Choice openings

In Section B (Writing) of your exam paper you will complete two pieces of writing. In each one, your opening paragraph is vital: It sets the tone and style of what will come next, but more importantly perhaps it gives the marker a first impression of the quality of your answer.

Below you will find three Section B type questions. After each come two different attempts at the opening paragraph. In each case, Paragraph B is better than Paragraph A, but can you say why? Try to find three reasons each time.

1  Question: Write a letter to a pen friend who is coming to stay with you for two weeks, informing him or her of what you plan to do in that time.

Paragraph A

Hey Todd!

There’s loads of stuff we can do. For a start there’s Thorpe Park near here and it’s got the Rocket Ride that nearly takes your stomach out when it comes down! And that’s only one thing. There’s loads more.

Paragraph B

Dear Todd

I’m really looking forward to your two week stay this summer. I’ve been thinking about a programme for the fortnight and I think that there are three things we must definitely do: Thorpe Park (a huge theme park); Brighton beach; and the Spectrum Centre (a leisure centre with a swimming pool, flumes and an ice rink). Here’s a bit more detail about each of them.

Your three reasons why Paragraph B is better than Paragraph A:

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Question: Write a letter to a pen friend who is coming to stay with you for two weeks, informing him or her of what you plan to do in that time.
2 Question: Write the text for a charity leaflet persuading people to give money to help rebuild Haiti after the recent earthquake.

Paragraph A
Thousands died in the recent earthquake in Haiti and they need our help to rebuild their homes, schools, hospitals and workplaces. What can be done to bring aid?

Paragraph B
We’ve all seen the pictures of devastation from Haiti – an entire community wiped out by a massive earthquake. But the task of rebuilding Haiti is now just as massive. Will you help?

Your three reasons:

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3 Question: Write an article for your school newsletter arguing either for or against students being able to use computers to complete GCSE English assessments.

Paragraph A
Computers are a fact of life. If you go into any office you will see everyone using a computer. So why can’t we use them in school to do our GCSE controlled assessments? Some people say that if we are allowed to use them we’ll cheat by having the spell checker on, but this can be turned off so that isn’t really an argument.

Paragraph B
When digital watches were first invented, schools banned them. When the calculator first became affordable for all, exam boards prohibited their use. Now that computers are a standard life tool we are unable to use them to complete our GCSE controlled assessments in English. Is there a pattern here? Let’s look at the facts.

Your three reasons:

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Task 2

“Even better ...”

Have a go at rewriting the 3 B paragraphs so that they are even better. Make the marker sit up and notice just how good you are!