

C2 Proficiency: Writing Part 2

Description

This activity familiarises students with the text types, focus and word limit in Writing Part 2. Students discuss the requirements of a question which asks them to write a review. They check a sample answer to make sure it answers the question and to consider which band the answer is in.

Time required: 25 minutes

Materials required:

- C2 Proficiency Handbook or copies/OHT of the description of the Writing paper from the Handbook
- Student's worksheet (one copy per student)
- Sample answer (one copy per student)
- Writing Assessment scales (one copy per student)

Aims:

- to familiarise students with the text types, focus and word limit in Writing Part 2.
- to help students understand the requirements of a Part 2 question
- to familiarise students with review writing
- to familiarise students with assessment

Procedure

1. As a lead in, ask what your students write in their everyday lives, e.g. notes, text messages, emails, etc. Establish if anyone often writes longer pieces such as reports, essays or proposals. Briefly discuss what students like or don't like about writing both short and long texts, e.g. the style, the type of language used, having to plan/being spontaneous, checking and editing.
2. Refer students to **Student's worksheet Exercise 1**. Ask students, in pairs, to complete the key facts about C2 Proficiency Writing, referring to the handbook if necessary.
3. Check the answers to Exercise 1 with the whole class. Ask if there are any other questions about Part 2.
4. Remind students of the importance of making the right choice in Part 2 during the exam. Students should choose a topic they have experience of, they have enough vocabulary for, and choose a task type which suits their writing style. One way to increase the range of questions they can answer is to study different genres of writing, so in this activity you are going to focus on writing a review.
5. Ask students if they like reading novels. Elicit the names of any novels about the students' country/countries. Briefly discuss which aspects of life in their country are portrayed in novels.
6. Refer students to **Exercise 2** on the **Student's worksheet**. Ask them to read the Part 2 sample task very carefully, and, with a partner, to discuss what they have to do to answer the question by completing the writing plan.
7. Check the completed writing plans with the whole class (see **Key**). Emphasise the importance of answering both parts of the question and of writing in an appropriate format and style.

8. Give out the **Sample answer** and the **Writing Assessment Scales**. Students should read the sample answer and discuss with a partner whether the question has been fully answered, then use the assessment scales to decide which is the best band score, 3 or 5.
9. Discuss the sample review with the whole class (see **Key** below).
10. If time, discuss with students:
 - **Apart from novels, what else can be reviewed?** (*film, magazine, play, concert, restaurant, hotel, exhibition, TV show*)
 - **What makes a good review?:** (*catch readers' attention; do more than just describe but also discuss some specific aspects; gives opinion in an interesting way, with good justification for ideas; uses appropriate language, including of literature and the media*)
 - **How can you prepare for writing a review?** (*e.g. read or listen to examples in English language media (e.g. BBC arts shows podcasts); discuss books you have read, TV shows or films you've seen with classmates; pick out useful expressions and vocabulary from reviews you read*)

Additional information

You could look through the FAQs for Writing to see if there are any points there you would like to raise with your class. Make sure you cover these main points:

- students can choose one topic from 5 questions
- the question is shorter than in Part 1
- the length of answers is not the same in Part 1 and Part 2
- students have to read the question carefully to identify who they are writing to, the topic, and the type of writing, article, report etc.
- there are always two parts to the question and students who produce a balanced answer dealing adequately with all parts of the question can expect to gain a mark in the higher bands.

Task format

The input for the questions in Part 2 is considerably shorter than in Part 1, and will not be more than 70 words in length.

The rubric for each question will define the purpose for writing, identify the target reader and therefore indicate the appropriate format and register required in the answer.

Questions 2 – 4 Task types and focus

The different task types are intended to provide the candidates with a clear context, topic, purpose and target reader for their writing. For questions 2–4, the task types used are essay, article, letter, report and review.

Questions 5(a) and 5(b)

Question 5 consists of a choice of two tasks based on the set reading texts, as specified in the Examination Regulations issued every year (also available on the Cambridge ESOL website:

www.cambridgeesol.org/cpe).

This option is included to encourage the extended reading which develops candidates' linguistic competence, widens the range of language they encounter and enriches their language study. A variety of texts is included in order to appeal to different tastes. Each text remains on the list for two years.

Task types and focus

The task types used in question 5 are article, essay, letter, report and review. Candidates are not required to produce literary analysis for question 5.

Answer keys

Student's Worksheet Exercise 1

- *a report and a review*
- *280 – 320 words*
- *set books*

Student's Worksheet Exercise 2

Who is going to read this?	Readers of a local English-language newspaper
What am I going to write, a report, a review etc?	A review of a novel
What style/format is it going to be in?	A review of a novel usually has a title and has clear paragraphs. It identifies and describes the novel and then evaluates aspects of the novel before concluding with a recommendation.
How many content points are there? What are the content points?	2 Identify and describe the novel with reference to the area where it is set Assess the novel's effectiveness in capturing the atmosphere of the area through the descriptions of the landscape, buildings and characters.
What sort of language do I need to use?	Neutral register; language for describing, narrating, explaining and evaluating

Sample answer

1. The question has been clearly answered: there is reference to the novel, the area where it is set, and discussion of the effectiveness of the novel in capturing the atmosphere of the area through the descriptions of the landscape, buildings and characters.
2. This review has been awarded band 5 for all four criteria. Refer students to the examiner comments on the last page for a more detailed commentary.

Student's worksheet

Exercise 1

Working in pairs, complete the key facts below. The first word of each answer is given and each dash represents one letter. Use the C2 Proficiency Handbook to check the information.

Key facts:

Part 2 offers a choice of 4 questions.

The possible types of writing are the same as for Part 1: a *letter, an article, an essay*, **PLUS**

- a r _ _ _ _ _ and a r _ _ _ _ _ .
- Candidates must write _ _ _ - _ _ _ _ words.
- The last question is always on the s _ _ b _ _ _ _ .

Exercise 2

Look at the Part 2 question below and complete the writing plan.

Who is going to read this?	
What am I going to write, a report, a review etc?	
What style / format is it going to be in?	
How many content points are there? What are the content points?	
What sort of language do I need to use?	

Part 2 Sample Task

Write your answer in **280 – 320** words in an appropriate style.

You have recently read a novel set in an area you know well. Write a review of the novel for your local English-language newspaper. You should comment on how well the writer of the book has captured the atmosphere of the area through the descriptions of the landscape, buildings and characters.

Write your **review**.

Sample answer

1. Now read the sample answer and discuss with a partner whether the question has been fully answered.

Everybody who has lived in Athens during the past 30 years could relate to John Armstrong's new novel 'City Days'. By means of a simple storyline, concerning the adventures of six friends growing up together in the city centre, the writer manages to show Athens' evolution during the years 1979-2000.

The fact that John Armstrong is not Greek has no effect on his perception of Athens, since he has lived here for more than 20 years. All of the city centre's areas, including Syntagma, Omonoia and Plaka, are described almost exactly as they are or have been. It is obvious that he was careful not to give misleading information about them and that he has studied the city's history, including its architectural styles during the past three decades, since all of the characteristic buildings in Athens are presented, and all other buildings described do or could exist, and the changes that it has gone through. Even the landscapes look familiar to an Athens' resident like me. I have often had the feeling that I knew where a place described was, even if its name was not mentioned.

The novel's only weak point is the description of its characters. While the main six characters, especially George, the protagonist, are ordinary people, good examples of how Greek youth thought and felt at the time, secondary ones are not given as much attention. The writer tends to follow the clichés that have been established concerning Greeks, describing almost all of them as good-natured but lazy and not serious people. That is partially true, but during the post-dictatory years Greeks were not like that, especially the capital's residents. They used to think a lot and were no longer passive. By making this mistake the writer fails to capture that age's spirit.

Despite its disadvantages, though, the novel is totally worth reading. I was really moved while reading it, perhaps because of personal experiences and my bond to the place. To sum up, this novel accomplishes its main purpose; to show that, despite its chaos, the difficulties it poses and the problems it causes, one can't help loving Athens. I do, and the writer does, too.

361 words

2. Look at the C2 Assessment Scale. Do you think the sample answer was given Band 3 or Band 5 for each of the four criteria?

Writing Assessment Scales

C2	Content	Communicative Achievement	Organisation	Language
5	All content is relevant to the task. Target reader is fully informed.	Demonstrates complete command of the conventions of the communicative task. Communicates complex ideas in an effective and convincing way, holding the target reader's attention with ease, fulfilling all communicative purposes.	Text is organised impressively and coherently using a wide range of cohesive devices and organisational patterns with complete flexibility.	Uses a wide range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, with fluency, precision, sophistication, and style. Use of grammar is sophisticated, fully controlled and completely natural. Any inaccuracies occur only as slips.
4	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>			
3	Minor irrelevances and/or omissions may be present. Target reader is on the whole informed.	Uses the conventions of the communicative task with sufficient flexibility to communicate complex ideas in an effective way, holding the target reader's attention with ease, fulfilling all communicative purposes.	Text is a well-organised, coherent whole, using a variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns with flexibility.	Uses a range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, effectively and precisely. Uses a wide range of simple and complex grammatical forms with full control, flexibility and sophistication. Errors, if present, are related to less common words and structures, or as slips.
2	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.</i>			
1	Irrelevances and misinterpretation of task may be present. Target reader is minimally informed.	Uses the conventions of the communicative task effectively to hold the target reader's attention and communicate straightforward and complex ideas, as appropriate.	Text is well-organised and coherent, using a variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns to generally good effect.	Uses a range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, appropriately. Uses a range of simple and complex grammatical forms with control and flexibility. Occasional errors may be present but do not impede communication.
0	Content is totally irrelevant. Target reader is not informed.	<i>Performance below band 1.</i>		

PAPER 2: WRITING

Question 3 (sample script)

Sample script with examiner comments

QUESTION 3: CANDIDATE D

■ Content

For a Band 3 or above, the review must:

- identify the novel and describe the use of local landscape, buildings and characters
- comment on the effectiveness of the descriptions.

■ Organisation and cohesion

Clear development of ideas.

Appropriate use of linking and paragraphing.

■ Appropriacy of register and format

Consistently appropriate for a review in a newspaper.

■ Range

Language for:

- describing
- narrating
- evaluating

■ Target reader

Would be informed about the novel and the writer's view of it.

Candidate D

Everybody who has lived in Athens during the past 30 years could relate to John Armstrong's new novel 'City Days'. By means of a simple storyline, concerning the adventures of six friends growing up together in the city centre, the writer manages to show Athens' evolution during the years 1979-2000.

The fact that John Armstrong is not Greek has no effect on his perception of Athens, since he has lived here for more than 20 years. All of the city centre's areas, including Syntagma, Omonoia and Plaka, are described almost exactly as they are or have been. It is obvious that he was careful not to give misleading information about them and that he has studied the city's history, including its architectural styles during the past three decades, since all of the characteristic buildings in Athens are presented, and all other buildings described do or could exist, and the changes that it has gone through. Even the landscapes look familiar to an Athens' resident like me. I have often had the feeling that I knew where a place described was, even if its name was not mentioned.

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Examiner comments

■ Content

Excellent development of topic.

■ Organisation and cohesion

Skilfully organised and coherent.

■ Range

Extensive range.

■ Accuracy

Minimal error.

■ Appropriacy of register and format

Wholly appropriate.

■ Target reader

Impresses the reader and has a very positive effect.

■ Marks awarded

Band 5.