Diagnostic Assessment Report

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE English Language B (4EB1), Paper 1

Student: [Name]
Paper Assessed: Pearson Edexcel International GCSE English Language B, Paper 1 format (November 2026 school mock)
Source Texts: Text One, adapted from the website Listverse, on paranormal events and their logical explanations. Text Two, an extract from a non-fiction book about a family, their house and Father Victor.
Report Date: November 2026
Prepared by: Ru, Peregrine Tutors

Dear parent,

I've now worked through your son's November mock in full: all three sections, every page. What follows is a diagnostic of what he's doing well, the few things that still cost him marks, and what I'd do about them. I want you to come away from this knowing that he is already working at a secure Grade 9, and understanding exactly which habits would keep it secure on a harder paper or in front of a stricter marker.

Overview

The school marked the paper at 81/100. I've marked it at 90/100. Both totals sit well above the Grade 9 boundary in Pearson's most recent published series for this qualification (70/100 in June 2026), so the question isn't whether he can reach the top grade. He's there.

The difference between the two marks is worth explaining, because it points straight at the main thing to work on. Most of it comes from the reading analysis questions. His teacher wrote "A very odd approach!" beside one and "Good points, but I do not like this formulaic approach" beside the other. That's a fair reaction to how the answers are built: nearly every paragraph opens with a quotation, then "suggests that", then the idea. Pearson's grid rewards the quality of the analysis rather than the shape of the paragraph, and the analysis is strong, so I haven't taken marks off for the format. But the teacher's instinct is sound as advice, and an examiner in the real exam could react the same way.

The encouraging headline is that his writing is the strongest part of the paper. His story in Section C rests on a structural idea I'd expect from a much older writer, and his vocabulary is

wide and chosen with purpose. The marks still available are few, and they sit in two places: how he shapes a reading answer, and how he handles the single most important moment in a story.

Marks at a Glance

QUESTION	MY MARK	SCHOOL	MAX	LEVEL	ASSESSMENT
Q1: Retrieval, Text One	**1**	1	1	**Full**	No intervention needed
Q2: Retrieval, Text One	**1**	1	1	**Full**	No intervention needed
Q3: Language and structure, Text One (AO2)	**9**	7	10	**L5**	1 mark: argue, don't list
Q4: Retrieval, Text Two	**1**	1	1	**Full**	No intervention needed
Q5: Retrieval, Text Two	**2**	2	2	**Full**	No intervention needed
Q6: Language and structure, Text Two (AO2)	**8**	8	10	**L4**	Biggest reading lever: 2 marks
Q7: Comparison of both texts (AO3)	**14**	13	15	**L5**	Secure
Q8: Talk, use of the texts (AO1)	**9**	9	10	**L5**	Secure
Q8: Talk, audience and purpose (AO4)	**11**	9	12	**L5**	1 mark: hold the peer voice
Q8: Talk, technical writing (AO5)	**7**	6	8	**L4 (top)**	Secure
Q10: Story, communication (AO4)	**18**	16	20	**L5**	2 marks: dramatise the title moment
Q10: Story, technical writing (AO5)	**9**	8	10	**L5**	Secure
Total	**90**	**81**	**100**	**Grade 9**	**Grade 9 boundary: 70 (June 2026)**

HOW I MARKED THIS

The paper follows the 4EB1 format exactly, but it was set by the school rather than by Pearson. I've placed every answer against Pearson's published level grids for this paper and checked the placements against Pearson's own marked example scripts for the qualification. I didn't have the source booklet, so I've accepted the school's ticks on the four short retrieval questions and couldn't check every reference in Q3 and Q6 against the original texts. Treat those two reading marks as provisional until I've seen the booklet.

What He Does Well

I want to start here, because there's a lot of it. He isn't a student who needs rescuing. He needs a small number of habits tightened.

He reads a writer's tone, not just the content

On the Listverse article, he noticed that the writer's attitude lives in small, loaded words:

> *The humour evident in "overpriced crystals" and "New Age weaponry" suggests that the writer does not believe that paranormal beliefs are rational...*
>
> *...tentative words such as "supposedly" and "probably" create a very cynical narrative.*
>
> Q3

Plenty of students at this level write about what a text says. He writes about the voice saying it, and that is what Pearson's top level means by "perceptive". It's also the skill that makes the comparison question easy for him.

He works at word level when it counts

He doesn't stop at naming a technique. He goes into the single word that carries the meaning. In Q3 he shows how "clutching" suggests "an attachment" to the crystals, and so to paranormal belief itself. In Q6 he sees the family "mitigating the notion of 'ghosts' with the positive adjective 'friendly'". That second point is sharp. A frightened family calling something a "friendly ghost" is a way of talking themselves out of fear, and he caught it. This is the habit that the improvement plan builds on.

His comparison sees how the texts are built

Q7 opens on structure, the hardest kind of comparison to make well:

> *The writer of text one frames their piece this way in order to systematically destroy and dismiss paranormal beliefs, repeatedly emphasising to the reader that everything has a logical explanation through sheer volume. The writer of text two uses a recollection to emotionally involve the reader and thus make the progression of his experiences and feelings about the house more impactful and credible.*
>
> Q7

That pairs each writer's method with its purpose, and it keeps both texts in play in the same paragraph. His teacher's comment, "Compares throughout", is right. I've put this answer at 14 out of 15.

He writes like a writer

The story opens with Grandad's bookshop "shuttered and salt-stained, as though grey had settled into its brickwork", and later the dark shop "slowly revealed itself like a photograph developing in a darkroom". Those images are precise, and they belong to this story: a place of old paper and fading memory. The bigger achievement is the idea. Given the title "The scariest night of my life", he resisted the haunted house and made the scariest night the one when his grandfather held a book upside down, "studying the pages intently, as though the words would eventually make sense." That is the kind of reading of a title that separates the top level from the one below it.

The talk in Section B shows the same control in a different form. He turns the audience's belief back on itself by asking them to imagine being the ghost ("Would you stop haunting a family if they tried to catch an ethereal presence with physical items like dream-catchers? Of course not!"), and he anticipates their objection before they can raise it: "I am aware that, so far, my talk has been extremely opinionated." Those are a speaker's moves, not an essayist's.

What Needs to Change

I've identified four things that cost marks and one practical habit that puts marks at risk. They're listed by how many marks they could recover. The first also carries the most risk with a stricter marker.

1. His reading paragraphs start with the quotation instead of the point

Affects: Q3 and Q6, 20 marks of the paper. Worth 1 to 3 marks, and protects against a marker who reacts as the school did.

Nearly every one of his nine Q3 paragraphs and ten Q6 paragraphs follows the same pattern: quotation, "suggests that", idea. Each paragraph is a separate observation, and none builds on the one before it. Pearson's Level 5 asks for "Perceptive understanding and analysis of language and structure", with references that are "discriminating and clarifies the points being made". He meets that point by point. What he doesn't yet do is tell the examiner what the writer is doing overall, so the examiner has to assemble his argument for him. On a good day the examiner does that and rewards it. On a tired afternoon, or with a marker who dislikes the pattern, they don't.

The top-band move is to open with a claim about the writer, bring the quotation in as evidence, and then take one word further than feels necessary. Fewer paragraphs, each doing more. Here's what that looks like, using his own Q6 paragraph:

What he wrote (Level 4):

> *"like a Venus flytrap swallowing its prey" suggests that, upon reflection, the house was almost sinister; because the simile creates the image of a trap and paints the writer as the victim.*

What Level 5 sounds like:

> *Looking back, the writer presents the house as a trap his family walked into without seeing it. A Venus flytrap lures its prey in before it closes, so the simile suggests the house seemed inviting at first, and "swallowing" makes their arrival sound final, as if the family were being consumed rather than simply moving in.*

Same quotation. Same simile spotted. But the second version starts with what the writer is doing, then gets two ideas out of the image instead of one: the lure, and the finality of "swallowing". He already had "upon reflection" and "victim" in his version. The rewrite keeps both ideas and lets them carry an argument.

2. Some Q6 paragraphs explain what the writer felt, not how the language shows it

Affects: Q6. Worth 1 to 2 marks.

Q6 asks how the writer presents his feelings. In four of his ten paragraphs, the answer drifts from how to what:

> *"I had suspected that there was something strange" and "I didn't understand" suggests that all reservations that the writer initially had about the house were based off of him being cynical, rather than hard proof.*
>
> Q6

The reading of the writer's state of mind is accurate, but it's a comprehension point. Nothing in it is about the words "suspected" or "understand" themselves, or about why a writer telling a ghost story would admit to not understanding. That's why this answer sits at the top of Level 4 rather than in Level 5, where Q3 is. There's a related precision issue: he uses "cynical" in Q3, Q6 and Q7 where he means sceptical or doubtful. A cynic distrusts people's motives; a sceptic doubts their claims. Small, but at Grade 9 examiners notice the difference.

The fix is a simple rule: before he writes a Q6 paragraph, he underlines the one word or sentence shape he is going to analyse. No word, no paragraph.

3. The story's title moment is told in one line

Affects: Section C (AO4, 20 marks). Worth 1 to 2 marks.

The best idea in the paper arrives in two sentences, and then the story moves on:

> *One night, I saw him holding a book upside down, studying the pages intently, as though the words would eventually make sense. That was the scariest night of my life.*
>
> Section C

The fear that follows, in the empty shop, is a more conventional kind (a snapping floorboard, dust, running) and it is hurried: "Seizing the book, I bolted, racing down the steps two at a time. Just as my feet hit the pavement, something collapsed inside." Pearson's top level asks for writing where the "Task is sharply focused on purpose and the expectations/requirements of the intended reader". The story is sharply focused for most of its length. It loosens at exactly the two moments that carry the title.

The move is to slow time at the moment that matters: what the narrator sees in his grandfather's hands, what he hears in the room, the one thing he can't bring himself to say. Spend 150 words where he spent 30, and tie the final scare in the shop back to Grandad rather than to an unsafe building. That turns a moving story into a frightening one as well, which is what the title asks for.

4. His talk sometimes sounds like a letter rather than a speaker to classmates

Affects: Section B (AO4, 12 marks). Worth 1 mark.

The audience is his peers, and most of the talk is pitched exactly right: "those pesky beliefs", "Of course not!", the joke about friends who "meticulously" plan a haunting "to convince you that you are crazy". Then the register stiffens into "I implore you to ask yourselves", which belongs in a formal letter. The voice wobbles between a confident Year 11 talking to his year group and an adult writing to a newspaper. Holding the first voice all the way through is the difference between 11 and 12.

5. Presentation: writing in the margins and below the lines

Affects: the whole paper. No marks directly, but a real risk.

His teacher wrote "Do not write in margins!" on the talk and asked why he kept writing below the lines when there was space. The script also carries heavy crossings-out, mostly where a sentence was abandoned halfway. Exam scripts are scanned before marking, and anything squeezed outside the answer area risks being cropped or missed. The fix is two minutes of planning before each long answer, so the first sentence is the right one, and using the additional pages rather than the margins.

What We're Going to Do

Each of the issues above has a specific intervention. Here's the plan, in the order I'd work through it. It is deliberately short.

Phase 1: Argument-first reading paragraphs

Sessions 1 and 2 | Q3 and Q6

We start with his own answers. He'll regroup his nine Q3 points under two or three claims about the writer, then rewrite them as argued paragraphs, so he can see that the thinking was already there. Then timed Q3 and Q6 practice on fresh texts from Pearson past papers. Success looks like this: every paragraph opens with a claim about the writer, and every paragraph takes at least one word beyond its first meaning.

Phase 2: How, not what

Within sessions 2 and 3 | Q6 and Q7

Narrative non-fiction is where his analysis drifts into retelling, so we'll practise on memoir and travel extracts with the underline rule in force. Success: no paragraph without a named word, sentence shape or structural choice at its centre, and "sceptical" where he means sceptical.

Phase 3: Slowing the moment that matters

Session 3 or 4 | Section C

He'll rewrite the upside-down book scene at length, then write two timed stories to past Pearson titles, each planned around one moment he will deliberately slow down. Success: the moment the title points to is dramatised on the page, not reported.

Phase 4: Register, and one full paper

Session 5 | Section B and the whole paper

One talk task with a fixed peer voice, then a full three-hour Pearson past paper sat at home under exam conditions, inside the lines, which we'll go through together.

Projected Outcome

He's at Grade 9 now, 20 marks clear of the boundary on my marking and 11 clear on the school's. With the work above, I'd expect his scores on Pearson past papers to sit consistently between the high 80s and low 90s. The aim is not to move the grade. It's to make the 9 hard to lose: on a harder pair of texts, in front of a stricter marker, or on a day when the story idea doesn't come easily.

He doesn't need to work harder. He needs his reading answers to look as good as the thinking inside them already is, and his best story ideas to get the space they deserve. That's a short, specific programme, and I'd keep it short.

If you have any questions about this report, or if you'd like to discuss anything in more detail, I'm very happy to talk it through.

Best,

Ru

Peregrine Tutors

This report is based on [Name]'s November 2026 school mock, set in the format of Pearson Edexcel International GCSE English Language B (4EB1) Paper 1. Marks are indicative: each answer was placed against Pearson's published level grids (November 2024 mark scheme) and compared with Pearson's marked exemplar scripts for 4EB1 (Summer 2019). They have not been calibrated against Pearson-marked scripts for this paper, and the reading marks are provisional because the source booklet was not available. The grade is set against Pearson's published June 2026 overall boundaries for 4EB1. Pearson sets boundaries for each series, and a school-set paper may differ in difficulty from a live one.