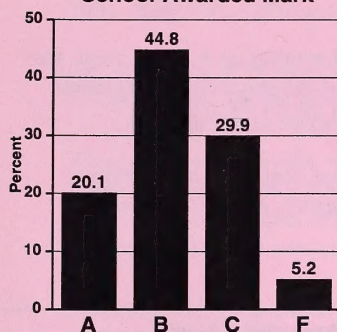


English 30

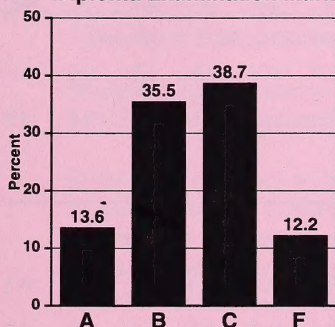
Diploma Examination Results Examiners' Report for January 1998

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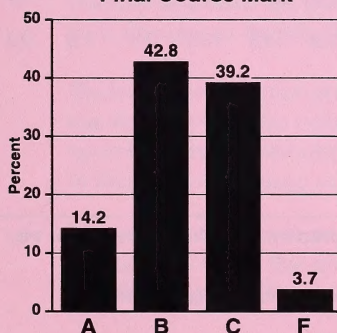
School-Awarded Mark



Diploma Examination Mark



Final Course Mark



The summary information in this report provides teachers, school administrators, students, and the general public with an overview of results from the January 1998 administration of the English 30 Diploma Examination. This information is most helpful when used in conjunction with the detailed school and jurisdiction reports that have been provided to schools and school jurisdiction offices. A provincial report containing a detailed analysis of the combined November, January, June, and August results is made available annually.

Description of the Examination

The English 30 Diploma Examination consists of two parts: a written-response section and a reading section. Each part is worth 50% of the total examination mark.

Achievement of Standards

The information reported is based on the final course marks achieved by 9 736 students who wrote the January 1998 examination.

- 96.3% of these students achieved the acceptable standard (a final course mark of 50% or higher).
- 14.2% of these students achieved the standard of excellence (a final course mark of 80% or higher).

Students who achieved the standard of excellence (80% or higher, or A) on the diploma examination demonstrated impressive competence in their writing. Students who achieved the acceptable standard (50% to 64%, or C) showed often that they were able to use language well, but did not always sustain this ability.

Provincial Averages

- The average school-awarded mark was 68.5%.
- The average diploma examination mark was 64.5%.
- The average final course mark, representing an equal weighting of the school-awarded mark and the diploma examination mark, was 67.0%.

Part A: Written Response

Part A: Written Response is written at a different time from *Part B: Reading*. Students are required to complete two writing assignments related to the same piece of literature. Both assignments assess a variety of reading, writing, and thinking skills.

Readers will find the results most meaningful in the context of the assignments and the scoring descriptors. The most useful starting place for reviewing these results is at the **3 Satisfactory** level. Such work exceeds the pass mark of 50%. The scoring criteria are in the *English 30 Information Bulletin, Diploma Examination Program*, for the 1997–98 school year, which is available in all schools.

The table below outlines the requirements for each assignment, the categories for scoring each assignment, the amount each category contributes to the total mark (parts A and B combined), and the percentage of students achieving at the various levels. In January 1998, the average raw score for Part A was 31.2 out of 50.

By comparing school and jurisdiction results with provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

Examination Blueprint and Percentage Distribution of Scores

Description of the Writing Assignment	Scoring Category	Proportion of Total Mark(%)	Percentage Distribution of Scores									
			Excellent		Proficient		Satisfactory		Limited		Poor	
			5	4.5	4	3.5	3	2.5	2	1.5	1	Ins*
Minor Assignment The student is required to respond personally and thoughtfully to literature, and to communicate clearly and effectively in writing.	Thought and Detail	7.5	3.6	3.8	19.0	15.8	32.9	12.4	9.6	1.8	0.9	0.2
	Writing Skills	7.5	3.0	3.4	17.9	15.1	37.0	11.5	9.1	1.5	1.4	0.2
Major Assignment The major assignment maintains a thematic connection to the minor assignment. The student is required to demonstrate an appreciation of literary works studied in class by discussing theme and the literary techniques that the author uses to support that theme. The student is also required to synthesize thoughts clearly and correctly in writing.	Thought and Detail	12.5	4.2	3.2	14.3	11.5	27.7	16.5	17.8	2.9	1.5	0.3
	Organization	7.5	3.4	3.2	15.3	13.5	38.1	14.5	9.7	1.4	0.6	0.3
	Matters of Choice	7.5	3.9	3.1	16.1	12.2	39.9	12.5	9.3	1.6	1.1	0.3
	Matters of Correctness	7.5	4.6	3.6	17.2	13.8	32.8	12.8	10.5	2.4	1.8	0.3

*Ins (Insufficient) is a special category that includes students who did not attempt the assignment, who wrote too little to evaluate, or who wrote answers that were completely off-topic.

Note: The shaded portion represents the percentage of students who achieved or exceeded the acceptable standard on each scoring category.

Reader's Response to Literature Assignment

This assignment is intended to focus the student as a reader on his or her own response to a text and a theme that are provided. The January 1998 Reader's Response to Literature Assignment required students to respond to the poem "The Swimmer's Moment" as a means of exploring the significance of individual response to challenge.

This assignment required the students to discuss what the poem "The Swimmer's Moment" conveyed to them about the significance of our response to challenge.

Most students were able to understand the central metaphor of "The Swimmer's Moment" and to appreciate the significance of the two choices—to accept challenge and the accompanying risk or to avoid the "ominous centre" and stand by knowing nothing of those who have dared. Students responded in a variety of ways and with various degrees of effectiveness. Some discussed the entire poem. Some discussed selected aspects of the poem. Some students referred to one detail; others referred to many details. Many students offered a "lecture" on the virtue or folly of accepting challenges. Very few students included a personal experience to support their discussion.

Students achieving scores of **4 Proficient** and **5 Excellent** were perceptive and focused in their personal response to the poem. Many recognized the paradoxical nature of the choices suggested in the poem. Those students achieving **3 Satisfactory** often suggested that "whirlpools" should be avoided.

Literature Composition Assignment

Students were required to develop and support a thesis based on appropriate literature regarding the individual's response to challenge.

Students referred to a wide variety of literature. Most had a general understanding of "challenge"; some students combined challenge with dilemma, choice, risk, obstacle, or conflict. Given the wording in both assignments and the nature of challenge, this shift or "drift" was legitimate and not, in itself, problematic. Students commonly discussed the sequential development of the character's challenges, which, markers were reminded, was an organizational choice rather than the indication of merely summarizing plot.

There were many papers that were outstanding in thoughtfulness, insight, confidence, and fluency. Many students addressed the craftsmanship of the author directly. Most students were able to focus and organize their discussions by selecting details appropriate to the literature and the topic.

Students who achieved overall scores of **4 Proficient** and **5 Excellent** usually presented carefully thought-out discussions of the nature and effect of challenge, acknowledging that the richness of life often depends upon whether one embraces or avoids challenge. Students at this level of achievement showed confidence in their use of language as well as in their ability to interpret the literature insightfully.

Students who achieved overall scores of **3 Satisfactory** had no difficulty in relating literature that applied to the topic. Some of this group failed to appreciate the subtle difference between "challenge" and "obstacle," "conflict," "choice," and similar concepts.

While organization of ideas continues to be more effectively focused, control of writing skills is notably erratic. In some of the word-processed papers, one suspects inept use of the word processor, in particular, the computer's thesaurus.

Question-by-Question Results

Part B: Reading

Question	Key	Difficulty*
1	D	78.9
2	B	65.3
3	A	67.1
4	B	80.9
5	C	90.1
6	D	77.2
7	D	85.8
8	B	50.5
9	A	89.2
10	C	44.5
11	B	78.7
12	C	84.2
13	C	52.0
14	A	66.8
15	D	56.2
16	B	49.1
17	B	40.4
18	C	47.8
19	C	76.4
20	A	72.2
21	C	57.1
22	A	32.1
23	D	67.2
24	C	58.9
25	A	60.7
26	B	67.4
27	A	69.8
28	B	57.4
29	B	80.9
30	D	57.2
31	C	70.4
32	A	58.8
33	C	62.4
34	D	51.1
35	B	51.1
36	A	72.7
37	C	72.7
38	B	59.2
39	D	60.6
40	C	70.5
41	D	68.4
42	A	72.8
43	B	75.6
44	D	79.2
45	B	54.2
46	C	64.0
47	B	82.5
48	D	58.2
49	A	67.2
50	B	78.5
51	D	65.1
52	D	64.0
53	B	83.7
54	A	77.6
55	A	71.4
56	C	83.7
57	A	67.6
58	D	63.7
59	B	70.0
60	C	66.7
61	D	66.6
62	C	71.2
63	D	71.8
64	B	64.8
65	D	56.4
66	C	59.0
67	A	56.1
68	A	59.2
69	D	69.0
70	C	76.1

*Difficulty—percentage of students answering the question correctly

The table at the left shows question-by-question results and the keyed answers. Parallel tables in the school and jurisdiction reports show the percentage of students who selected each alternative. By comparing school and jurisdiction results to provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

Examination Blueprint

Part B: Reading has a value of 70 marks, one for each multiple-choice question. Each question is classified in two ways: according to the curricular content area being tested and according to the thinking (process) skill demanded by the question. The examination blueprint illustrates the distribution of questions in January 1998 according to these classifications.

Classification by Course Content	Classification by Thinking Skills			Total
	Literal Understanding	Inference and Application	Evaluation	
Meanings	64	1, 3, 16, 25, 27, 28, 31, 34, 38, 40, 45, 56, 57, 60, 63, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70	9, 13, 21, 30, 41, 43, 47, 58, 62	30 Items (22%)
Critical Response	20, 22, 32, 54	2, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 26, 29, 33, 37, 39, 42, 50, 55, 67	10, 19, 23, 24, 36	26 Items (18%)
Human Experience and Values		46, 48, 49, 59	4, 5, 6, 7, 35, 44, 51, 52, 53, 61	14 Items (10%)
	5 Items (4%)	41 Items (30%)	24 Items (16%)	70 Items (50%)
Total				

Subtest Results**

Results are in average raw scores.

Total Part B: 46.7 out of 70

Course Content

- Meanings: 19.8 out of 30
- Critical Response: 16.7 out of 26
- Human Experience and Values: 10.0 out of 14

** Readers are cautioned **not** to compare subtest results, because the subtests are not of equal difficulty. Instead, readers should compare these provincial subtest results with their own school subtest results.

Examiners' Comments

The results of Part B: Reading indicate that English 30 students are proficient in close reading.

Most students are able to successfully infer the meaning even from texts that teachers say are subtle and complex.

The first reading selection, "The Girls' Room" was selected to provide an amusing, but appropriately challenging, opening passage for students. The narrator in this essay describes a time in her life when her grandmother, suffering from arteriosclerosis, came to live with her and her two uncles. The affectionately ironic tone conveys with sensitivity both the humour and the pathos of their time together.

The essayist employs contrast, paradox, allusion, and irony, challenging readers to go beyond the obvious idea that the eight-year 'visit' of "Etka from Minsk" was a serious disruption, especially to the narrator. Students are invited to examine the difficulties of growing old in a society that tends to reject the aged.

Most of the questions related to this selection deal with the writer's craft. Questions 4, 5, 6, and 7 require students to examine more closely selected portions of the text. Of all students, 90.1% responded correctly to Question 5, an evaluation question requiring students to choose the clearest indication of the **ironic** outcome of the rivalry described in the essay. All of the alternatives present an outcome of the rivalry; all of them include an element of irony. That students were so successful in choosing the correct answer is evidence of their proficiency in reading skill and knowledge. The average difficulty on this set of questions is an impressive 77.9%.

The second reading selection, a poem, "Accidents of Birth," proved to be more challenging for many students, with difficulty ranges from 40.4 to 89.2.

The table below provides information about six questions from this selection. For each question, statistics are given for three student groups.

Percentage of Students Correctly Answering Selected Multiple-Choice Questions

	Question Number					
	8	10	13	15	16	17
All Students	50.5	44.5	52.0	56.2	49.1	40.4
Students achieving the <i>standard of excellence</i> (80% or higher, or A) on the whole examination	81.4	65.2	77.0	86.7	82.3	76.4
Students achieving the <i>acceptable standard</i> who received between 50% and 64%, or C, on the whole examination	38.7	37.9	43.9	44.4	36.7	26.6

-
8. The two quotations at the beginning of this poem serve to
- A. examine the issue of despair
 - * B. support the speaker's sense of awe
 - C. provide opposing points of view on life
 - D. contrast with the speaker's life experience
-

-
10. The metaphors that have been chosen in lines 5 to 10 serve **mainly** to convey the speaker's
- A. fear of mortality
 - B. feeling of inferiority
 - * C. awareness of indifferent forces
 - D. knowledge of evolutionary processes
-

-
13. The speaker's **most emphatic** declaration of his existence is
- A. "I've been brought back again from the / fine silt" (lines 5–6)
 - B. "I've also been / pardoned miraculously for years (lines 7–8)
 - * C. "Here I am, brought back, set up, not yet / happened away" (lines 11–12)
 - D. "me being here again, old / needer" (lines 17–18)
-

Question 8 is the opening question of a set based on "Accidents of Birth," a poem introduced by questions posed by two philosophers discussing the meaning of life. The unusual format may have intimidated some students, as only 50.5% of all students responded correctly. Of the students who achieved the standard of excellence on the whole examination, 81.4% answered this question correctly. The reward for the careful reading and rereading required here was to establish the attitude of the speaker, the "sense of awe" at recognizing the phenomenon of "chance." Students who read the poem's introductory ideas less carefully would not have recognized their similarity. Of all students, 27.2% chose alternative C, perhaps thinking they could save time by guessing. It is worthwhile to note that part of what contributes to reading competence is the attention to all of the provided text.

Question 10 proved to be difficult: only 44.5% of all students answered correctly. Students were required first to identify the metaphors in lines 5 to 10 and then recognize what is being conveyed about the speaker through his choice of these words. The metaphors "long naps" and "lava of chance" do not seem to be a problem for students when they had to consider them individually, as in questions 11 and 12 (difficulty 78.7 and 84.2 respectively). However, students seem to have had trouble making the leap to recognizing that these metaphors suggest forces that cannot be controlled and are, therefore, "indifferent." Some students may have had problems with the difference between "inferiority" (alternative B) and "indifferent" (alternative C).

Question 13 is an evaluation question. Students were required to determine the "most emphatic" of the speaker's declarations of his existence. The 52.0% of students who answered correctly very likely responded to the effective repetition of ideas in alternative C as establishing the **strongest** emphasis referred to in the question. Of students WHO achieved the standard of excellence on the whole examination, 77.0% answered this question correctly. Of students who achieved the acceptable standard on the whole examination, 43.9% answered this question correctly.

15. The word choice and imagery in lines 20 to 25 serve to

- A. indicate the speaker's embarrassment
 - B. reflect the speaker's irritation with humanity
 - C. illustrate that human lives are identical everywhere
 - * D. emphasize the unlikeliness of this meeting in space and time
-

16. The idea central to this poem is an expression of the

- A. undeniable instinct for survival
 - * B. wonder implicit in random events
 - C. danger implicit in everyday existence
 - D. meaningless of individual existence
-

17. In the context of the entire poem, line 28 is effective in conveying the speaker's

- A. regret
 - * B. humility
 - C. flippancy
 - D. arrogance
-

Question 15, like question 10, required students to recognize and appreciate the poet's choice of words and images to convey an idea. Students answering the question correctly would likely identify such phrasing as "inching over the same little segment of earth-ball, in the same little eon," and "the centuries whining like gnats" as serving to reinforce the vastness of time and space as the context within which two people meet. Of those students who achieved the standard of excellence on the whole examination, 86.7% answered this question correctly.

Of those students who achieved the acceptable standard on the whole examination, 44.4% answered this question correctly. The results here further illustrate the importance of skill in deriving meaning from context.

Questions 16 and 17, as shown in the table, proved very difficult (49.1% and 40.4%, respectively). In the case of these two questions, recognizing the central idea is wholly dependent on recognizing the speaker's tone. Students who were not sensitive to the images of wonderment and awe in the poem might well have decided that the poet was commenting on the meaninglessness of existence: for question 16, alternative D was selected by 36.6% of students who failed the whole examination. These students also would be less inclined to recognize the speaker's tone as humble (question 17, B). Question 17 directs students to consider the context of the **entire** poem, a love poem celebrating the unlikely but real event of the coming together of two people. Line 28 (the [offering of] uncomprehending impudent thanks) is an expression of gratefulness that acknowledges the speaker's recognition of his insignificance.

Of those students who achieved the standard of excellence on the whole examination, 76.4% answered this question correctly as did 26.6% of students who achieved the acceptable standard. This 50% difference between the two achievement groups is a reflection of the challenging demands of the question as well as of the passage.

Comparison of Students' Results on Parts A and B

While it is not intended that Parts A and B of the English 30 Diploma Examination be considered as separate exams, it is interesting to compare the distribution of scores on the two parts of the examination.

	Part A	Part B
A	12.6	22.6
B	26.1	35.5
C	46.5	27.3
F	14.8	14.6

As noted in the discussions on pages 6 and 7 of this report, student success on Part B: readings is directly related to success on the examination as a whole (Parts A and B.) This relationship is especially apparent at the failure level. At the A and B levels, student achievement on Part B continues to improve.

For further information, contact Gail Gates (ggates@edc.gov.ab.ca), Mary Lou Campbell (mcampbell@edc.gov.ab.ca), or Elana Scraba (escraba@edc.gov.ab.ca) at the Student Evaluation Branch, 427-0010. To call toll-free from outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000.

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