



General Certificate of Education

General Studies 5761

Specification A

GSA1 Culture, Morality, Arts and Humanities

Report on the Examination

2008 examination - June series

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Unit 1 Question 1

(GSA1/1 Culture, Morality, Arts & Humanities)

This component is an objective test for which the following list indicates the correct answers used in marking the candidates' responses

1.1	B	1.14	A
1.2	A	1.15	C
1.3	C	1.16	A
1.4	D	1.17	B
1.5	A	1.18	C
1.6	D	1.19	D
1.7	B	1.20	C
1.8	B	1.21	D
1.9	A	1.22	A
1.10	D	1.23	B
1.11	D	1.24	D
1.12	C	1.25	C
1.13	B		

GSA1 Culture, Morality, Arts and Humanities

General comments

Despite the potential of the topic of ballet to put some candidates off the examiners felt that this was a successful test which touched on a number of key themes in the specification relating to the appreciation and cultural and social aspects of the arts. Candidates appeared to understand and engage with the passage and questions reasonably successfully, perhaps because it was written from the perspective of a new-comer to the ballet, although some had difficulty with a number of the author's references and his use of irony. Performance on the multiple choice questions was slightly higher than in both last summer's and January's tests and marginally higher than last year's disappointing response on the written component. Most candidates were able to score reasonable marks on Question 2.1 and the response to the more difficult 2.3 was not bad either, but 2.2 on the appeal of an art form of the candidate's choice was disappointing, given that this is a standard General Studies question, like the one last year on the role of newspapers. The general quality of written communication was not good and at the lower end of performance the standard was abysmal. Many candidates appear to have a very careless attitude to spelling, particularly of words which appear in the questions themselves as well as in the passage. Other words which candidates constantly spell incorrectly are: a lot, affect/effect, argument, article, available, definite(ly), interest, its/it's, relevant, their/there, undoubtedly, and plurals of nouns ending in -y, e.g. celebrities, stories.

Question 1

The selection of multiple choice questions worked well as usual with a slightly higher overall mean facility of 63% and mean mark of 15.8, and a slightly lower standard deviation of 4.0, compared with last summer. 92% of candidates scored 10 marks or more and 20% scored 20 or more. Questions which candidates found relatively 'easy' with scores over 70% were 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8, 1.13, 1.14, 1.15 and 1.19. Four questions stood out as difficult for the majority of candidates. These were 1.2 on the point of the author's emphasis in the first paragraph on 'perfection' (where over a third of candidates opted for D 'the reason why many people do not enjoy ballet' rather than A 'the essence of ballet'); 1.9 on meaning of the reference to '*Midsomer Murders* ladies' (a quarter of candidates choosing C 'idealistic' rather than A 'disillusioned'); 1.20, the first Assertion/Reason question (where half of the candidates opted for A or B considering 'we do not accept anything less than perfection in the arts' to be a true statement rather than C not true); and 1.22 on points supported by the author about ballet and its audience (more than half opting for B 'mainly middle class' and 'now more popular than other art forms' rather than just the third opting for A 'mainly middle class' and 'still made up of mostly older people'). However, these questions discriminated well or at least satisfactorily, as did all the other items in the test, and it was clear that the stronger candidates had chosen the correct option in each case.

Question 2.1

This form of question ('identify and explain three reasons') is chosen to enable the candidate to be selective in their response. Brevity and succinctness are the key here as one mark is quickly gained for identifying an appropriate reason, a second for an acceptable explanation of the reason and the third for coherence and accuracy in expression. Three well chosen sentences will thus score three marks. Too many candidates wrote far too much and more than was necessary to gain maximum marks and penalised themselves potentially in a number of ways. They lost time which they could have spent on the next two questions and the more they wrote the greater the possibility of an error which could lose them explanation and/or communication

marks. Many candidates (up to a third?) lost a mark in their first sentence by incorrectly spelling 'pleasantly' and/or 'surprised', both given to them in the question.

Most candidates could identify at least two appropriate reasons and offer at least one acceptable, if not more, explanation. Sometimes the reasons or explanations were not distinct or developed enough from each other to gain extra marks, but on the whole candidates scored well on this question, except for the fact that the third mark could often not be awarded because of errors of expression, usually the mis-spelling of either common words or less common ones given in the passage. One reason given for the author's surprise which did not gain marks involved reference to the Beckhams attending the ballet which tended to show candidates' lack of understanding of the purpose of this allusion.

Question 2.2

This was a standard General Studies question (the appeal of art) which it was hoped all candidates would have had a chance to explore in some form or other during their course and in this light the responses were disappointing with few candidates providing sufficient range of points or examples to gain the highest marks at Level 3. Music was most commonly chosen followed by film and literature. Some chose theatre but very few visual art. Usually candidates choosing literature had the most to say supported effectively by examples and they tended to score higher marks. The overall quality of responses tended to reflect how little time is given to educating candidates formally in the appreciation of film and other art forms. Realism and special effects were often as far as candidates got in exploring aspects of cinematography for example, and apparently 'everybody likes music' in some form or other. Some candidates wrongly classified ballet as 'visual art', so lengthy paraphrasing of points in the passage gained few, if any marks, as the question was specifically formulated to exclude this option.

Question 2.3

Candidates generally did better on this question and the responses were more encouraging. The best answers tended to dispute the author's suggestion that other art forms need not be so concerned with the pursuit of perfection and compared in detail the demands of ballet with those of other art forms, often usefully based on personal experience of performing in an orchestra or group, whilst perhaps acknowledging that there were very challenging physical aspects of ballet that were important and also very visible. Other interesting angles were to examine the nature and meaning of perfection itself and the qualifications of the author, a self confessed 'ballet virgin', to make the claims he did. Some candidates fell into the same trap as the author by seeking to demonstrate that their preferred art form was superior in its own pursuit of perfection and the weakest simply paraphrased points from the passage.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.