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## FOREWORD

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This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Paper 0396/01

Composition

## General comments

As usual, there were some effective and rewarding responses across a range of questions. There were imaginative answers of a mature nature and some discriminating argumentative pieces of writing. Candidates should be reminded that there is a rubric requirement to write between 600 and 900 words for each piece: work which fails to meet this requirement loses marks in an almost self-penalising way. There should be time left for proofreading answers: the number of technical errors seemed more evident this session, especially matters of tenses and agreement.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

This question elicited a range of different conversions, some of which were very ambitious and imaginative. Successful answers were well structured with a clear, significant conversion. Less successful responses tended to rely on narrative without fully exploring the character's thoughts and attitudes. Careful planning paid dividends here if carried out effectively.

#### **Question 2**

This proved to be a very popular choice, inducing some highly imaginative responses. Effective answers were characterised by very detailed observations of emotions and physical objects and used an extensive vocabulary. Stark contrasts were developed successfully. Some candidates were over ambitious: they tended to pile up descriptive effects to the extent that this produced rather flowery, forced work. Some overlooked the rubric and wrote two narrative rather than descriptive pieces, relating the activities of characters before and after a party.

#### **Question 3**

This also proved to be a popular choice and elicited some imaginative and thoughtful work. Answers at the top of the range clearly mentioned the home country. However, some candidates simply wrote about a series of events and some never even left the airport. Those who focused on thought, feelings and experiences fared well.

#### **Question 4**

This was not such a popular choice but those who attempted it offered some perceptive and stimulating work, underpinned by an imaginative and structured approach. Some allowed the mirror to watch its owner changing over time and combined a dispassionate initial tone with an increasing sense of frustration that the voice could not help or alter experiences and the passage of time.

**Section B**

**Question 5**

Many candidates opted for this, showing a mature and sophisticated understanding of world affairs and reasoned, persuasive discursive writing. Attitudes varied widely. Such responses considered both sides and structured the essay accordingly before giving a conclusive opinion. Less effective answers tended to focus on one particular example and tended to get bogged down in commenting on it at the expense of considering a range of issues.

**Question 6**

On the whole, this produced some good responses, allowing candidates to draw fluently upon their own knowledge, although, at times, there was a tendency to describe a particular country's traditions without explaining what people could learn from them. Less secure answers seemed to have a rather random approach to selection of material – and, as always, effective planning would have helped.

**Question 7**

This question produced some inventive and humorous answers where candidates justified their choices in a persuasive and reasoned manner. Effective responses managed to offer comparative reasons for their selection of each object.

**Question 8**

There were some predictable responses here but the material was generally well handled, showing knowledge and persuasive skills. Answers at the top of the range were characterised by explicit discussions about why their chosen person was a true role model. Less successful answers tended to resort to biography or to rely on description and a list of achievements at the expense of considered and measured evaluation.