

GCSE

# English/English Language

Unit 1H

Report on the Examination

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ENG1H  
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## INTRODUCTION

Examiners have reported that the examination overall was accessible and that candidates had adequate time to complete all questions. The reading sources were well received and candidates found the writing tasks engaging, indeed enjoyable.

Candidates responded generally well to **question 1** with over 88% achieving at least half marks and over 64% gaining a mark of five out of eight or more. The requirement to show understanding again resulted in usually focused interpretation. There were a number of facets to the article, including the central point that vegetarianism would not, of itself, 'save the planet', and the writer's own suggestions about how this might be achieved. Many candidates recognised the two sides of the vegetarian issue and would therefore have achieved Band 3 of the mark scheme. Candidates who did best drew attention to all the aspects covered by the article, including the writer's views and solution, with focused comment and quoted support. The ability to make perceptive connections between both sides of the argument and the possible solutions led to a mark in Band 4. Less able candidates missed important points, or thought the writer was advocating vegetarianism, or just listed four or five points without any sense of real engagement. A small number of candidates misunderstood the question and wrote a critique of the writer's use of language or offered their own opinion about vegetarianism.

Candidates responded well to **question 2** with 85% achieving at least half marks and over 57% gaining a mark of 5 out of 8 or more. There was plenty in the headline to engage candidates, with most recognising the significance of 'ticking time bomb', 'teenage girls' and 'starved' and many seeing the irony of 'starved' and 'diet'. The most successful candidates analysed the effects of the words in their context and went on to link the words and phrases with direct quotations from relevant parts of the text. They would also have provided a telling reason why the words were effective, for example that 'ticking time bomb' makes the reader consider that something explosive and destructive is lurking, waiting its moment to do damage in the future. Less successful, but unfortunately common attempts merely suggested, for example, that the words 'put a picture in your head' or 'makes you want to read on'. Such generalised, empty comments – which could apply to any text – inclined examiners to award a mark low in Band 2.

Many candidates commented on the picture in detail, with much emphasis on the unhealthy nature of the food versus the innocence of the girl. Generally, candidates picked up on gender, the size of the burger and had something to say about the girl's facial expression. They also examined the type of shot, foreground and background, use of colour and positioning. The best responses made use of these valid descriptive elements to make telling comments on the effects they would have on the reader and then tied them directly to the text with quotations. Less successful responses offered, again, generalised effects or either failed to make clear connections with the text or just linked the picture to the headline. A small minority of candidates offered a critique of the article or an analysis of its use of language and so failed to recognise the purpose of the question.

For **question 3**, the extract, 'In Search of Olives', offered a good deal of material for candidates to use in response to the question, and there were very few who were not able to make at least the most obvious comments about the writer's thoughts and feelings. However, there were subtleties to the text which offered a challenge for more able candidates. The question was successful, with over 84% of candidate achieving at least half marks and over 58% gaining a mark of 5 out of 8 or more. Most candidates were able to explain Carol's 'love' for the desert and her 'frustration' with Muhammad. The most successful candidates traced the shifts in her thoughts and feelings

throughout the extract, explaining her sense of curiosity, her desire to experience her surroundings and her wonderings about the exterior life she viewed. The best responses also recognised that seemingly negative statements, for example about the ‘burning wind’ and her drying skin and keeping the car window open ‘whenever it was possible’, were, in fact, a celebration of the environment she was travelling through.

Candidates who did less well made assumptions based on less than close reading. For example, it was variously claimed that the writer was lonely, upset, sad, found the journey arduous or was bored. A more careful reading of the text would have elicited a more accurate impression of the writer’s thoughts and feelings for these candidates. Indeed, a defining characteristic for demonstrating the Band 3 descriptor of ‘clear understanding’ was grasping the idea that, despite the negative aspects of the journey, the writer was actually enjoying the trip immensely. There was, furthermore, some evidence that a small number of candidates misconstrued the requirements of the question by writing about the effects of the extract on the reader, or the effectiveness of the writer’s use of language. The majority of candidates, however, grasped the requirements of the question well, including the need to explain and to employ quotations from the text to support their ideas.

**Question 4** remains the most challenging question for candidates, with many candidates failing to achieve a mark in Band 3. Whilst there was evidence that some candidates selected words, phrases and language features appropriately and in context, there were many who produced generalised responses which discussed purpose, audience, genre, and person at length, without acknowledging that these were only significant in that they determined the writer’s choice of language. There were also many candidates who merely named language features - in particular the use of rhetorical questions - but offered no specific examples so that the effects of such devices could not have been discussed, explained or interpreted in a precise and contextualised way.

There were, perhaps, fewer responses simply comparing content, which was encouraging, but candidates often looked for points of comparison in content as a starting point, for example the fact that both Source 1 and Source 3 make reference to meat, and then examined the related language, rather than making the use of words, phrases or language features the initial focus of their comparison.

Candidates selected Source 1 and Source 2 in about equal measure. Those who opted to compare Source 3 with Source 2 considered descriptive language, in particular the use of metaphors, with the ‘crystal stars’ creating a magical effect and the ‘ticking time bomb’ suggesting a countdown to the inevitably disastrous and ‘explosive’ consequences of a junk food diet. Focus on individual words such as ‘belched’ and ‘guzzlers’, used to similar effect in both Source 1 and Source 2, also provided some interesting analysis. Some of the best responses to Source 1 analysed the selection of individual word choices, for example, the writer being a ‘committed’ meat-eater, suggesting how dedicated he was to this way of life, but at the same time having to ‘acknowledge’ the need to cut down on his meat intake, signifying a concession that he was prepared to make in order to preserve the planet for his grandchildren.

Many candidates, who appeared to be able to discuss the effect of words and phrases in response to **Question 2**, defaulted, in **Question 4**, to often generalised comments about the length of sentences and paragraphs instead of addressing the challenging but quite straight-forward task of selecting some examples of language choices - which were abundant throughout the sources - and analysing what the effects were.

The topic for **Question 5**; the best and the worst meal, was well received. Candidates evidently enjoyed writing about it and examiners enjoyed marking it. The task was accessible and candidates had plenty to say, some showing considerable knowledge and understanding of culinary matters and associated vocabulary. The less successful writing focused entirely on the food aspect of the meal which, in some cases, resulted in the over-use of both cliché and hyperbole. The most successful considered context: the restaurant décor; the attitude of the waiters or the harmonious – or otherwise – circumstances of a family occasion, and some produced restaurant critiques or humorous travelogue-style responses. The best responses combined lively and controlled writing with an original, perhaps ironic approach relating the meal to wider, even perhaps ethical considerations. The marks reflected the candidates' engagement with the topic with 85% achieving a mark in Band 3 or above. There was also evidence that varied sentence forms, punctuation and spelling were generally secure with 83% of candidates awarded 4 marks and 29% awarded 5 marks out of a possible 6.

Candidates responded well to the topic in **Question 6**, which was within their personal experience and about which they had a view. A number borrowed ideas freely, and successfully, from Source 2 and many employed facts and statistics, although the sometimes spurious or unrealistic nature of these was detrimental to the effectiveness of the writing. Often candidates took a utilitarian approach to their writing by assuming that their readers were stereotypically fast food and computer game addicts and, by adopting an appropriately persuasive tone, encouraged them to participate in a variety of health and exercise options, whilst at the same time easing the burden by exercising with friends or joining a gym to make it more sociable and fun. A more successful approach employed humour, irony or satire in order to manipulate, whilst simultaneously entertaining, the reader. Candidates who included wider, perhaps more moral or social aspects of personal responsibility or well-being in their writing were likely to be considered convincing. More than 78% of candidates achieved a mark in Band 3 or above for communication of ideas and more than 75% achieved a mark of 5 or better out of 8 for accuracy, suggesting that sentence structure, punctuation and spelling were generally secure. Many of the responses to both **Question 5** and **Question 6** were lengthy. Whereas this suggests that candidates had enough time to complete the paper and is, therefore, a positive indicator, length of answer did not, of itself, earn candidates more marks; focus, poignancy and succinctness, on the other hand, did.

## Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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