tended to write about the original piece only.

### Comments on specific questions

#### *Section A*

#### Question 1

- (a) There was much evidence of good creative talent here. There were effective and emotive responses which almost all adopted an appropriate tone and conveyed the intensity and horror of the situation. The best responses used a fluent style and were perceptive and graphic, giving a real sense of helplessness. Many picked up on the stylistic features such as the repetition of words, the listing of verbs, the use of direct speech, the figurative language, the variety of sentence length, the progression of mood changes. Less secure responses tended to spend too long on pre-accident events or followed the original too closely by simply rewriting the original extract and substituting a few words here and there.
- (b) The majority of candidates were able to capitalise on what they had clearly noticed in both passages. There was, in general, sound understanding of the progression of the passage and a grasp of the changing moods. However, a significant minority of candidates were armed with a list of linguistic terms (such as alliteration/assonance/repetition) which they searched the passage for. Whilst such terminology is useful, it is only really useful if such devices are priorities in the actual material and if, in analyses, they are supported by textual evidence and relevant comment. Some of the more significant aspects of style are lost because some candidates are intent on looking for often minor features.

#### Question 2

- (a) There were some enjoyable answers here. Good answers responded really well to the question. Typically, they picked up on various elements: the evident humour; the variety of moods; the eccentricity of the passengers; the differences between what the writer expected and the reality actually was; the beauty and magnitude of the setting; the figurative and sometimes hyperbolic language. There was a good grasp of the progression of the passage. However, some candidates tended to rely on generalisation and did not use textual evidence to support their points – a prerequisite for analysis.
- (b) This was, for the most part, extremely well done. Candidates had clearly been well taught. Many chose the emphatic second person verbs 'Visit' and 'Enjoy' to engage their audience and almost all drew on significant aspects from the passage. A few candidates took too many phrases from the original passage and limited their opportunity to gain credit for their own writing.

**Question 3**

- (a) There was some really enjoyable material here too. Candidates displayed great energy in their writing, picking up many aspects of the original, especially the contrasting moods and the sense of isolation and vulnerability. Many sensed the horror, the mother's suppression of her own feelings, the beautiful but illusory beach scene. Less successful responses tended to rely on narrative or simply wished to finish the story with everyone living happily ever after.
- (b) This produced more consistent analysis as a whole. Candidates sensed the ingredients of the genre well and those who managed to compare their writing to the original tended to do well: there were a few who, again, did not compare both pieces. Many focused on the contrasting moods of the original but others took a character based approach and looked at the mother and her relationship with her children. There were some effective comments on the descriptive language of the original extract. This proved to be a popular and effective question (in terms of opportunities for candidates to show their abilities) whilst also allowing for a range of differentiation.

**Paper 8693/02**  
**Composition**

**General comments**

There was, as usual, some very enjoyable and thoughtful work on display. Candidates produced some excellent imaginative writing and perceptive, structured and cogent discursive essays. Some need to ensure that the accuracy of their writing is checked, especially the switching from present to past to present tense in the first section of the paper. Some have also drifted towards offering rather clichéd endings by finishing with 'it was all a dream and I woke up.' A number of candidates need to check the rubric more carefully, especially when it comes to word limits. The guide is 600-900 words for each composition but some candidates are losing potential marks because they write brief responses, sometimes too brief. On occasions, it seemed that a few candidates were writing out essays that they had practised but which did not really meet the requirements of the set question – perhaps another trend to guard against. On the whole, this paper continues to elicit some genuinely excellent work.

**Comments on specific questions****Section A****Question 1**

There was some excellent science fiction material here because the nature of the genre was understood; futuristic worlds full of new inventions and new terminology were conveyed extremely well in the higher ranges. The question also produced some enjoyable historical novel openings, capturing a sense of setting, period and dialogue convincingly. However, some candidates produced factual biographies rather than pieces of fiction. Rubric requirements, candidates should be informed, need careful attention.

**Question 2**

There were some well structured and effective pieces here which clearly focused on the idea of contrast. Figures ranged from football players to pop stars and politicians. The sense of different points of view was communicated clearly in most cases. Some candidates only covered one biography and this proved to be a limitation. The better answers blended background, upbringing and examples of performance and behaviour skilfully but also with a good degree of information.

**Question 3**

This was not such a popular choice but there were some effective and thoughtful responses, especially where the device of a narrator was used with imagination. There were some effective twists and rendering of the inner thought processes. Less secure answers tended to focus on plot and narrative at the expense of characterisation and motive.

**Question 4**

There were often excellent answers here, especially where candidates used the medium centrally rather than simply mentioning a letter or email as part of the narrative. Some more imaginative use of planning could have helped less successful answers: some storylines were rather limited by simply relying on broad romances or similar well-worn territory.

**Section B****Question 5**

This proved to be a popular and quite provocative question, producing some excellent, thoughtful material. Candidates argued with genuine passion and interest. The best responses blended personal viewpoints with supporting examples which were not based on generalisations. Some took a different approach than the implicit gender issue and took 'man' to mean humans or a world in which machines had replaced humanity.

**Question 6**

This was handled really well for the most part. There was a clear understanding of newspaper style and how to offer a balanced viewpoint. Candidates blended background, quotations from interviewees and other information into structured and relevant paragraphs. Candidates had been taught how to structure and plan for material of this kind and it is to Centres' credit that they performed so well on the whole.

**Question 7**

This was a popular choice. Candidates argued forcefully and, again, with a degree of passion which was pleasing to see. There was good use of supporting examples and, on the whole, sustained argument which drew on national and international illustrations. There was a strong belief that the media do have too much power but perhaps an acceptance that this is the way the world is going and that we have to learn to adjust to it.

**Question 8**

There were some very effective answers from candidates who felt strongly that they wished to make the world a better place. Issues ranged from the return of the death penalty to the age for provisional driving licences. There were some well-constructed pieces and very few relied on ranting or abusive opinions. Again, it is evident that Centres are encouraging candidates to focus on planning in these kinds of essays – perhaps something some candidates could do a little more in **Section A**.