

OXFORD

INTERNATIONAL  
AQA EXAMINATIONS

# INTERNATIONAL GCSE ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

(9280)

Reading

responses with commentaries

---

For teaching from September 2016 onwards  
For GCSE exams in May/June 2018 onwards

## **GENERAL COMMENTS**

This guide includes some student example responses and commentary from the June 2018 exam.

It is intended to provide some examples of the kind of responses that are submitted with some exemplification of the mark scheme connected to that response.

**QUESTION**

**11**

Now read the second part of the article then answer questions **11** to **14**.

**Dangers to Sea Life**

5 Plastic bags are now amongst the top 12 items of rubbish found along coastlines. Animals and sea creatures are hurt and killed every day by plastic bags because they think they are food. Plastic is trapped in their stomachs and leads to slow starvation. Other creatures get caught up in plastic bags and drown. Many bags that drift into the ocean end up killing turtles, suffocating seabirds and filling the stomachs of dolphins and whales with waste until they die of starvation. A dead turtle with a plastic bag hanging from its mouth isn't a pleasant sight.

6 Every year our seas become 'home' to more and more bags because plastic bags take hundreds of years to break down. Every bag that's washed down a drain when it rains ends up in the sea. Every bag that's flushed down a toilet ends up in the sea. Every bag that's blown into a river will most likely end up in the sea.

**Reduce and Recycle**

7 There are schemes to recycle and reduce the use of plastic bags all over the world. More than 40 countries have banned or partly banned single-use plastic bags, including China, France, Rwanda, and Italy. Plastic bags can be re-used in a variety of ways and can carry 2,500 times their own weight! They are damaging the environment and the problems they cause are becoming more widespread. Thankfully more people are now realising this and starting to do something about it.

**1 1** In **paragraph 5** the writer uses the phrase 'isn't a pleasant sight'. What does this mean? **[2 marks]**

---

---

---

---

**MARK SCHEME**

Qu	Marking Guidance	Total Marks
<b>Accept</b>		
11	Award a maximum of 2 marks  2= candidate explains idea that the sight of a dead turtle with a plastic bag hanging from its mouth is something which people would not want to see as it is disgusting, disagreeable, distressing (similar synonyms for unpleasant are acceptable) 1=some understanding of this idea but lacks clarity 0=nothing relevant	2

### STUDENT A

1 1 In paragraph 5 the writer uses the phrase 'isn't a pleasant sight'. What does this mean? [2 marks]

~~The~~ The dead turtle is ~~not~~ very afraid  
and it can't do anything to save itself.

### EXAMINER COMMENTARY

0 marks.

The student does not address the question. The idea of the turtle being 'very afraid' is irrelevant as it 'can't do anything to save itself'.

### STUDENT B

1 1 In paragraph 5 the writer uses the phrase 'isn't a pleasant sight'. What does this mean? [2 marks]

Show the plastic bags are dangers to  
sea life.

### EXAMINER COMMENTARY

0 marks.

The answer is not a complete sentence and does not touch on the phrase 'isn't a pleasant sight'.

### STUDENT C

1 1 In paragraph 5 the writer uses the phrase 'isn't a pleasant sight'. What does this mean? [2 marks]

That seeing <sup>dead</sup> turtles with plastic ~~hanging~~ bags hanging from their mouths is a disturbing view, or is not pleasant to look at =  
appealing

### EXAMINER COMMENTARY

2 marks.

Good use of vocabulary to explain the meaning of 'isn't a pleasant sight' particularly the use of 'it's not appealing to look at'.

### STUDENT D

1 1 In paragraph 5 the writer uses the phrase 'isn't a pleasant sight'. What does this mean? [2 marks]

A dead turtle with a plastic bag in its mouth is not nice to see and it's awful for both tourists and people. It's cruel.

### EXAMINER COMMENTARY

2 marks.

A clear and accurate answer. The explanation of 'isn't a pleasant sight' ('is not nice to see') is simple and well addressed.

**QUESTION**

**23**

**2** **3** In the last paragraph, the writer says, 'However, if people feel underpaid, they will not be as motivated in their jobs.'

What does this mean?

**[2 marks]**

---

---

---

---

**MARK SCHEME**

<b>Accept</b>		
23	<p>Award a maximum of 2 marks</p> <p>2=candidate explains idea that if, on the other hand, people are not being paid fairly they will not feel as inspired or stimulated in their jobs (similar synonyms for motivated are acceptable)</p> <p>1=candidate explains one of the ideas or partially both</p> <p>0=nothing relevant</p>	2

### STUDENT A

**2 3** In the last paragraph, the writer says, 'However, if people feel underpaid, they will not be as motivated in their jobs.'

What does this mean?

[2 marks]

People need feel happy ~~and they~~ for job  
and then they will have positive emotion and  
attitude to do their work.

### EXAMINER COMMENTARY

0 marks.

The student misses the point of the question and does not pinpoint the idea of unfair pay (1 mark) being connected to a low level of stimulation at work (1 mark).

### STUDENT B

**2 3** In the last paragraph, the writer says, 'However, if people feel underpaid, they will not be as motivated in their jobs.'

What does this mean?

[2 marks]

If people get less money or salary, they will eventually  
become demotivated or not work as hard in their works  
or jobs.

### EXAMINER COMMENTARY

1 mark.

The student gets across the idea of de-motivation but not the idea of unfair pay.

## STUDENT C

2 3

In the last paragraph, the writer says, 'However, if people feel underpaid, they will not be as motivated in their jobs.'

What does this mean?

[2 marks]

If <sup>one</sup> people's wage is <sup>lower than he expects,</sup> really ~~low~~, he may lost confidence and doesn't want to work any more. Because he thinks he works a lot but earns a little.

## EXAMINER COMMENTARY

2 marks.

This response gets across both the idea that the pay received is unfair 'works a lot but earns a little' and how this is de-motivating 'doesn't want to work anymore'.

Even though the answer lacks some grammatical accuracy, both ideas are alluded to so that the overall meaning is clear.

**QUESTION**

**25**

**Text 4 Ma Jian: Red Dust**

The following passage is taken from a travelogue called 'Red Dust'. Here the writer describes travelling towards a lake in Xinjiang, a remote part of China.

Read the first part of the passage then answer questions **25** and **26**.

- 1 After an hour's hiking, I reach the desert. Sweat pours from my body and evaporates in seconds. My water is half-finished, and the lake has sunk from view. I must rely on my compass<sup>1</sup> from now on.
- 2 The sun is still overhead. As I breathe the hot air in and out, my mouth becomes as dry as dust. The compass in my hand burns like the gravel underfoot. The dry noodles have reached my stomach and seem to be sucking the moisture from my blood. I long to reach the shore of the lake and plunge my head in its cool water. For brief moments, through the heat waves on the right, I see villages, moving trucks, or a sweep of marsh. If I didn't have a compass, I might be tempted to walk straight into the mirage.

<sup>1</sup> A device used to show direction.

**2 5** In **paragraph 1** the writer says 'sweat pours from my body and evaporates in seconds.'

What does this mean?

**[2 marks]**

**MARK SCHEME**

Qu	Marking Guidance	Total Marks
<b>Accept</b>		
25	Award a maximum of 2 marks.  2 = candidate explains both ideas of excessive perspiration/exertion and heat 1 = candidate explains one idea or partially both 0 = nothing relevant	2

### STUDENT A

**2 5** In paragraph 1 the writer says 'sweat pours from my body and evaporates in seconds.'

What does this mean?

[2 marks]

The writer ~~feels~~ ~~happy~~ reaches the desert and feels very ~~low~~ happy but the writer's ~~water~~ water is half-finished, and the lake has sunk from view so the writer feels sad.

### EXAMINER COMMENTARY

0 marks.

No reference to perspiration/exertion or heat. Comments are not relevant to the specific phrase mentioned in the question.

### STUDENT B

**2 5** In paragraph 1 the writer says 'sweat pours from my body and evaporates in seconds.'

What does this mean?

[2 marks]

He steel exciting, but he need to hurry up.

### EXAMINER COMMENTARY

0 marks.

This student completely misreads the meaning of the given extract.

### STUDENT C

**2 5** In **paragraph 1** the writer says 'sweat pours from my body and evaporates in seconds.'

What does this mean?

**[2 marks]**

This means that the weather is really hot, to the extent that the sweat evaporates really quickly.

### EXAMINER COMMENTARY

2 marks.

This student gets across the idea of the excessive heat and excessive perspiration and connects the two. Two marks are awarded even though the student uses the word 'evapourates' instead of explaining what this means. Additionally, the use of adverbs 'really quickly' in the answer show a good understanding of what is happening.

**QUESTION**

**26**

**2 6** In **paragraph 2**, the writer describes factors which make the situation more difficult for travelling.

List **four** of these below.

**[4 marks]**

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**MARK SCHEME**

<b>Qu</b>	<b>Marking Guidance</b>	<b>Total Marks</b>
<b>Accept any four of the following</b>		
26	The sun is overhead and hot His mouth is dry The compass in his hand is hot The gravel underfoot is hot He sees mirages The noodles in his stomach are sucking moisture from his blood	4

## STUDENT A

**2 6** In **paragraph 2**, the writer describes factors which make the situation more difficult for travelling.

List **four** of these below.

**[4 marks]**

- 1 Compass in his hand burns like the gravel under-foot.
- 2 The dry noodles have reached his stomach.
- 3 air is hot.
- 4 his mouth becomes as dry as dust

## EXAMINER COMMENTARY

2 marks.

This is an example of a student copying fragments from the text with the result that two of the answers do not make complete sense. For example, the student gains one mark for the answer: 'compass in his hand burns like the gravel underfoot'. However, there are no marks awarded for 'air is hot' as this is not a full enough explanation of a factor which makes the situation more difficult for travelling.

## STUDENT B

**2 6** In **paragraph 2**, the writer describes factors which make the situation more difficult for travelling.

List **four** of these below.

**[4 marks]**

- 1 The sun is still overhead.
- 2 Breathing the hot air in and out makes his mouth dry.
- 3 The compass burns like the gravel underfoot.
- 4 The dry rocks have reacted his stomach and seem to be sucking the moisture from his blood. <sup>dehydration,</sup> (very hot and dry, no moisture).

## EXAMINER RESPONSE

4 marks.

Generally clear answers on factors which make the situation more difficult for travelling. Direct quotes like this from the text are fine as long as they are (re) worded where necessary to fit with the way the question is phrased.

### STUDENT C

**2 | 6** In **paragraph 2**, the writer describes factors which make the situation more difficult for travelling.

List **four** of these below.

**[4 marks]**

- 1 The sun is still overhead so it's hot.
- 2 The compass in ~~my~~<sup>writer's</sup> hand burns like the gravel underfoot.
- 3 As ~~I~~<sup>writer</sup> breathe the hot air in and out, ~~my~~<sup>his</sup> mouth becomes as dry as dust.
- 4 The dry noodles have reached his stomach and seem to be sucking the moisture from his blood.

### EXAMINER COMMENTARY

4 marks.

The student refers to four of the reasons given in the mark scheme and therefore receives full marks. The wording of the answer is clear and precise.

**QUESTION**

**27**

Read the second part of the passage then answer questions **27** to **31**.

- 3 Four or five hours go by. At last I see clumps of weed rise from the gravel. The land starts to dip. I check the compass. Suddenly it dawns on me that distances can be confusing in the atmosphere of the desert. The lake that seemed so near could be a hundred kilometres away. After all, what looked like a tiny blue spot is in fact a huge lake. It is too late to turn back now though – my bottle is empty. I have no choice but to keep walking towards the water. Where there is water there are people, and where there are people there is life. There is no other path I can take.
- 4 As the sun sinks to the west, the lake reappears at last. It is not a lake exactly, just a line of grey slightly brighter than the desert stones, not wavering in the heat haze this time, but lying still at the edge of the sky. I am on course, but my legs can barely hold. The sun sinks slowly below me, then reddens and disappears.

**2 7** In **paragraph 3**, the writer says 'it dawns on me that distances can be confusing'.

What does this mean?

**[3 marks]**

**MARK SCHEME**

Qu	Marking Guidance	Total Marks
<b>Accept</b>		
27	<p>Award a maximum of 3 marks</p> <p>3 = candidate explains idea of realisation that it is not always clear how far away things are (in the desert) and that this can be misleading (a similar synonym for confusing is acceptable)</p> <p>2 = candidate explains two ideas or partially all three</p> <p>1= candidate explains one idea</p> <p>0=nothing relevant</p>	3

### STUDENT A

2 7 In paragraph 3, the writer says 'it dawns on me that distances can be confusing'.

What does this mean?

[3 marks]

The writer can't know ~~the~~ distances from the  
compass. The writer feels ~~find~~ afraid.

### EXAMINER COMMENTARY

0 marks.

The student misses the point of the phrase and does not comment on any of the relevant points: the writer realising (1 mark) that it's not always clear how far things are in the desert (1 mark) and how this can be confusing (1).

### STUDENT B

2 7 In paragraph 3, the writer says 'it dawns on me that distances can be confusing'.

What does this mean?

[3 marks]

~~the writer was lost in the desert~~  
The compass was incorrect in the environment of  
the atmosphere in the desert

### EXAMINER COMMENTARY

0 marks.

The student misinterprets the text and the meaning of the phrase focusing on the idea of the compass being incorrect rather than how the evidence – both from the compass and from what the writer can observe – can be misleading.

## STUDENT C

**2 7** In **paragraph 3**, the writer says 'it dawns on me that distances can be confusing'.  
What does this mean? **[3 marks]**

He ~~or she~~ <sup>daawns</sup> realises that ~~it~~ you cannot determine the length of a distance correctly. It can be confusing or misleading, accurately.

## EXAMINER COMMENTARY

3 marks.

The student obtains the full three marks for this answer as all three are covered:

1. He realises
2. You cannot determine the length of a distance accurately.
3. This can be misleading.

The student expresses the ideas clearly and uses an appropriate synonym.

**QUESTION**

**34**

Read the third part of the passage then answer questions **32** to **35**.

**5** When my feet tread on to damp grass the sky is almost black. I move forward in a daze. The ground gets wetter and wetter. Through the green weeds ahead I glimpse a cold sweep of water. Hurriedly I drop my pack and wade down through the marsh towards the lake. I have arrived at last. Let me plunge into your waters! I stamp to the shore, throw myself down and scoop the water into my mouth. The taste is foul and salty. A fire burns down my chest and my stomach explodes. I roll over and vomit and my mind goes black.

**3 4** In **paragraph 5**, what does the writer notice about where he is?

**[4 marks]**

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
3 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
4 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**MARK SCHEME**

Qu	Marking Guidance	Total Marks
<b>Accept any four of the following</b>		
34	Ground getting wet Sky black There are green weeds Damp grass Cold sweep of water The water tastes horrible	4

### STUDENT A

**3 4** In paragraph 5, what does the writer notice about where he is? **[4 marks]**

1 daze

2 green weeds

3 shore

4 damp grass

### EXAMINER COMMENTARY

2 marks.

The student's answers are brief. While 'green weeds' and 'damp grass' can be accepted, 'shore' and 'daze' cannot.

### STUDENT B

**3 4** In paragraph 5, what does the writer notice about where he is? **[4 marks]**

1 the ground gets wetter and wetter

2 He glimpse a cold sweep of water.

3 A fire burns down his chest.

4 He move forward in a daze

### EXAMINER COMMENTARY

2 marks.

Neither 'A fire burns down his chest' nor 'he moves forward in a daze' are relevant answers to the question.

### STUDENT C

**3 4** In paragraph 5, what does the writer notice about where he is? [4 marks]

- 1 The ground gets wetter and wetter.
- 2 The green weeds
- 3 The shore.
- 4 a A cold sweep of water.

### EXAMINER COMMENTARY

3 marks.

Answers 1, 2 and 4 provide information about what the writer notices about where he is. Answer 3 is too brief and does not clarify what the writer notices.

### STUDENT D

**3 4** In paragraph 5, what does the writer notice about where he is? [4 marks]

- 1 The sky is almost black.
- 2 The ground gets wetter and wetter.
- 3 His feet tread on damp grass.
- 4 He catches a glimpse of the lake ~~and~~ ~~east~~ ~~to~~ it.  
through the ~~woods~~ green weeds.

### EXAMINER COMMENTARY

4 marks.

All four answers address the question about what the writer notices about where he is.

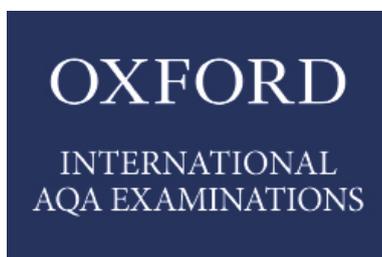


## FURTHER GUIDANCE AND CONTACTS

You can contact the subject team directly at [esl@oxfordaqaexams.org.uk](mailto:esl@oxfordaqaexams.org.uk)

Please note: We aim to respond to all email enquiries within two working days.

Our UK office hours are Monday to Friday, 8am - 5pm local time.



OXFORD INTERNATIONAL AQA EXAMINATIONS  
GREAT CLARENDON STREET, OXFORD, OX2 6DP  
UNITED KINGDOM

[enquiries@oxfordaqaexams.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@oxfordaqaexams.org.uk)  
[oxfordaqaexams.org.uk](http://oxfordaqaexams.org.uk)