



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	English
Level	Standard Grade

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the Examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Folio

Markers and examiners reported that, in general, candidate performance was in line with or slightly better than in previous years. There was a slight increase in the number of pupils achieving Credit grades for Folio Writing (24.2% pre-appeal) and Folio Reading (28.4% pre-appeal).

On the whole, candidates' submissions showed a good understanding of the requirements of the Folio, with most pieces being typed and accurately labelled. Articles taken from the internet provided sources for many W1 pieces. Some markers commented on the prevalence of 'scaffolded' Reading pieces which did not allow candidates to display a 'genuine' personal response to the texts they had studied.

There were fewer Reading pieces based on a text personally chosen by the candidate. There were also some concerns raised by markers about the danger of asking candidates to compare and contrast two or more texts in critical responses.

A significant minority of Reading pieces produced by S3 candidates included little or no analysis of the texts being studied. Popular texts were: (Drama) *Macbeth*; *Romeo and Juliet*; *The Merchant of Venice*; *Our Day Out*; *Kes*; *The Diary of Anne Frank*; *Frankenstein*; *An Inspector Calls*; (Novels) *Stone Cold*; *Holes*; *Lord of the Flies*; *Of Mice and Men*; *Animal Farm*; *Daz4Zoe*; (Short stories) *The Sniper*; *On the Sidewalk Bleeding*; *The Necklace*; *The Last Spin*; *Lamb to the Slaughter*. MacCaig, Carol Ann Duffy, Browning, Heaney, Morgan, Owen and Scannell continue to be popular poets.

As noted in previous years, the number of responses to media texts continues to increase at the expense of Imaginative Responses to Literature. The films *Jaws*; *Stand by Me*; *Gregory's Girl*; *Braveheart* and Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet* continue to be studied widely at this level.

Examination Writing

Markers and examiners reported that the paper seemed fair overall. Generally, candidates selected appropriate assignments which allowed them to respond in a wholehearted fashion and at an appropriate length. Most candidates seemed to be aware of the purpose of their writing. Markers commented that most candidates chose to write stories or accounts of their personal experience.

Many candidates chose assignments from page 5 of the question paper (assignments relating to the picture of a boat in a storm). Assignments 1 and 2 were also popular. Assignment 2 elicited many personal responses relating to experiences of bereavement or family illness. Discursive and descriptive assignments were less popular. There were no assignments that candidates did not attempt.

Some markers suggested that 'prepared responses' were being offered by some candidates for assignments 7 and 16, often with only the most tenuous of connections to the picture

stimulus. Some markers commented on a lack of maturity in the responses of S3 candidates. There was a slight decrease in the number of candidates achieving a Credit award (19.9% pre-appeal) in the examination.

Examination Reading

Markers and examiners reported that the content of the paper seemed suitable across all three levels and seemed to engage pupils. The Credit and General passages were both non-fiction — a magazine article on Parkour in Glasgow and a memoir about a childhood visit to Glasgow at Christmas respectively. The Foundation passage was fiction – an extract from *The Iron Woman* by Ted Hughes.

At all levels, most candidates showed an awareness of the demands of particular questions, and many markers commented on the continuing improvement of candidates in their ability to identify techniques used by writers. Some markers reported that S3 candidates tended to perform less well than S4 candidates.

The Credit paper was seen as an appropriate preparation for those candidates going on to study Higher English in S5.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Folio Writing

- ◆ A good number of candidates produced effective discursive pieces across a wide variety of topics.
- ◆ The most able candidates were able to produce interesting and engaging accounts of personal experience (including those based on work experience).
- ◆ Some markers were impressed by candidates' positive attempts to make effective use of appropriate literary techniques (and apt and extensive vocabulary) in W2 pieces.
- ◆ Candidates took care to present their work attractively (most pieces were word-processed).

Folio Reading

- ◆ Candidates continued to respond positively to high-quality literary texts (even when these are very familiar to markers).
- ◆ The most effective tasks allowed candidates to display their knowledge of techniques used by the author and to display a genuine personal engagement with the text.

Examination Writing

- ◆ Markers reported that the best writing at Credit level continues to be perceptive and sensitive.
- ◆ When attempted, assignments 8, 10, 12, 13 and 17 produced excellent results.
- ◆ The best short stories showed clear evidence of the development of character, setting and plot.
- ◆ The variety of narrative structures utilised in the best responses showed a willingness by candidates to experiment with different storytelling methods.
- ◆ Candidates made positive attempts to use techniques such as the single-sentence paragraph; ellipsis; imagery.

- ◆ Markers reported that, although fewer candidates tackled discursive assignments ('Give your views'), those who did tended to do well.
- ◆ The best accounts of personal experience (in response to assignments 2, 6, 10, 14) showed insight and self-awareness and a genuine sense of involvement.
- ◆ Punctuation such as the colon and semi-colon had been used correctly and effectively by candidates who had evidently been taught how to use them.

Examination Reading: Foundation

As has been noted in previous years, candidates at this level seem to respond well to the narrative and characterisation of a fiction passage. This also seemed to be the case this year with candidates able to answer successfully on the dramatic opening to Hughes's story.

- ◆ Questions 11 and 18: a good number of candidates were able to identify the basic techniques (short sentence; alliteration).
- ◆ Questions 1, 3, 5 (i), 5 (ii), 9b, 10 (i), 10 (ii) were the ones dealt with most successfully by candidates.

Examination Reading: General

- ◆ Question 3: most candidates were able to identify the alliteration or the list.
- ◆ Question 4: most candidates identified the three things required (a very straightforward question).
- ◆ Question 10a: many candidates were able to identify the use of metaphor, simile etc.
- ◆ Question 12: most candidates supplied the required piece of evidence from the text.
- ◆ Question 15: another very straightforward question.

Examination Reading: Credit

The passage chosen for this year's Credit paper was slightly longer than usual. Markers commented on this but also said that the length did not seem to cause candidates any undue difficulties. Candidates responded well to a passage that was regarded as 'contemporary' and 'youth-orientated' in terms of subject matter.

- ◆ Question 12a: most candidates were able to gloss 'popularised'.
- ◆ Question 10: most candidates showed knowledge of what a 'catalyst' is (often giving the 'scientific' definition).
- ◆ Question 14: candidates at this level had no difficulty in dealing with a multiple-choice question.
- ◆ Question 16: most candidates found the appropriate evidence (a straightforward question at this level).
- ◆ Question 18: most candidates successfully identified and commented on the aptness of the simile.
- ◆ Question 23: most candidates were able to provide two appropriate pieces of evidence to justify their choice.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Folio Writing

- ◆ Making the best use of source materials (especially those taken from the internet) in W1 pieces.
- ◆ Proof-reading word-processed submissions effectively — too often use of a spell checker leads to *more* errors in candidates' work.
- ◆ Avoiding weaknesses in expression, comma-splicing, inappropriate use of tenses and careless punctuation.
- ◆ Overcoming the limitations of vague or poorly-worded tasks.

Folio Reading

- ◆ Analysing two (or more) texts in one critical response.
- ◆ Overcoming the limitations of vague or poorly-worded tasks ('Write a C.E.L. on ...'; 'Write about a novel you have studied in class...')
- ◆ Overcoming the limiting nature of overly-prescriptive 'scaffolds' provided by teachers for critical responses.
- ◆ Producing credit-level responses to texts of dubious literary merit.

Examination Writing

Where candidates struggled, markers noted difficulties in the following areas:

- ◆ Technical errors, such as punctuation of direct speech; comma splicing; confusion of tenses in narratives; confusion of to/too/two; confusion of there/their/they're; incorrect use of apostrophes; inconsistent spelling; ineffective paragraphing.
- ◆ Handwriting that was difficult to read.
- ◆ Genre confusion: short story assignments giving rise to accounts of personal experience (and vice versa).
- ◆ Not making effective use of planning.
- ◆ Failing to continue the imposed opening of assignment 11 in a convincing and sustained way.
- ◆ Failing to develop setting and character in short stories.
- ◆ Failing to provide effective endings to short stories.
- ◆ Overuse of dialogue in short stories.
- ◆ Some candidates did not pay enough attention to the demands of the rubrics (assignment 2 'a telephone call giving you unwelcome news'; assignment 6 '... a memorable journey by boat').
- ◆ In response to assignment 6, some candidates made only a cursory mention of a journey by boat, concentrating instead on the holiday that followed.
- ◆ Some candidates failed to ensure the picture stimulus was reflected in the content of responses to assignments 7 and 16.

Examination Reading: Foundation

- ◆ Question 6: few candidates gained 2 marks due to their inability to interpret 'writhing'.
- ◆ Question 7: many candidates scored 1 mark only having failed to 'Explain fully'.
- ◆ Question 12: the majority of candidates were unable to connect the words 'Garronk! Garronk! Garraaaaaark!' to the sound made by the heron.
- ◆ Question 14: most candidates were unable to infer why Lucy 'felt the loneliness'.

- ◆ Question 19: many candidates gained 1 mark only.
- ◆ Question 21: many candidates failed to pick up on the idea of the 'strength' of the shocks and so gained 1 mark only.
- ◆ Question 23: some candidates failed to distinguish between Lucy's and the writer's imagination.

Examination Reading: General

- ◆ Question 1: most candidates were unable to explain the concept contained in the expression 'it was Christmas'.
- ◆ Question 5: a significant minority of candidates interpreted 'one thing the writer's sister did' as a question about her job rather than her actions.
- ◆ Question 10b: many candidates were unable to explain the imagery.
- ◆ Question 13: many candidates gained 1 mark only — referring to parenthesis or mother but not both.
- ◆ Question 22: many candidates scored 1 mark for the dirty gloves but failed to refer to the birds for the second mark.

Examination Reading: Credit

- ◆ Question 2: some candidates did not provide a suitable comment on the writer's word-choice and so failed to gain the second mark.
- ◆ Question 3: although many candidates were able to gloss 'unorthodox', many found it more challenging to gloss both 'urban' and 'theatre' for the second mark.
- ◆ Question 4: a significant number of candidates failed to gloss 'interesting'.
- ◆ Question 5: many candidates failed to identify that the writer was using a metaphor.
- ◆ Question 9: candidates failed to focus on the sentence itself and did not follow the accepted 'formula' for dealing with a 'link question'.
- ◆ Question 17: most candidates failed to make the second point about the injury or the irony.
- ◆ Question 19: very few candidates were able to show understanding of the word 'bureaucracy'; either because the context for this was in the next column of the passage or because too many candidates were simply unfamiliar with the word itself.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Folio

- ◆ Ensure labels for folio pieces are completed in full.
- ◆ Show candidates how to keep to suggested word limits.
- ◆ Ensure candidates are set meaningful tasks that will allow them to produce work that reflects their ability to analyse literary techniques *and* display a genuine personal response.
- ◆ Avoid setting candidates tasks which, although interesting and 'rich' in themselves (such as comparing a novel with its film version), do not fit the requirements of valid Folio submissions.
- ◆ Avoid submitting critical evaluations of non-fiction and media texts as W1 pieces purporting *to convey information*.

Examination Writing

- ◆ Centres should address the technical errors outlined in the first bullet point in the section 'Areas which candidates found demanding'.
- ◆ Responses to 'write in any way you choose' assignments should demonstrate a clear link to the picture stimulus.
- ◆ Candidates should be advised against using a 'prepared' response in the examination.
- ◆ Candidates should practise developing *setting* and *character* in short stories.
- ◆ Candidates' handwriting must be clear and legible (many candidates wrote in pencil in this year's examination).

Examination Reading

This advice remains consistent with that given in previous years in the light of candidate performance in this element. Candidates should read a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction texts during the two years of the Standard Grade English course. Passages used in the Reading papers are likely to be taken from novels, short stories, memoirs, travel writing, newspaper and magazine features and other non-fiction sources. To prepare candidates for particular questions, note the following points:

- ◆ Candidates should be taught how to deal with the demands of the 'link' question (a type of question used previously in this examination and commonly found in English examinations at other levels).
- ◆ Candidates should be alerted to the need to use their own words when required to do so in questions at Credit and General.
- ◆ When answering questions that ask them to 'Explain' or 'Explain fully', candidates should not just quote from the passage in the answer.
- ◆ Candidates should not waste time writing out part of the question in the answer.
- ◆ Word-choice questions require candidates to quote and comment.
- ◆ Questions asking candidates to 'Comment on...' require an explanation (usually of a particular technique) and not just a quote.
- ◆ Candidates should ensure their handwriting is legible.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Standard Grade

Number of resulted entries in 2010	51,962
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	50,297
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of overall awards

Grade 1	9.8%
Grade 2	32.6%
Grade 3	33.1%
Grade 4	19.9%
Grade 5	3.4%
Grade 6	0.1%
Grade 7	0.0%
No award	1.1%

Grade boundaries for each assessable element in the subject included in the report

Assess-able Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
R	50	34	23	50	32	25	50	29	20

Statistical information: update on Courses

English — Alternative Communication Standard Grade

Number of resulted entries in 2010	1
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	2
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of overall awards

Grade 1	0.0%
Grade 2	0.0%
Grade 3	50.0%
Grade 4	50.0%
Grade 5	0.0%
Grade 6	0.0%
Grade 7	0.0%
No award	0.0%

Grade boundaries for each assessable element in the subject included in the report

Assess-able Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
R	50	34	23	50	32	25	50	29	20