Student responses with examiner commentary

AS English Language and Literature
Paper 2: People and Places 7706/2 Section A

For teaching from September 2015
For assessment from June 2016

Introduction
This collection of resources gives examples of student responses to questions from our AS-level English Language and Literature specimen materials, with accompanying examiner commentaries.

These are answers that exemplify the kinds of approaches students ought to take and the analytical frameworks with which they should be familiar. They should be used as models for the type of work that students should be doing in their study, rather than just as examples of marked work.

The responses in this resource relates to AS Paper 2: People and Places, Section A (Remembered Places). Please see the separate resources for examples of student responses, with accompanying examiner commentaries for AS Paper 2 (Section B) and AS Paper 1.

Paper 2: People and Places (7706/2)

As detailed in the specification (3.1), the aim of the area of study examined in this paper is for students to learn the ways in which writers and speakers present narratives about places.

Section A: Remembered Places

Students study the AQA Anthology: Paris, which includes a wide range of text types with a particularly emphasis on non-fiction and non-literary material. In this part of the subject content, students explore speech and other genres. In studying, thinking and writing about the anthology, students consider:
- the ways in which writers and speakers present places, societies, people and events
- the metaphorical nature of representations
- the influence of contextual factors such as time, people, race, social class and gender on the content and focus of narratives
- the affordances and limitations of different media
- different generic conventions and different purposes for communicating ideas and viewpoints about travel, people and places
- how people and their relationships are realised.
Question 1:

Compare and contrast how the writers and speakers in these extracts present Paris. You should refer to both extracts in your answer and consider:

- the language choices made and their likely effects
- the different audiences and purposes of the texts
- aspects of mode.

Assessment objective(s) covered:
AO1 (10 marks)
AO3 (20 marks)
AO4 (10 marks)

Total marks available: 40

Student response (1)

Text A is an extract from ‘The Most Beautiful Walk in the World: A Pedestrian in Paris’ by John Baxter. Text B is an extract from a video guide to Paris and is written by an employee of the travel company: Lonely Planet. Extract A is in the form of written mode whereas extract B is in the form of spoken mode therefore possess contrasting linguistic techniques. The purpose of text A is to inform readers of the actual sites of Paris consisting more of tourists than triumphant statues whereas the purpose of Text B is to persuade travellers to visit Paris with a subtle sub purpose of advertising the travel company ‘Lonely Planet’.

Text A uses the first person pronoun, 'I' to narrate experiences and state personal views and opinions from the eyes of a ‘pedestrian’; for example, ‘I pass them’. The first person pronoun ‘I’ effectively enables the author, ‘John Baxter’ to write the anecdote from his own perspective, demonstrating a local Parisian insight of the bustling activities on ‘boulevard Saint-Germain’. The author adapts a critical writing style when recounting chaotic tourists, ‘huddling over a folded map’, to possibly convey a common opinion among Parisians about the troublesome aspect tourists create when exploring the city. In comparison text B uses the third person narrator to effectively describe Paris in a positive light; for example ‘the city of light’. Writing from the third person narrative enables the author to use metaphors such as, ‘the city of light’ and describe the significant assets of Paris thus inclining viewers to travel to the city. The third person narrative also empowers the author to successfully use sophisticated language: ‘iconic’, ‘epitome’ thus conforming to the more formal side of the register. This contrast in narrative between extract A and B enables the authors to attract different audiences: Text B addresses people online, viewing Paris as a possibility for holiday (tourists), whereas Text A addresses local Parisians with a knowledge of Paris, relating to the annoyance of tourists in their hometown.

In Text A lexis with negative implications such as ‘uncertain’ and ‘huddled’ is used to describe the walkers. The modifier ‘uncertain’ has connotations of uneasiness, unconfident and anxiety, thus implying the visitors are evidently disorganised and confused by the overwhelming eccentricity of Paris. This undesirable description subtly discriminates against tourists as it could be argued they are merely looking at directions of where to go because it is a known expectation that as a traveller one is unaware of their new surroundings. The verb ‘huddled’ implies an element of claustrophobia as the sight-seers crowd the already bustling, chaotic city inconveniently filling the streets - in admiration of Paris. This memoir suggests this is a common scene on the ‘boulevard Saint-Germain’ for residents living in Paris and degrades the beauty of Paris due to the now congested streets of ‘loiter[ing]’ walkers. In comparison, Text B uses lexical choices made to influence viewer
and present Paris as attractive; for example, ‘leisurely stroll’, ‘charm’ and ‘grand boulevards’. These vivid descriptions generate an image of perfection, portraying the city to be the faultless ‘get-away’ holiday for all types of people, and especially couples due to the strong sense of romance, associated with the ‘city of love’. The spatial adjective ‘grand’ effectively demonstrates the monumental impressiveness of the city conforming to the opulent architecture of the city for example the Eiffel Tower. This positive lexical choice relates to purpose of the extract to encourage and persuade people to visit Paris and to consequently buy more of the video company’s (Lonely Planet) products ie travel guide to Paris. Therefore this contrasting positive lexical choice in comparison to the negative lexical choice in text A is relevant and appropriate in terms of audience and purpose. The audience also differs between texts due to Text A supposedly being in the form of a book whereas text B is an online format, thus can be accessed from a number of online devices. Consequently, it is likely that text B has a much wider audience due to the extract being on the internet and thus easily accessible.

In conclusion, I have compared and contrasted how the writers and speakers in these extracts present Paris using specific language choices such as third and first person pronouns and positive and negative lexical choices. I have also discussed the ways in which specific lexical choices apply to differing purposes and audiences in both extracts.

Examiner Commentary

AO1
One of the strengths of this answer is the focus on specific linguistic details, applying some terminology (eg modifiers) accurately and developing the exploration of the texts from these features. There is some vagueness in the identification of lexical choices and more precise labelling would have pinpointed the writers’ and speakers’ choices more effectively. The selection of lexis as the main language level explored is appropriate to the texts, although there are many areas that could have been explored fruitfully. Selecting from a wider range of language levels would have added some more sophistication and perception. However, ideas are expressed clearly and fluently, although the conclusion is unnecessary as it only summarises what has been said before.

AO3
Some of the contextual information feels a little tagged on and superficial. For example, the opening paragraph offers a number of contextual influences but as it’s an introduction does no more than identify facets of audience and purpose. As outlined in the comments for AO4 below, there is some stronger engagement shown with the significance and influence of contextual factors on the texts, particularly when exploring audience. Perhaps there is less awareness of aspects of mode and how these affect the writers and speakers choices, which should be more developed given the bullet point in the question that directs students to consider mode. There is an observation regarding the affordances and constraints of online versus the printed book form but this could have been developed further.

AO4
Some of the comparison is based on AO3 (ie contextual factors) which are relevant to compare but these are handled more straightforwardly. However, the strongest comparisons are evident in paragraph two. Here the student offers an extended comparison of the point of view presented in each text and follows this with a more evaluative discussion of these differences as being influenced by contextual factors – specifically the impact on their respective audiences. This more tentative analysis shows an emerging thoughtfulness about the texts.
Student response (2)

Texts A and B have many differences in their modes and linguistic features which are clearly influenced by their different audiences and genres. However despite these differences, both texts share similar purposes and the positive viewpoint of Paris by boasting of its beauty.

Text A is a written text, which has a clear purpose to inform and entertain. Text A is a memoir written by John Baxter, who has had experience of walking the streets of Paris. The audience consists of adults who are possibly interested in visiting Paris and adults who may be into the culture aspects of Paris. The audience and purpose explains the use of first person narration to relay the text producers experience of walking in the city therefore the text is predominately written in past tense.

Text A is a written text, therefore only display features of written language. Lexical choices such as ‘on the corner of the boulevard Saint-Germain or toward the market in rue Buci, I pass them’ gives the text a poetic and slight romantic feeling which enables the audience to absorb the passionate feelings of the text producer. Other linguistic features include the combination of simple and complex sentences, which continues the effect of romance and passion that the text producer has found in Paris. The text also shows the repeated use of third person pronouns such as ‘they’ and ‘them’ as a representation of the tourists. The text producer clearly feels the tourists are out of place therefore uses the third person pronouns to create a distance to show that they are not the same.

Text B is a transcript therefore it is projected as speech, but is multi-modal as it does contain elements of written speech due to the nature of the transcript being planned rather than spontaneous. This makes both texts A and B have similar modality as both are created and planned for their purposes. The genre of this text is a video but both texts share the purpose of informing and entertainment. Both texts also share the element of persuasion for the audience to visit Paris.

However the audience for text B varies from text A as it is aimed at adults who have either booked or will book a holiday to Paris. Adults who are interested in seeing the tourist aspects of Paris want a guide of how to structure their visit.

The language of text B varies from text A as the text producer uses third person narration in present tense in order to describe the places and landmarks in the city. The use of second person pronouns are used. The lexical choices in this piece are obviously influenced by the purpose as it tries to sway the viewers’ perception to make Paris seem more appealing to visitors. The use of well-known proper nouns that are associated with Paris and France such as ‘Arc de Triomphe’ and ‘Napoleon’ makes the video more informative and firmly roots it in ‘Paris’.

In conclusion, the majority of differences are very obvious in the language and the audience. The text producers use the language effectively to appeal to their targeted audience, for example they use specific lexical styles. However both texts share a desired purpose of informing and entertaining their audience. The clear belief of Paris’ beauty is an evident feature in both texts.
Examiner Commentary

AO1
Terminology is generally applied but with sometimes limited support and exemplification from the texts. Some features are explained, as in the examination of pronouns and tense, but there is a limited range of terminology and language levels are not selected and used in a purposeful manner. Indeed the observations about language are often vague and are not expressed clearly. For example, ‘the use of second person pronouns are used’ and ‘lexical choices such as [long quotation] gives the text a poetic and romantic feeling’. The latter could have been a valid and interesting point if the student has identified more precisely which lexical choices created this. There are glimmers of stronger understanding and engagement shown, such as in the discussion of proper nouns and the writer’s use of the third person pronoun in Text A.

AO3
Given that this Assessment Objective accounts for half of the possible marks for this question, the student shows an awareness of its importance by making various observations about audience, the purposes of each text, genre and mode. She makes a number of obvious and superficial points about these, instead of really exploring aspects of mode and genre that are interesting in each text. The limited understanding of mode is shown in comments such as ‘Text A is a written text and therefore only displays features of written language’ and furthermore some real misunderstanding is evident from the assertion that the texts have ‘a similar modality as both are created and planned for their purposes’. She is aware of the “viewed” nature of Text B but again does not explore the genre conventions used and struggles a little to explain the conventions of a memoir; a rewriting of the paragraph identifying the possible audiences for Text A (paragraph 2) and the manner of narration used might have overcome this difficulty as there are potentially some sensible ideas here.

AO4
A few comparisons are drawn but mainly straightforward and undeveloped observations about contextual links. The tendency to structure the answer into paragraphs explaining aspects of each text separately suggests that the student has not considered the texts fully before writing in order to draw out comparative aspects she wishes to explore. Some similarities and differences are referred to in a very general way.

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