

Cambridge IGCSE® (9–1) First Language English 0627 Specimen Paper 1 Examiner Report June 2015

This report has been written for **Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys** who kindly agreed to provide candidate responses for the new Cambridge IGCSE (9–1) First Language English (0627) Specimen Paper 1. Paper 1 Reading Passages is 2 hours 10 minutes and untiered, and is worth 50% of the total marks. Paper 1 has three compulsory questions:

- Question 1 Comprehension
- Question 2 Summary
- Question 3 Comprehension and comparison.

The three unseen passages for Paper 1 are taken from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries.

General comments

The vast majority of the candidates managed their time well and attempted all the questions. There were a few who did not finish either **Question 2** or **Question 3(c)**, presumably because of issues with time management. This was often due to writing too much when responding to the low-tariff questions in Question 1. Candidates are reminded that for questions with a weighting of one or two marks, a developed response is not expected. Noting the number of marks attached to questions is crucial to ensure good time-management in this paper.

Question 1

Question 1 was based on Passage A – the 19th century text. In 0627 Specimen Paper 1 the text was taken from *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens. The question was split into a number of low-tariff questions testing reading comprehension and then a longer question on writer's effects. The understanding of this 19th century passage was generally very sound in this sample.

Question 1(a) was split into two sections and tested explicit understanding of the opening paragraph. Short responses were required in the candidate's own words. The vast majority of candidates in this sample got these answers right. Where they were incorrect it was usually due to misreading of the question or over-complicating the response. Some candidates wrote far too much for a 1 mark question.

In **Question 1(b)** we were looking for sharp focus on the reader's impression of Mr Creakle in the given sentence. As two marks were allocated to the question, candidates were expected to identify two characteristics. Some only gave one therefore losing a mark. Very few candidates got this question wrong.

There was greater misunderstanding of **Question 1(c)** which asked candidates to explain the meanings of two phrases – 'profound impression' and 'speechless and motionless'. Those who understood the question were able to offer meanings or partial meanings for these words. The majority could explain 'speechless and motionless', although 'profound impression' was more demanding with many responses repeating the word 'impression' instead of identify an appropriate synonym. Candidates who misunderstood the question tried to comment on the effects of the phrases rather than the meanings of the words. Where a single word or a phrase was correctly explained candidates were awarded one mark.

Question 1(d) asked the candidates to explore effects of phrases in italics and the majority of candidates were able to analyse them well. Some found the word 'writhe' in the quote challenging to explain but most made an attempt to address the question and think carefully about the words identified.

In **Question 1(e)** many candidates took a rather general approach to the given simile 'like a giant in a story-book surveying his captives'. As this was a four-mark question candidates were expected to look at the simile closely, unpicking the different aspects. We wanted analysis of how the simile expressed the boys' feelings of entrapment, fear of Mr Creakle as a huge powerful figure, the feeling of being under scrutiny, and the sense of being in a terrifying or unfamiliar place. Many responses commented on one of these ideas but did not develop the answer fully enough to gain more than one or two marks.

Question 1(f) asked candidates to look at paragraph five in detail and select powerful words and phrases to explain how the writer creates effects. Candidates were given bullet points to guide their response. Most candidates seemed familiar with this style of question, as it is similar to the 0500 syllabus Paper 2, **Question 2**. Many candidates were able to identify three to four phrases and explain them well, but only a few responses went beyond this and found a greater range. This was probably because the bullet points had not been read properly and they missed the third bullet – what David Copperfield thinks about Mr Creakle – completely. The majority of responses chose 'a delight in cutting at' and were able to comment in some depth on the sense of enjoyment and pleasure derived from a violent and cruel act, and a number wrote very well on 'craving appetite' and the connotations of addiction. Many also analysed the implications of 'couldn't resist a chubby boy' and its connotations of bullying and victimisation of the most vulnerable. Fewer responses referred to 'scored and marked' or 'rises hotly' and 'incapable brute'. Generally the quality of comments was good, although there were a number of responses where the ideas were slightly repetitive. As a 15-mark question candidates should aim to write a developed response to this task.

Question 2

Passage B was taken from *Summerhill School – A new View of Childhood* by A S Neill and outlined the author's thoughts about how children are best educated, the principles behind Summerhill School and how Summerhill differs in its approach from other more conventional schools.

Candidates were asked to write a short formal report to the governors of Summerhill as a new teacher who does not agree with the way that the school is run. They were asked to focus on the Headteacher's attitude to discipline and rules.

Question 2 produced some very good responses and many candidates used the passage very well to offer a full and informed viewpoint in a formal report. In terms of reading, many responses identified a number of concerns, drawing their ideas from the passage and writing in a convincing voice as a new teacher at Summerhill School.

The differentiation here came from the range of ideas offered and the development and modification of those ideas to suit the style, purpose and audience. All responses referred to optional lessons and lack of rules and children having complete freedom, but responses in the higher bands looked more closely at the passage and also commented a wider range of ideas: mixed-age classes; the nuisance caused by children playing all day; the lack of moral education; the fear that the students wouldn't be able to cope in the real world on leaving school, and the general naivety of a school based on the Headteacher's ideology. These more subtle ideas allowed a more developed response. As 10 marks in this question are for Reading, candidates are expected to extract a number of relevant points from the passage rather than just two or three which was sometimes the case.

In terms of writing this seemed to be a voice that the candidates were comfortable with. A number of candidates wrote a letter rather than a formal report – the question needs to be read very carefully. The vast majority of candidates adopted an appropriate register and tone, and used some good vocabulary to express the teacher's views. A small number were too openly critical of the Headteacher himself, and lacked the tact and subtlety that such a report would demand. Most candidates, however, were able to express strong views and raise their concerns without being too personal or offensive. The standard of spelling, punctuation and grammar varied, but most responses were in Band 3 or above.

Question 3

In **Question 3** candidates read Passage C, and respond to a question on both Passage B and Passage C. Passage C was a newspaper article urging for the reinstatement of corporal punishment in British schools.

This question started with three low-tariff questions on Passage B and Passage C, followed by a comparative question on both passages worth 20 marks.

In the first part of **Question 3(a)** the candidates were asked to identify a phrase from paragraph 1 of Passage B. The majority of candidates wrote a whole sentence instead of a phrase which denied them the mark, even if it contained the correct phrase. Reading the question carefully is essential as only a few candidates answered this question correctly. In the second part of the question they were asked to identify why the writer thinks conventional schools are wrong for children. As this was a two-mark question we were looking for two ideas, but many candidates only offered one. Again this is a reminder to always look at the number of marks a question is worth.

Question 3(b) proved to be quite challenging as the emphasis was on why the description of the caning was an effective *opening* to the article. Some responses didn't focus on the question sufficiently, commenting rather generally instead of looking at the paragraph in the context of the whole article. Some candidates used stock phrases such as 'draw the reader in' which could not gain any credit. Those that did focus more sharply on the question were usually able to gain some marks on this question.

Question 3 (c) proved to be the most challenging on the paper, probably because a comparative response is very new to the candidates and less familiar territory for them. This is a differentiating task and candidates who are aiming for higher grades must ensure that they manage their time carefully to ensure that they produce a developed response to this question. The passages offered very different viewpoints and were also written in different styles, offering much scope for comparison.

Candidates rarely used the bullet points provided to scaffold their responses, instead focusing only on the first bullet point – the views and ideas of each writer. Most were able to identify the opposing viewpoints and offer textual support to illustrate their ideas. However, very few candidates looked closely at the evidence used to support the ideas or the language, structure and techniques used by the writers. As these bullet points offered a much greater scope for comparative analysis – a higher order skill – the responses that did not address them could not get a mark in the higher bands. Those that did comment on tone, language and structure made some perceptive comparisons and were able to support their points with integrated quotations. It is advisable that candidates use the three bullet points to scaffold their response and ensure that they address each one evenly. This will ensure integrated comparison of the two passages and also allow them to address all the strands in the marking bands and earn higher marks.

More detailed information about this syllabus can be found at www.cie.org.uk and <http://teachers.cie.org.uk>

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