

GCSE (9–1)

Examiners' report

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

J351

For first teaching in 2015

J351/01 November 2022 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper 1 Series Overview

The J351/01 Communicating information and ideas component of GCSE English Language assesses candidates' ability to read and write non-fiction texts. The reading assessment tests candidates' ability to evaluate and compare the ways two texts present a particular topic. The writing assessment tests candidates' ability to write in a specified form for a specified audience and purpose.

Candidates should answer the questions in the order they are given. Each question is designed to prepare students for the next question so candidates would be well advised not to respond to the writing task until they have completed the reading section. Not only do the topics of both writing tasks draw on themes explored in the reading section but the close analysis in the reading section of how ideas are presented may remind candidates of approaches they can take in their own writing.

The short answer questions in Question 1 should help set the scene for the candidates. The synthesis and selection task for Question 2 helps the candidates work out the similarities between the texts in preparation for Question 4 in which they start to explore the differences. Question 3 draws the candidates' attention to features of language and structure which the writers use to present their ideas. Candidates may reuse material from their responses to earlier questions in their response to Question 4 because they are using it for a different purpose.

In November 2022 almost all candidates were clearly well-prepared for the examination. There was clear evidence that the advice that has been given in previous Examiners' reports had informed centres' work with their candidates. The detailed analysis and evaluation of each of the unseen texts in this session's paper shows that both texts were appreciated and enjoyed.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in response to Question 3 candidates explained how each writers' choice affected the reader • in response to Question 4 candidates compared the choices made by each of the writers • in the writing task in Section B candidates adapted their writing to suit the audience of the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in response to Question 2 candidates did not explain clearly enough the similarities between the texts • in response to Question 3 candidates identified a feature of language and structure but did not explain how it affected the reader • in response to the writing task in Section B candidates did not use paragraphs to organise their ideas.

Section A overview

The reading section contains two unseen texts which have a thematic link. The first text will always be from the 19th century and the second from either the 20th or 21st century. As this qualification is not tiered, the texts may be slightly edited to make sure that they are both accessible for all candidates and challenging for the most able.

Text 1 was an extract from letter written in the 19th century. Text 2 was taken from a newspaper article written in the 21st century. Candidates clearly understood the main points of both texts and were clear that the writer of Text 1 was much less pleased with his experience than the writer of Text 2. Both texts were accessible and had some straightforward features of language and structure on which to comment.

Question 1 (a)

Question 1 is about **Text 1**, *The Manchester to Liverpool Railway* by Charles Young.

1 Look again at lines 1–9.

(a) Identify a **phrase** that shows that people are excited by the new railway.

..... [1]

Almost every candidate was able to select the phrase 'much talked of' as evidence that people were excited about the new railway. Some candidates, however, either copied out too much, i.e., the whole first sentence rather than just the relevant phrase. while others copied out too little, i.e., 'much talked'. On this question candidates are encouraged to be selective but not, perhaps, too selective. The number of lines available for the candidate's response should indicate how much or how little the candidate should write.

Question 1 (b)

(b) Identify a **phrase** which shows there are different types of railway coaches.

.....
..... [1]

Candidates usually correctly selected either 'a range of coaches' or 'some were closed, some were open'. A few candidates offered the word 'distilling' but clearly did not understand what it meant. Candidates should be made aware that this is a low-tariff question and, therefore, although it may require some inference, will never require knowledge of unfamiliar vocabulary.

Question 1 (c)

(c) Explain **two** ways in which the writer makes clear he is worried about the railway journey.

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

Most candidates were able to pick out at least one of the three possible answers to this question from the specified lines. However, more candidates than usual offered material from outside the specified lines. This may be because this was the third part of Question 1 and candidates did not realise that they were still restricted to lines 1-9. The format of Question 1 may vary from session to session; sometimes it may be divided into two parts, sometimes into three parts. All parts of Question 1, however, will be based on a limited number of lines – usually the same set of lines – but, if one part does vary, it will be made clear as part of the question.

Question 2

Question 2 is about **Text 1**, *The Manchester to Liverpool Railway* by Charles Young and **Text 2**, *The Best Rail Trip in Britain* by Ben Fogle.

2 Both texts describe a journey by train.

What are the **similarities** between the experiences of the two writers?

Draw on evidence from **both** texts to support your answer.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [6]

To prepare for Question 2 candidates should read both texts carefully. This question should help candidates to see the connections between the texts and set the scene for Question 4 which requires candidates to consider the differences between the two texts.

Previous Examiners' reports have explained that candidates should not comment on the methods writers use to present their ideas as this will gain no credit – this question assesses AO1, not AO2. Centres have clearly borne this in mind when preparing candidates as very few used this approach in this session.

The expected similarities are listed in the mark scheme, but the list is not exhaustive. Examiners will reward any valid similarity identified by candidates. Some candidates explained a relevant similarity clearly and offered two quotations in support without explanation. It would be better to summarise in the candidate's own words how the evidence supports the stated similarity rather than quoting without explanation.

Some less successful responses offered a similarity which simply paraphrased the question, i.e., that both writers went on a journey by train. Candidates should be advised that this cannot be rewarded as it does not go beyond the question.

Exemplar 1

In both texts, the train journey is fast. In text 1, Young writes that they went off 'like a shot from a gun'. In text 2, Foyle uses words such as 'Speed' and 'quickly' to describe the train ride.

In both texts, the writers take their children with them on the train journey. In text 1, Young has 'my little ones' with him on the train. In text 2, Foyle took his 'son Ludo... to Cornwall.'

In both texts, the writers pass through ^{long} tunnels. In text 1, ~~Young passes~~ 'previous to entering Liverpool' Young passes 'through a... tunnel... 300 yards long'. In text 2, Foyle passes 'through a long tunnel into Devon.'

This exemplar illustrates an effective approach to Question 2. The candidate writes three paragraphs, each of which starts with a clear statement of the similarity between the texts and then illustrates the similarity with evidence from each text. The evidence is often presented as an explanation with some embedded quotations.

Question 3

Question 3 is about **Text 2**, *The Best Rail Trip in Britain* by Ben Fogle.

3 Look again at lines 7–22.

Explore how Fogle uses language and structure to describe what he notices on his journey.

Support your ideas by referring to the text, using relevant subject terminology.

[12]

The question asks candidates to explore how a writer has used language and structure to present ideas and information. For this qualification, structure includes any feature of a text at or beyond sentence level, or at text level. For more about how to write about language and structure, refer to the OCR support link below.

This question asks candidates to look at a specified number of lines. Candidates had again been well prepared by centres for this question because very few candidates used material from outside the specified lines.

The most successful responses linked their references to Fogle's choices of language and structure to the particular ways in which they describe what he notices on his journey, and what this implies. Less successful responses were content to label features without any comment on the writer's purposes.

There were a significant number of candidates who simply retold the content of the text without any reference to language and structure. Those who selected quotations which had significant linguistic features were credited for some awareness of language.

Others copied out lengthy quotations from the texts with no meaningful comment beyond the fact that Fogle noticed this detail on his journey. It was difficult to find anything in such responses that was worthy of marks.

The text did contain many straightforward features of language and structure, which less successful responses often successfully identified. More successful responses were able to use precise vocabulary to explain what was conveyed by the specific words or phrases the writer had chosen.

More successful candidates were able to discuss less obvious connotations of the writer's choice of language. The phrase 'weary drivers battling against the traffic' gave such candidates an opportunity to demonstrate some impressive insight.

There was much reference to the writer's use of an appeal to the different senses. This was less successful when it was simply an assertion that the writer had done so and more successful when the connotations of words like 'scent' and 'aroma' were considered more thoughtfully.

Although there are some helpful comments that could be made about sentence structure, there were almost no examples of candidates discussing sentence lengths effectively. Comment could, perhaps, have been made about the sequencing of clauses to reflect Fogle's rapid progress along his route.

OCR support



A teaching guide about writing about language and structure can be found on the OCR website using the following link:

[English Language \(9-1\) - J351 \(from 2015\) - OCR](#)

Exemplar 2

Another way Fogle uses language to describe what he notices on his journey is by using metaphors. Fogle passes the M5, where he witnesses chaos. This can be seen by "you see weary drivers battling against the traffic". This metaphor shows drivers are stuck in traffic on their way to ~~the~~ work or maybe back home. By Fogle using a metaphor, it makes the reader understand how ~~extreme~~ ^{problematic} the traffic and ~~chaos~~ ^{chaos} is. Problematic the traffic really was. "battling" infers that it ~~was~~ looked like drivers were fighting with their cars to get through the traffic. Therefore, it can be seen that Fogle uses metaphors to describe the chaos he witnesses on his journey.

★ Another way chaos is shown is by "swamped by enormous waves as angry storms lash the coastline". This ~~shows that~~ is a metaphor that shows that the weather is extreme and dangerous. "Angry storms" infers that there is lots of rain, wind, thunder and lightning, which can cause lots of problems and accidents.

This exemplar illustrates an effective approach to Question 3. The candidate identifies some relevant features of language and explores the ideas the writer uses them to convey. It is the use of precise vocabulary such as 'problematic' and 'dangerous' which helps to show that the candidate understands what is implied by the details they have chosen.

Question 4

Question 4 is about **Text 1**, *The Manchester to Liverpool Railway* by Charles Young and **Text 2**, *The Best Rail Trip in Britain* by Ben Fogle.

4 'Both texts powerfully describe the excitement of a journey by railway.'

How far do you agree with this statement?

In your answer you should:

- discuss what we learn about the excitement of each railway journey
- explain how far you agree that both journeys are exciting
- compare the ways the texts present the excitement of a railway journey.

Support your response with quotations from **both** texts.

[18]

The first three questions on this examination prepare candidates for this question. The question is worth 18 marks so candidates should spend around 25 minutes planning and writing their response. Candidates should stop and think carefully about how they will frame their response before they start writing.

In this session the question asked candidates to consider how powerfully the texts presented the excitement of a train journey. Most candidates understood that the excitement experienced by Charles Young was less pleasant than the excitement experienced by Ben Fogle in the second text.

Less successful responses tended to write about one text and then about the other with little attempt to describe similarities and differences between the texts. Although there are only 6 marks for comparison in AO3, organising the response as a comparison throughout helps candidates to evaluate.

Where candidates considered the ways the writers presented their ideas, even if they did not directly compare them, they were able to achieve Level 3 for AO3. Where candidates compared the ways that writers presented their ideas, they were able to achieve Level 4 or better.

More successful responses wrote about the presentation of ideas by each writer. They demonstrated the critical evaluation required by Level 5 and above for AO4 by considering how the writers deployed information and language to present their experience in different ways.

Better responses explored nuances by commenting on which text presented the rail journey as 'more' or 'less' exciting for the writers. Words like 'more' or 'less' allow candidates to express some of the more subtle differences between the texts and access the higher marks for comparison in AO3.

Exemplar 3

Both texts describe the excitement of a journey by railway by describing the views. However, Text 2 does this more than Text 1. In the text 1 it can be seen that the views are not extraordinary, which is shown by "a dark black, ugly, vile, abominable tunnel". This creates a negative feeling for the reader as the listing speeds up the reading pace, ~~making~~ suggesting to the reader that the writer wants to forget about his experience. The descriptive words used are very powerful and greatly impact the reader as they make the experience ~~feel~~ feel horrid. Where ~~as~~ as, in text 2, the writer ~~sees~~ sees stunning views. This can be seen by "beautiful scenery, around me is very therapeutic" this shows that the writer is excited about the rest of his railway journey because already at the start the views are spectacular. "Therapeutic" suggests the writer is having a very calm and enjoyable time. Therefore, it can be seen that text 2 powerfully describes the excitement of a journey by rail and ~~the~~ I agree with the statement.

This exemplar illustrates an effective approach to Question 4. The response identifies a comparison between the two texts, then illustrates the comparison with detailed references to both texts, and ends with a summative comment. The candidate also refers to the ways in which the writers have presented their ideas, e.g., listing and the use of adjectives like 'therapeutic'.

Section B Overview

The writing tasks in this section are designed to build on what candidates have read in Section A of the examination. It is unwise to advise candidates to do the writing task first because candidates may be able to use what they have read to inspire the content and style of their writing.

In this component there is a choice of writing tasks which can both broadly be described as non-fiction. Each task specifies a clear context for the writing and candidates are expected to adapt their style of writing to suit the form, audience, and purpose of their chosen task. Question 5 asked candidates to imagine that they have had a difficult journey and write a letter of complaint to the company responsible. Question 6 asked candidates to write a talk to young people to persuade them to make less use of cars for travel.

Almost all candidates made confident use of the letter format and had a suitable salutation and valediction. Candidates should be advised that they do not need to add addresses to the letter, especially their real address. Candidates were less clear about how to write a talk. Many responses more closely resembled an opinion piece from a newspaper or an argumentative or persuasive essay than a speech given to a live audience.

Centres could prepare their candidates to write the words of a talk by teaching them some simple techniques; the use of first and third person pronouns; mentions of the time when, and the place where, the talk is happening, and references to shared knowledge of people and places.

Most candidates spelled most words correctly and most were able to write coherent sentences. It would be good to see candidates using more ambitious vocabulary precisely and accurately to convey their ideas. Very few candidates were able to use accurate punctuation either between or within sentences. Time spent teaching candidates how to use paragraphs to organise their ideas and to create effects would help the more able candidates to achieve the highest levels.

Question 5*

5* Imagine you have had a difficult journey by train, bus or aeroplane.

Write a letter to the company responsible to complain about the journey.

You should:

- explain why the journey was so important to you
- describe what made the journey so difficult
- convince the company that they should do something about this.

[40]

Candidates engaged enthusiastically with this task. Many gave detailed accounts of their experience of a disappointing journey. Some of the best responses were very lively and engaging with a string of outrages attached to the journey they described. Their language use was often effective and there were plenty of rhetorical questions and exclamations of disgust and horror. Buses and planes were usually behind schedule and filthy, and staff were always rude and neglectful. There was some naivety in terms of transport workers' roles and the kind of recompense that could be expected but this did not detract from the responses. Candidates are not being tested on their knowledge of complaints procedures at travel companies but on their ability to communicate information and ideas using an appropriate tone, style, and register. Some less successful candidates spent so much of their response describing the problems they faced that they did not focus on the bullet point asking them to convince the company responsible to do something about the problems.

Question 6*

6* Write a talk to persuade young people to make less use of cars for travel.

You should:

- explain why using cars too much is not good for young people
- describe the difficulties for young people in changing the way they travel
- convince young people that it is worthwhile to make a change.

[40]

Many candidates are well informed about the issues of climate change and global warming, and they put that knowledge to good use here. Although probably barely of driving age themselves, they also knew quite a lot about the costs of running a car, including insurance premiums for their age group, petrol prices and some referred to the very recent hikes in cost-of-living prices. They were not being assessed on such knowledge, however, but on their ability to write persuasively and adapt their style to suit the spoken mode and the young audience. More successful responses adopted features which made it clear that they were delivering a talk and that they were speaking to young people. Less successful responses, however, were usually able to address the purpose of the task but showed little awareness of the audience.

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