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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In English Language (1EN0)
Paper 1: Fiction and Imaginative Writing

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Paper Introduction

This report will provide an overview of performance, together with tips and comments, for Questions 1-6 of Paper 1 of the Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2 GCSE in English Language (9–1) for the November 2024 series.

The qualification consists of three components:

- Unit 1: Fiction and Imaginative Writing - 40% (this examination)
- Unit 2: Non-fiction and Transactional Writing - 60% (examination)
- Unit 3: Spoken Language Endorsement (non-examination assessment)

This report will focus on Unit 1: Fiction and Imaginative Writing. The paper is assessed through a 1 hour 45 minutes examination. The total number of marks available is 64. The reading and writing sections on this paper are linked by a theme. This is an untiered specification and the choice of texts and questions set are such that all candidates are able to access the paper and to show their abilities in reading and writing.

The focus of this component is:

Section A – Reading

Study and analyse selections from a range of prose fiction.

This paper features one unseen fiction extract from 19th-century prose fiction. The word count of this text is approximately 650 words.

The specification states that:

'Students should read selections from a range of high-quality, challenging prose fiction, in preparation for responding to an unseen 19th-century prose fiction extract in the examination. They should be able to read substantial pieces of writing (extended texts) that make significant demands on them in terms of content, structure and the quality of language.' (page 6)

There are four questions on the text, which are stepped in difficulty. Questions 1 and 2 are short response questions and questions 3 and 4 are extended response questions.

Candidates are recommended to spend one hour on section A.

Section B – Writing

This section allows candidates to develop imaginative writing skills to engage the reader.

There is a choice of two writing tasks, which are linked by a theme to the reading extracts. Candidates pick one question to respond to. One of the writing tasks additionally provides two images that candidates can use to help them generate ideas for their writing. Candidates can write a response that draws on

just one or neither of the images. In November 2024, the images were part of Question 5.

The specification states that:

'Students should use what they have learned about the writer's craft in their reading of fiction to inspire and influence their own imaginative writing. They should develop a range of creative writing techniques, and planning and proofreading skills.' (page 6)

Candidates are recommended to spend 45 minutes on section B.

The Assessment Objectives for this paper are:

Section A – Reading

AO1:

- Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas (Q1 and Q2)

AO2: Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views (Q3)

AO4: Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references (Q4)

Section B – Writing

AO5:

Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences (Q5 or Q6)

Organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts (Q5 or Q6)

AO6: Candidates must use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation (Q5 or Q6)

Mark breakdown

Question 1: 1 mark (AO1)

Question 2: 2 marks (AO1)

Question 3: 6 marks (AO2)

Question 4: 15 marks (AO4)

Questions 5 and 6: 40 marks (AO5 24 marks, AO6 16 marks)

Total mark available: 64

Section A overview

In the November 2024 series, the extract was from *The Monster and Other Stories*, by Stephen Crane.

It was evident from the responses seen across the reading section of the paper that candidates found the text to be accessible, with many showing clear and often insightful understanding of the unfolding events in the extract.

Candidates' responses tended to centre on the increasing pace and excitement presented in the text, with the mounting fear and tension as the text progresses. In particular, many candidates explored the slow build up of events, such as the description of the initial 'wisp of smoke', which 'drifted quietly', and considered how the text concludes with the frantic actions of Henry in an attempt to rescue Jimmie from the fire.

Question 1

Question 1 is a single mark question, which requires understanding of AO1: 'identify and interpret'. This low-tariff question is intended to lead candidates into the examination and was successfully done by the majority of candidates in the November 2024 paper.

Question 1 asked candidates to identify a word or phrase which shows where the smoke ended up (from lines 1–3).

There were two correct answers:

- branches
- tree

The important advice for this question is to read what is being asked for and to select the correct information. Candidates should ensure that their response is selected from the lines indicated in the question.

Some candidates copied out a phrase, which included the correct answer. This is sufficient for a mark. Other candidates saved some time by writing just one word, which answered the question (either 'branches' or 'tree'), and gained the mark for this question.

The candidates who did not achieve a mark for this question did not address the question. Candidates must ensure that their answer responds to the question being asked. For example, some candidates responded to this question with information about where the smoke came from, such as 'one of the windows at the end of the house'. Other incorrect answers focused on how the smoke travelled through the air: 'drifted'.

Candidates should provide some evidence of selection, and, therefore, copying out all the lines stipulated in the question would not be sufficient for a mark.

Question 2

Question 2 is worth two marks and, like question 1, tests candidates' ability to identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas. This question develops from question 1 by asking candidates to focus upon a longer section of text and by allowing candidates to express answers in their own words as well as using quotations from the text.

This question asked candidates to give two ways which show how Hannigan reacted to the fire, from the relevant lines printed in the question paper.

This question was answered successfully by the majority of candidates, with most candidates achieving at least one mark and many achieving full marks. Where candidates were unsuccessful, they often failed to provide two parts to their answer. The layout of the answer space, with its use of separate lines numbered 1 and 2, is intended to structure the answer for candidates and to ensure that they include two ways, in order to gain the two marks that are available.

All of the examples given in the mark scheme were seen in responses, either as quotations or own words:

- Hannigan reacted immediately
- he seems to be shocked and alarmed by the fire / he is in a state of panic
- Hannigan 'tumbled' / gets down from where he is very quickly and without taking care
- Hannigan 'swung over the fence'
- he is running
- he is 'shouting'
- Hannigan hammers on the door
- he hits the door so hard his fists are compared to 'mallets'
- Hannigan is 'bawling'
- he is incoherent

Some candidates who did not achieve two marks referred to text from outside the line references given. If candidates use the section of text printed on the question paper rather than the looking at the whole extract, they are less likely to make this mistake.

Other candidates did not address the question. The focus of the question was how Hannigan reacted to the fire. However, some candidates copied out the phrase 'A man's voice suddenly shouted: "Fire! Fire! Fire!"', which is not Hannigan's reaction to the fire but is what alerts him to it.

Candidates should ensure that they read the question carefully and provide responses that address the question.

Question 3

Question 3 is worth six marks and tests candidates' ability to explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views. The most notable feature of this question is that it asks candidates to comment upon both language and structure.

The mark scheme is split into three levels of two marks each and it is worth noting that the mark scheme states that 'The mark awarded cannot progress beyond the top of Level 1 if only language OR structure has been considered.' This is an important feature and one that centres should make candidates fully aware of. In order to access the marks in levels two and three, it is not necessary for the language and structure comments to be equally weighted, only that the answer must contain reference to both.

Candidates should use the mark tariff as a guide about how much to write in response to this question and it is quite possible to attain all six marks in the space provided in the answer booklet. Candidates should take care not to spend too long responding to question 3 at the expense of later questions on the paper.

In the November 2024 paper, candidates were asked to consider how the writer uses language and structure in the given lines to show what Henry and Hannigan experience in the house.

It was pleasing to see that many responses had considered both language and structure and that candidates had been encouraged to be aware of structural points. The majority of candidates were able to pick out both elements of language and structure in the text using well-selected quotation/references.

The more successful answers offered a balanced analysis of how the writer uses features of both language and structure to show what Henry and Hannigan experience in the house. For language, many candidates focused on the description of the thick smoke, the use of a simile to indicate Mrs. Trescott's lack of strength and control ('waving her arms as if they were two reeds') and the description of Henry's desperate fumbling through the smoke. For structure, many candidates successfully considered how the extract begins with great movement and action but ends with the slow and awkward movements of Henry. Many responses also considered the use of repeated direct speech to create urgency and immediacy: "Jimmie! Jimmie! Save Jimmie!"

The less successful responses wrote about only language or structure or only offered comments upon isolated features and did not clearly explain the effects that the writer had sought to achieve and were not able to examine in detail those features. As a result, they were not able to reach the marks in levels two and three.

Candidates should be reminded that responses should be based on the lines printed in the question paper. Some candidates lost marks as a result of, at least in part, referring to outside of the given lines.

Examiners' comments:

- 'The vast majority of students ... showed good general ability to comment on or explain the writer's methods and effects.'
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- 'Many answers were offered with a methodical use of the PEE paragraph structure, with the more successful candidates zooming into key features, naming the technical terms and zooming in to explore the writer's craft.'
- 'Generally, pertinent references and quotations were selected to substantiate ideas.'
- 'A significant number of successful candidates offered blended, layered, and tentative analysis of each point being covered.'
- 'Some candidates muddled the requirements of question 3 with those of question 4, using evaluative phrasing and the SITE or SPITE method to present their ideas.'
- 'Popular language points included the fire described as 'roaring', the ever-changing colours of characters' faces (I enjoyed reading some imaginative and medical attempts to explain these), and the choice of verbs to depict speed.'
- 'The most popular responses focused on the description of the smoke: 'thick cloud of smoke' and the use of the powerful vocab: 'rushed', 'clamour' and 'horror' and the effect of the verbs 'screamed' and 'bellowed'.'
- 'Popular structure points included the repetition and punctuation of 'Jimmie!' and the use of short paragraphs.'
- 'Most candidates were able to select and pick out references to consider, however, a number of responses provided explanations that were focused on Mrs Trescott's use of repetition or the repetition of the word 'fire' without considering how these examples of direct speech contributed to tone, cross referenced with other language features or were short and simple in their expression.'

Question 4

Question four is the highest mark tariff question in Section A and candidates would be wise to ensure that they allocate sufficient time to this question.

This question tests candidates' ability to evaluate texts critically and support their evaluations with appropriate textual references. The focus of evaluation is upon how well something has been achieved, not merely upon how it has been achieved; it is an assessment of the relative success of the writer rather than simply an explanation of the techniques that have been used. It is true that in order to offer a meaningful evaluation one must be able to show a well-informed understanding of the text and be able to support this with close reference to the text.

The focus of this question in the November 2024 paper was upon how successfully the writer had created tension. Once again, candidates must focus upon the question asked if they are to be successful.

The more successful answers offered wide-ranging evaluations that were closely focused upon the Assessment Objective and which used apt text selection to support the points being made. The most successful responses considered the extract in its entirety. The quality of evaluative language was a good discriminator, as was the focus on the question. The mark scheme for this question indicates that 'References to writer's techniques should only be credited at Level 2 and above if they support the critical judgement of the text.' It was pleasing to see that in the main responses had attempted to be evaluative, even just at the level of 'successful' or 'effective' and that candidates had been encouraged to use evaluative language.

Less successful responses tended to be narrative-based and sometimes concentrated entirely upon a small part of the text, showing only a partial understanding of the text, which limited their ability to evaluate how successfully the writer had achieved those effects. Such answers were often brief and undeveloped and often misunderstood the relationship between the characters.

The mark scheme sets out a range of possible points candidates could make. However, it is important to remember that this is indicative content and all relevant points made by candidates are rewarded. Many responses focused on how the extract begins slowly with an insidious and insubstantial 'wisp of smoke', emphasised by the manner in which it 'drifted quietly', that belies the dangerous density of smoke the men will face, creating feelings of unease at this stage. There was also much focus on the symbolism of blood in the extract, with the initial reference, 'as if the panes of it had been stained with blood', prefiguring the suffering and pain to come.

Candidates also commented on the description of Henry, with the metaphor 'turned him blue with horror' depicting him as the opposite to, and antagonist of, the red flames, bringing home his sense of deep concern for his own safety.

There were also some successful responses that considered the pessimistic ending of the extract, with Henry's movements becoming slow and precarious, indicative of how he gives up all hope of getting himself and Jimmie out of the

house alive, bringing the tension to its peak as it seems clear that they cannot escape unharmed.

Examiners' comments:

- 'Most candidates were able to understand how tension was key to the narrative and the writer's purpose.'
- 'Answers seemed to be secure and well thought out with a focus on the skill being addressed. Students were direct and showed confidence in their points.'
- 'Mostly, candidates focused on the contrast between the beginning and the end of the text, the task being a sense of rescue, the sense of urgency ("Fire! Fire! Fire!" was a very popular quotation) and the phrase, 'turned him blue with horror'.'
- 'More successful candidates gave very distinct reasons, which included the fact that the fire began as a wisp and developed into a full house fire. They commented on the heroism of the men and how they reacted to the fire. There were good contrasts made between the sight of Jimmie's room compared with the rest of the house. These candidates supported their work with relevant textual quotes.'
- 'Candidates accessing marks in levels 4-5 managed to explore how well the setting, people, ideas, themes and events built tension throughout the extract, with particular focus on the subtly of the fire building from a 'wisp' to 'ablaze', how each character demonstrated tension through their dialogue and actions and how they manage the stressful situation they're in.'
- 'Less successful responses tended to tackle the events of the extract rather than pick up on the more subtle meanings, how the reader becomes aware of the threat and potential severity of the fire. One such candidate showed misconception with the reference made to how Hannigan 'pawed awkwardly' at the door and stated that this was dramatic irony as Hanigan doesn't have paws!'
- 'Less successful candidates were still able to comment on tension in the extract by picking out the simple quotations of the 'fire' and the speed and the panes being stained with blood.'
- 'There was sound evidence of some effective teaching approaches allied with clear guidance and mnemonics for candidates that allowed even brief or underdeveloped responses to contain at least a rudimentary evaluative element. The extract seemed very helpful when taken alongside the question in providing distinct areas for the description and then evaluation or at least exploration/explanation of the intention to create suspense. The punctuation, repetition and the development of peril were examples of where this was well realised.'

Section B

The writing question is the final section of the paper. Candidates are advised to spend about 45 minutes on their writing and there are 40 marks available on both papers. Considered in the overall % of the marks available on the papers, this is significant. Examiners are always impressed by candidates' writing, and by the development they are able to achieve in the time they have, their individual style and level of thought and creativity. In an examination situation, candidates do incredibly well to produce a response to an unseen question.

The specification entitles the Paper 1 writing section 'Imaginative Writing', and it is important that all candidates understand what they are being asked to do. There is no set text type for Section B; candidates are expected to produce clear and coherent text and to write for impact. Each question tells candidates that their work will be marked for the accurate and appropriate use of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and grammar.

The question is marked against two assessment objectives and does not include a separate mark for SPAG. As a reminder, the two assessment objectives are:

AO5:

Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences (Q5 or Q6)

Organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts (Q5 or Q6)

AO6: Candidates must use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation (Q5 or Q6)

AO5 assesses how well candidates can communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences; and, in addition, how well they organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion. AO5 is worth 24 of the 40 marks available.

AO6 accounts for the remaining 16 marks and assesses how well candidates use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

Candidates must choose one of the two questions available to them.

The questions in the November 2024 paper were:

Q5 – Look at the images provided.

Write about a time when you did something that made you feel proud.

Q6 - Write about a time when you or someone you know did something that was exciting.

There is a deliberate and thematic link to the text that has been read for Section A and this is intended to encourage and support candidates in their writing. One of the questions will always make reference to a pair of printed images and in November 2024, this was question 5 (as per the question above).

In the November 2024 paper, question 5 was the slightly more popular writing question. Most candidates were able to complete a piece of writing in the available time. For those who had not left sufficient time for the writing, they should be aware that the mark scheme makes specific reference to structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion, therefore, incomplete texts will not be able to access the full range of marks that is available for this question.

The paper includes a section for candidates to plan their answers and they are recommended to do so. When candidates did make use of the planning box this series, it tended to be used effectively.

There was an interesting range of responses for both questions. Responses to question 5 included significant personal achievements for candidates, such as winning a competition or overcoming a fear. For question 6, responses ranged from an exciting trip abroad to an adventure into the unknown.

Essentially, the most successful responses crafted a response that used a wide variety of techniques, had emotional depth, accessible characters as well as a defined narrative structure.

The less successful answers were often incomplete, lacking in accuracy and clarity of communication and sometimes assuming an understanding of character or setting that was not shared with the reader, making it difficult to fully engage with what was written.

It is important for candidates to remember that a full short story or novel is not expected to be written in 45 minutes. Often with imaginative writing, candidates spend a lot of time creating an environment in a piece and this affects their ability to organise and structure their response, the second bullet of the mark scheme for AO5. There should be clear organisation and structure with an introduction, development of points and a conclusion. A candidate may attempt an ambitious opening to their writing, but this is then lost as they realise that the narrative needs to get somewhere very quickly as their time runs out. The point about Level 3 bullet three 'Develops and connects ideas and information' is important – the level to which ideas are developed can be a discriminator as to how far into the level an answer can get. Ideas at the lower end of this level are connected, but not fully developed, and at the higher end of the level are both connected and developed.

For AO6, it is important to remember that it is not just about SPAG (spelling, punctuation and grammar) - assessment is of the candidate's ability to 'use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation'. AO6 takes quality of vocabulary and syntax into account as well as spelling and punctuation.

Candidates should be encouraged to read and understand a range of texts in their preparation for the examination to extend their own vocabulary – think, how can they use extensive vocabulary strategically? Candidates are credited if they are ambitious in their vocabulary selection – it may not always be spelt correctly, but is credited as ambitious, whereas less ambitious vocabulary may be spelt correctly all the way through – this is where 'best-fit' is important in recognising the candidate's achievement. Strategic use of vocabulary in Level 5 is seen where candidates really consider their reader and their message in the choice of language.

Candidates often worry about how to show they are using a range of punctuation. They should consider using punctuation accurately (that they understand) and if possible, using varied punctuation. Varied punctuation could be parenthesis, ellipsis, semi-colons and colons, speech marks as examples. Syntax should be used to create an impact on the reader – candidates again should go back to their answers to Question 3 and should consider all the points they raise about language and structure in the text they have read. They should be ambitious, for example including coordination and subordination, short sentences, questions, exclamations and commands amongst other syntactical structures.

Examiners' comments:

- There were 'a wide variety of responses to the writing section, with many candidates opting to use the images in the paper as a stepping stone. Responses varied from winning Olympic Gold to overcoming a fear to achieving a personal goal and were enjoyable to read.'
- 'Responses contained ideas such as making a physical / emotional discovery, meeting someone new for the first time, concerts, weddings, parties, Christmas, holidays etc.'
- 'Sport and sporting achievement was easily the most prevalent topic. While this allowed some responses to be effective and affecting, the majority of mid-range responses relied on fairly pedestrian and simple football matches. Some notable outliers and maybe a good teaching point was that sports/activities like mountain climbing offered more scope for language and narrative/descriptive.'
- It is clear that 'candidates enjoy the freedom to express themselves, often by recounting a personal anecdote about something that made them proud or was exciting. Some of these may have been fictional but many had authenticity and appeared to be based on personal experience. Those rooted in wartime exploits or a fantasy world tended to be less successful because candidates did not have the time to explore and develop sufficiently.'
- There was 'an interesting array of interpretations of 'proud'. Most responses attempted to include a build up to the event or experience which made them or their family feel proud. Some featured activities such as bungee jumping, sky-diving or zipwires whilst others were based in school-based settings such as the exam hall or the stage. There was generally a strong sense of the narrative heading in a deliberate direction and of rising to the challenge (surviving a trip to town after a break up, or growing potatoes on Mars) or overcoming a fear (often of heights).'
- 'The majority of candidates planned their work with evidence of narrative sequence and story structure guiding the writing. Many candidates produced acronyms to prompt the use of writing techniques, sentence structures, and the collation of vocabulary they intended to use in their writing. Significant numbers of candidates prompted themselves to employ clear paragraphs. They also showed evidence of a final proofreading check by amending vocabulary, adding in punctuation and redefining paragraphs.'
- 'Stronger candidates were aware of the value of hooking devices, bringing the reader into either a certain historical period or a completely different world and were able to sustain this throughout their written piece. This was often coupled with precise and effective uses of vocabulary, figurative language and sentence structures.'
- From the responses seen, it was evident that more successful candidates 'recognise the value of structure and structural devices in conveying a

pleasing and satisfying story. From the off, these candidates set the scene, built character and demonstrated clear crafting from beginning to end – utilising and manipulating higher level techniques such as rhetorical devices, patterns of punctuation and motifs.'

- The most successful candidates 'carefully chose an extensive range of vocabulary which was strategically employed throughout their writing thus having the influence and impact on the reader. Punctuation tended to be applied with accuracy, precision and a full range was seen. The range of sentence structures most carefully employed to influence the reader and achieve particular literary effects. Spelling was generally secure and did not detract from the overall meaning.'
- 'Some students struggled with maintaining the purpose of the piece and fell in to the idea of 'telling not showing' style of writing. This ultimately led to relying on listing to develop the plot which weakened the overall response/ superficial/ too many events listed without development.'
- 'Generally, it was noted that candidates had worked hard to use some ambitious and detailed vocabulary. However, some candidates were not using basic punctuation accurately and this reduced their scores.'

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on the paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Remember that to do well in the Section A questions you should read the passage more than once before you start to answer the questions. At first you will simply identify the main features of the text: what is happening, the main characters and the setting. On a second and third reading you should start to identify the different ways in which the writer has tried to engage you as the reader and the techniques that have been used. These are what you will write about in your answers.
- Think about the structure of the text. Pay particular attention to the opening and closing of the text as these are important points for any writer and they will help you to see how the writer has shaped their text to initially gain the interest of the reader and then to leave them at a particular point.
- Remember that question 4 is worth more than the first three questions added together and twice as many marks as question 3. You should bear this in mind when considering how long you should spend on your answer, the level of detail to include and how much to write.
- On question 4, try to remember that you are being asked to evaluate how successfully something has been done, not just to comment on the language and structural devices that the writer has used. That means that you should use evaluative language to show that this is what you are doing.
- Before starting your own writing take some time to use the planning box that is included. Plan the basic outline of your plot so that you know where you will start and how you will end your writing. If you have the time you could identify key features of characters, important vocabulary or language techniques that you will include. Spending a few minutes to get your ideas in order will help you write in a more deliberate manner.
- If you are going to borrow any ideas from the Section A text or use any of its vocabulary try to make sure that you make it your own by fully integrating it into your writing.
- Try to avoid clichés. Think carefully about your very first sentences. Try to write in a way that is imaginative and engaging for your reader from the very start. Use your own reading as stimulus, including the adoption of certain writers' techniques.
- Using your plan, think of your writing like a journey so that as you begin to write, you will know what your destination is and where you will end. This will help you to write in a manner that is cohesive and coherent for your reader.
- Take care throughout with accuracy of all sorts: spelling, punctuation and grammar.

- Keep a close eye on the time during the examination and use the number of marks available for each question as an indication of how long you should spend answering each question. Remember that Section A is worth 24 marks whilst Section B is worth 40 marks. Use the timing suggestions you are given on the front cover of the paper: 1 hour on Section A and 45 minutes on Section B.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link: <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html>