

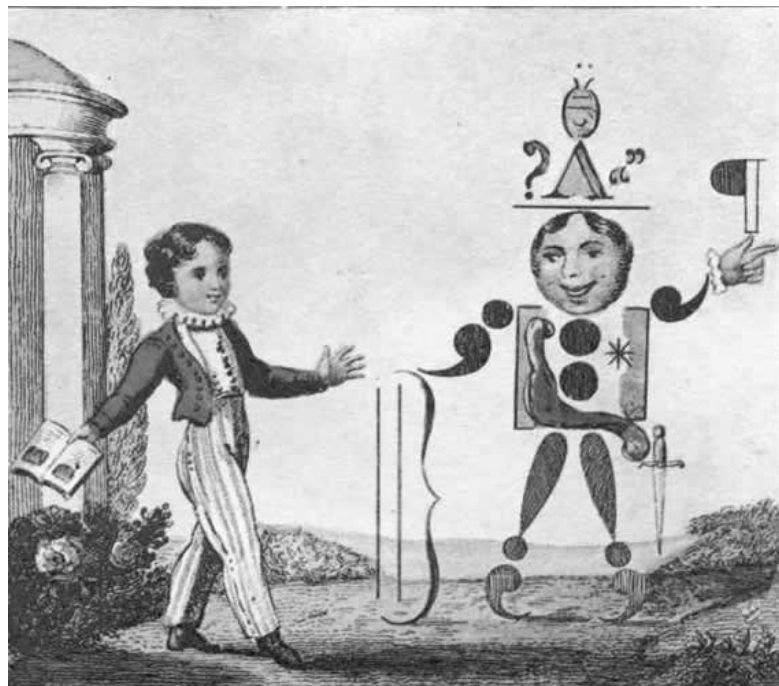
AS ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Unit 2

Language Issues and Original & Critical Writing

'Language Issues' essay: punctuation

Sample Essay Extracts: meeting the AOs



Sample essay extracts

Read through the following extracts from responses to the sample question and identify places where the candidates are meeting the different elements of the AOs.

You should look for evidence that each candidate has:

- AO1
 - analysed the stimulus material/other examples
 - used terminology
 - engaged with the topic
 - written accurately, fluently and logically in an appropriate style
- AO2
 - demonstrated knowledge of the topic/question focus
 - referenced relevant concepts, using accurate terminology
 - explored issues related to language use
 - discussed appropriate examples
- AO3
 - considered the effects of contextual factors
 - explored meaning and the effects created
 - interpreted examples
 - analysed and evaluated key language features using relevant terminology.

RESPONSE 1

Writers at different times have used punctuation for completely different purposes so the function of the marks has changed over time. In 'Stories of English', David Crystal points out that the earliest punctuation marks were used when reading aloud was a common activity and the marks gave the reader information about where they should pause. These were a very complicated set of symbols, but after printing was established there was a process of simplification. The punctuation came to have a grammatical rather than a rhetorical purpose. It was used to break words on the page into units that were easier to read. Up to the Modern English period, texts sometimes used commas between the subject and verb if the subject was made up of a subordinate clause and if it was long (e.g. Those other things which I am ..., are ...) and capitalisation to show the importance of a common noun (e.g. 'Sunne'), but this would not be acceptable in PDE writing.

RESPONSE 2

There is still a very clear view point on the use of punctuation and therefore the person using it. Of course the judgement is widely based on context but this is very much based on our perceptions of the use of punctuation. An example of this would be that the right punctuation is "appropriate" in formal situations such as letters this is based on the implication that wrong punctuation was a depiction of a person's lack of education and that has therefore influenced the appropriateness of punctuation in contexts, that rely on our education ability it is thought standard punctuation is far more sophisticated than non-standard punctuation, and judgements about it being inferior to have mistakes in writing is quite medieval on the subject. However mistakes like apostrophes are far less likely to be used in essays as it portrays a lack of education and all the connotations surrounding that.

RESPONSE 3

Punctuation is employed by different writers according to their context, audience and purpose. If a writer is producing a private and personal text like a diary or a letter to family or a close friend, punctuation is less important than the content. In this context, lack of paragraphs, technical inaccuracy and non-standard punctuation conventions will not be judged unlike in an exam essay where accuracy and clarity are just as important as the content. For example, in a diary you could put a full stop in front of a relative clause (e.g. 'I love iPhones. Which is good.')

and omit initial capitals at the beginning of a sentence and full stops between main clauses 'you know the number for Sally give it to me tomorrow I need to get in touch'. In this example, there should be a capital on the second person pronoun 'you' and a full stop before the imperative verb 'give' and the first person pronoun 'I'. Texting is similar because the process of informalisation has influenced the way we use punctuation in electronic English. In some ways we use much more punctuation because the tenor is often exclamatory and there can be lots of exclamation marks to show emotion with interjections (e.g. 'Waaaahh!!!). But things like apostrophes are often omitted in verb contractions (e.g. 'didn't', 'I've') and possessive nouns ('Ben's coat is here').

RESPONSE 4

In a book called 'Examine Your English', the writers argue that punctuation should not be considered a 'nuisance' or a 'necessary evil' because it is essential to get your ideas down they say wrong punctuation is a reflection of a muddled mind. They could be seen as strong prescriptivists because they suggest punctuation is what makes you successful because accurate punctuation makes sure any reader can understand and it is widely accepted as the appropriate in education and in formal contexts like government and media. An example is a comma splice because many people write sentences with a comma instead of a full stop like in 'The journalist used a modifier like 'outrageous' to shock the reader, it makes it easy to see the opinion.' This mistake would not be acceptable in formal writing because you should impose the rules for clarity. In school writing needs to be accurate to get the best marks because this is also a formal context.

RESPONSE 5

People who stand up for punctuation call themselves "Grammar Guerrillas". They go round changing punctuation that's wrong in public such as apostrophes in shop signs like "egg's" or posters such as "1980's music night" where they aren't needed. Lynne Truss proves it's an emotive topic because she uses dramatic analogies in "Eats Shoots and Leaves" to show inaccurate punctuation is like a traffic pile-up when the lights aren't working or a door shut in your face. It's definitely good for us to see punctuation used to learn from it because English lecturers say that the best way to learn is to see examples in everyday life, but this makes it seem as if using the wrong punctuation is life-threatening. In fact it doesn't usually effect understanding which is the important thing as writers have to make sure meaning is clear with no ambiguity. This can sometimes create humour "Let's eat Jack". There is no comma so the proper noun Jack looks like the object when really it's the vocative and should have a comma. When this is said, a pause would make the meaning obvious, but in writing it could be confusing. Sometimes no punctuation is needed such as in headlines. These are short/direct and often noun phrases (Celeb hoax horror) or simple sentences (Leak spells disaster) so don't need punctuation to make the meaning clear.