4.5 Standard English vs Dialect: 10-minute Pack

about 10 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer all questions in full sentences where required.

Sunday at Nan's

Written for Revision Library (original, copyright-free). A short first-person narrative extract, invented for this resource to give genuine, respectfully written examples of a regional English dialect in dialogue, framed by Standard English narration.

Every Sunday, without fail, my nan expects the whole family for dinner at one o'clock sharp, and every Sunday, without fail, somebody arrives at half past. This week it was my cousin Danny, ambling through the back door twenty minutes late with an apology already forming on his lips.

'You're late again,' said Nan, not looking up from the potatoes. 'I've told youse a hundred times, one o'clock means one o'clock, not one o'clock whenever it suits.'

'Sorry, Nan,' Danny said. 'The bus never come.'

'Aye, well, it never comes for nobody round here neither,' Nan said, 'so you'd best set off earlier next time, hadn't you.'

Nan talks the way she has always talked, the way her own mother talked before her: broad, quick, and shaped by fifty years on the same South Yorkshire street. She drops her aitches when she is cross, doubles up her negatives when she wants to make a point, and calls anyone she loves 'love,' whether she has met them once or raised them from birth.

My teacher would mark every one of Nan's sentences in red pen, and my nan would not care in the slightest, because she is not writing an essay. She is talking to her family, in the language that raised her, and it does its job perfectly.

At dinner, she told us about Mrs Ogilvie two doors down, who 'hasn't got nowt better to do than watch the street through her nets,' and

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about the new bin collection times, which she reckoned were 'a right carry-on and no mistake.' Danny, who is training to be a solicitor, speaks at work in a careful, rounded voice he seems to have borrowed from a radio announcer, and tried gently correcting her. 'It's "anything," Nan, not "nowt."'

'It's nowt to me what you call it,' Nan said, without missing a beat, passing him the gravy, 'so long as you eat your dinner while it's hot.'

Later, when Danny drafted a work email at the kitchen table, Nan read it over his shoulder and pronounced it 'proper posh talk, that,' full of words she said she would never use down the market but which she agreed looked exactly right on a letter to a client. She is not wrong. The email needs to be understood by a stranger who has never met Danny and will judge his firm by every line of it. The kitchen does not need any such thing. It already knows him.

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1 Choose the Standard English form in each pair.

(a) A) We was tired after the walk. **(1)**
B) We were tired after the walk.

☐ A

☐ B

(b) A) He don't like it. **(1)**
B) He doesn't like it.

☐ A

☐ B

(c) A) I done my homework. **(1)**
B) I did my homework.

☐ A

☐ B

(d) A) We ain't got none. **(1)**
B) We haven't got any.

☐ A

☐ B

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

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2 Identify and correct the one grammatical error in this sentence: 'They was late for the bus.'

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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3 For each quotation below, identify what it shows about Nan's grammar.

(a) 'The bus never come.' **(1)**

- ☐ A) a Standard English past tense
- ☐ B) a non-standard past-tense verb form
- ☐ C) a present tense used correctly

(b) 'it never comes for nobody round here neither' **(1)**

- ☐ A) a single negative
- ☐ B) multiple (double) negation
- ☐ C) the passive voice

(c) 'I've told youse a hundred times' **(1)**

- ☐ A) 'youse' is a regional plural form of 'you'
- ☐ B) 'youse' is a spelling mistake for 'you'
- ☐ C) 'youse' is a proper noun

(d) 'hasn't got nowt better to do' **(1)**

- ☐ A) 'nowt' is formal Standard English vocabulary
- ☐ B) 'nowt' is a dialect word meaning 'nothing', combined with a double negative
- ☐ C) 'nowt' is a contraction of 'not'

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

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4 For each situation below, decide whether Standard English would typically be expected, or whether informal/dialect speech would usually be perfectly appropriate.

(a) Answering a question in a GCSE English exam. **(1)**

- ☐ A) Standard English typically expected
- ☐ B) Informal/dialect speech usually fine

(b) Chatting with your nan in her kitchen on a Sunday. **(1)**

- ☐ A) Standard English typically expected
- ☐ B) Informal/dialect speech usually fine

(c) Emailing a new client for work. **(1)**

- ☐ A) Standard English typically expected
- ☐ B) Informal/dialect speech usually fine

(d) Texting a close friend about weekend plans. **(1)**

- ☐ A) Standard English typically expected
- ☐ B) Informal/dialect speech usually fine

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 4.5 Standard English vs Dialect: 10-minute Pack

Question 1

(a) B **B1**

(a) Answer: B

(b) B **B1**

(b) Answer: B

(c) B **B1**

(c) Answer: B

(d) B **B1**

(d) Answer: B

Question 2

identifies 'was' as the non-standard verb form for the plural subject 'they' **B1**

correct rewrite: 'They were late for the bus.', cao **B1**

Answer: They were late for the bus.

Question 3

(a) B) a non-standard past-tense verb form **B1**

(a) Answer: B

(b) B) multiple (double) negation **B1**

(b) Answer: B

(c) A) 'youse' is a regional plural form of 'you' **B1**

(c) Answer: A

(d) B) 'nowt' is a dialect word meaning 'nothing', combined with a double negative **B1**

(d) Answer: B

Question 4

(a) A) Standard English typically expected **B1**

(a) Answer: A

(b) B) Informal/dialect speech usually fine **B1**

(b) Answer: B

(c) A) Standard English typically expected **B1**

(c) Answer: A

(d) B) Informal/dialect speech usually fine **B1**

(d) Answer: B

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