

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/11

Reading Passage (Core)

Key Messages

- In responding to all questions, it is advisable to consider carefully the **specific implications of key words** within the question or within the phrase under analysis.
- The revised format of Question 1(g), the six mark language question assessing an understanding of vocabulary used in the passage, **clearly identifies the words that are to be explained**, by printing them in italics. It is important that responses **focus only on these words**, and explanations should comprise either acceptable synonyms or a more developed paraphrase. Responses that attempt to define a word by using a different grammatical form of the same word will not be credited.
- Centres are advised to encourage students to be aware of the distinction between the purpose of questions such as 1(g), as explained above, and questions such as 1(h), the six mark language question **assessing an understanding of the effects of language choices made by the writer of the passage**. The revised format of the latter question clearly identifies the phrases for comment. Responses should focus primarily on **explaining how the language used helps to convey the writer's experience** (in this case, his feelings while being in the middle of a volcanic eruption). This question does not require a paraphrase or definition of the vocabulary used and any explanation of the meaning of the words should be subsidiary to the main purpose of the question.
- **Question 2** test both Reading and Writing objectives and thus the content if a **response must be closely grounded in the stimulus passage**.

General Comments

The reading passage for the paper seems to have been well received and proved to be an appropriate stimulus for both the writing and reading questions, as well as an effective discriminator of understanding for a core paper of this nature. There was very little indication that responses suffered from timing problems and most produced answers of adequate length for all questions. There was very little evidence of serious misunderstanding of either the passage or the questions and the paper proved successful in terms of discrimination in that it required careful reading. However, evidence from a large number of responses would seem to suggest that even those with an apparently secure understanding of the reading passage showed inexperience in slow, careful reading of both question paper and questions, with the result that answers did not focus on the precise details of what was being tested.

Question 2, the Directed Writing task, in general, was answered at least satisfactorily, with a pleasing number of responses making a confident attempt to write in a tone appropriate to the required genre (a leaflet for tourists to Hawaii), although in doing so some responses lost sight of the requirement to base their content on details taken from the passage and referred to what may have been personal experience gained from a holiday to the islands by the writers. However, it was felt that there was no evidence that those who might have had actual knowledge of the Hawaiian islands were in any way advantaged over those who had never visited them.

Although there were reports that some handwriting was very difficult to read, overall presentation and handwriting were generally of a good standard and nearly all responses gave clear evidence that the examination was being taken seriously and all were trying their very best to do well.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) Many responses scored at least one mark on this 2 mark question by clearly identifying that the number of people in the population has remained the same as when Hawaii was first 'discovered' by Captain Cook (responses that referred to the explorer as 'Captain Hook' were not penalised). Many responses, however, did not gain the second mark for this question as they merely stated that there are '10000 native Hawaiians' thereby omitting the concept of 'fewer' or a 'small number'. A common misunderstanding of this question came in responses that referred to the *culture* of the islands rather than to the *population*. As mentioned in the 'Key Messages' section of this report, careful reading of the questions, especially those to which the answers are straightforward, is essential for those wishing to reach the highest grade.
- (b) Many responses to this 2 mark question showed some appreciation of the difference between the literal and figurative meanings of the two phrases but failed to explain it clearly. Often, answers were simply a paraphrase of the question on both counts or did not quantify the degree of 'amazement' experienced by the writer in the metaphorical sense of the phrase. Words such as 'surprised' and 'shocked' did not adequately portray the writer's feeling of wonder and did not gain the mark. The literal interpretations were often paraphrases or too brief, such as 'the power of the volcano' and did not offer any explanation as such. One very good answer was: 'Physically moved by the power of the volcano' and 'metaphorically blew my mind'.
- (c) (i) A large number of responses gained the 1 mark available for this question and successfully identified the writer's disappointment at seeing what looked to be like a desert or 'dessert' (which was not penalised) but some, despite showing some evidence of understanding, did not gain the mark as the reference to 'desert' was not made.
- (c) (ii) There were fewer correct responses to this 1 mark question than there were to (c)(i) with quite a number identifying the 'eruption' but not mentioning its immediacy or what it was erupting into; namely the sea - either of these points was necessary to gain the mark. References to Mark Twain were often made without further clarification and comments such as, 'because he was going to see something that Twain didn't see' were insufficiently detailed to be credited.
- (d) Again, this 1 mark question was successfully answered overall with the most common response focussing on the towns being 'engulfed'. Some responses simply repeated the question with the tautological 'towns being hard to find because they are buried' and many mistakenly claimed that the towns had been engulfed by 'tidal waves'; neither of these points could be awarded a mark. Correct references to surveyors not being able to get their bearings were common and correct although those responses that misread the word as 'survivors' were not rewarded as this was taken as an indication of misunderstanding.
- (e) Many responses did not clearly distinguish between this 2 mark question which focussed on the far from reassuring content of the *leaflet* and 1 (f) which also carried 2 marks but which was concerned with the hazards of the *walk* taken by the writer. Others answered this correctly and then repeated their answers in question (f) while other responses answered one correctly for each question with a wrong answer taken from details relating to the other question. A small number of responses successfully identified the generic 'negative' content of the leaflet or recognised the 'ironic' nature of 'reassuring'. There were, in fact, three points that could have been mentioned:
- the surface may collapse at any time (responses that gave the word 'unstable' and the fact that the 'lava could collapse at any time' were awarded only one mark as these are not discrete points)
 - the dangers of inhaling the clouds of hydrochloric acid
 - the irony in the word 'reassuring' and the negative content of the leaflet (a clear explanation of this point would have gained both available marks).

- (f) The introductory comments to 1(e) apply equally to responses to this question. In addition, responses that referred to a wall of lava stopping the writer parking could not be rewarded. Again, there were three points that could have been mentioned:
- no path/jagged/rough slabs of rock
 - the surface can rip skin to shreds/risk of falling over
 - risk of being scalded by hot steam.
- (g) (i) A relatively small number of responses gained the two marks available for this question and only a slightly larger number achieved one mark. The concept of 'uniqueness' was not clearly tied down as being one of a kind and presented instead as difference in various degrees. Similarly 'tradition' was not explained in terms of length of time and sameness. Frequently, responses focussed on explaining culture rather than 'traditional'.
- (g) (ii) Responses to this question were generally more successful, especially with explaining 'submarine' as being under water. Those who referred to actual submarines were not rewarded and neither were those that explained the word as *underground*. The word 'successive' caused more difficulty and was sometimes misread as 'successful' although there was general recognition of the number and constancy of the eruptions.
- (g) (iii) The slow movement of the rocks mixing into the water was often recognised although this was sometimes explained through reference to the viscosity of the liquid and its 'thickness'. The word 'slimy' sometimes appeared; presumably from a literal interpretation of the word 'sluggish' and this was credited if the second part of the association was clear.
- (h) Many responses did not clearly explain *how* each of the selected phrases helped the reader to understand what the writer's experience was like. Many merely paraphrased the phrase in question or repeated it, changing one or two words, or rearranged the syntax. Frequently, the 'explanation' offered was done for all three phrases without reference to the context. The phrases most appropriately commented upon comprised the sudden thud and knees buckling and the 'slow-motion nightmare'. Explanations of these in terms of shock, fear and even horror would have gained one mark per phrase for showing straightforward understanding and answers that clearly identified and commented on the use of such words as 'nightmare', 'slow-motion', 'thud', and 'buckle' would have gained a further mark. The 'fiery pool' phrase was occasionally explained in terms of its potential menace and gentle popping but usually as 'very hot' and the bright orange/black moonscape phrase was only explained in terms of its startling contrast by the most successful responses. A significant number of responses misunderstood the 'black moonscape' to be the sky and not the ground.

Only a small number of responses did not use the given phrases and selected others randomly from the text or, indeed, split one given phrase into three smaller parts. Others attempted to describe the feelings of the writer at this point in the passage, but only a small number successfully confronted the requirement to 'explain how the phrase helps you to understand the experience'. As mentioned at the beginning of this report, Centres are advised to focus on this aspect of the paper when preparing candidates for this examination.

(i) The most successful responses to this question showed a secure understanding of the requirements of the 7 mark summary question with scores of 5 or more being quite common from those who focussed closely on the need to identify points related to volcanoes and their effects on the Hawaiian islands. Less successful answers tended to focus less clearly on the stated topic and to include irrelevant details about the islands' population and culture or to focus too narrowly on the engulfed towns and related consequences to the exclusion of other relevant details. Another feature of such responses was that they contained much unnecessary repetition, for example by identifying details about creating new land and rising from the sea and so on and then repeating them, especially in relation to the black sand beach etc. The least successful responses tended randomly to copy sections of the passage without evidence of attempting to isolate individual points. There were eleven points (stated below) from the passage which could have been identified up to a total mark for the question of 7:

- 1 Volcanoes are powerful/have primeval power.
- 2 Islands are formed by eruptions of submarine volcanoes/thrust 6,100 metres up from the ocean floor.

- 3 Volcanoes die and sink back into the sea.
- 4 Some are 4,000 metres high.
- 5 Eruptions lead to a continually changing landscape/ can create (new land e.g. jet black strip of sand).
- 6 The craters can resemble lakes of fire/a desert.
- 7 Volcanoes are active/alive/erupt (into the sea).
- 8 They can destroy.
- 9 They can engulf/bury whole towns/no towns left on the southern coast.
- 10 They cause tidal waves.
- 11 The volcanic landscape is beautiful.

Question 2

Reading

The most successful responses showed a clear understanding of the requirements of the task, were written in a register that was fully appropriate to a leaflet for tourists and focused not only on the excitements of viewing and exploring volcanoes but also identified other details from the passage (such as the beaches and beautiful landscape) that would appeal to tourists with less adventurous tastes. Such responses achieved a balance of organising and developing passage-based material in their own words in a suitably persuasive tone. Less successful responses tended to lift quite extensively from the passage and, as a result, included a good deal of unnecessary material. The least successful strayed away significantly from the passage, often fuelled by their own holiday experiences in resorts significantly different from the Hawaiian islands; these responses were often both interesting and entertaining but revealed only a limited understanding of purpose. It was noted that some responses that over-emphasised the fear factor relating to the volcanoes may well have discouraged tourists from visiting the area!

Writing

Only a very small number of responses contained error to the extent that their meaning could not be understood and, as has been the case in previous series, the overall standard of writing was of a pleasing standard for Core tier responses. Some responses were accurately expressed but extremely brief which meant that they denied themselves the opportunity of being placed in the top bands, whereas others were unnecessarily lengthy which led to errors of expression becoming intrusive. This could have been avoided with more careful initial planning. The most successful responses showed clear evidence of planning and checking work for errors, and there were some very good attempts at achieving an appropriate register and tone. Misspellings of straightforward vocabulary (for example ‘intressting’, ‘truley’, ‘definetly’, ‘extordinary’), insecure sentence punctuation and misuse or omission of the apostrophe were the most frequent errors made in the less successful responses. There were also problems with the noun ‘Hawaii’ with uncertainty over whether it was an ‘island’ or ‘islands’ and therefore whether to use an article before it as in ‘the Hawaii’, or just ‘Hawaiian islands’.

The most successful responses were well planned and organised through constructive use of paragraphs. Less successful ones tended to have a good opening paragraph but then introduce further material in a somewhat random fashion with the result that the response was out of balance, with too much information on the islands and limited focus on persuasion.

In conclusion, most responses scored within bands 2 or 3 as they were able to identify and, at least, discuss details from the passage and to acknowledge some attractions. Only a small number scored in band 4 and below. This was often because the answer was below an acceptable length.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/12

Reading Passage (Core)

Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for Reading, although there were 10 marks available for writing in **Question 2**.

- 1 In responding to all questions, it is advisable to consider carefully the specific implications of key words within the question or within the phrase under analysis.
- 2 The revised format of **Question 1(f)**, the six mark language question assessing an understanding of vocabulary used in the passage, clearly identifies the words that are to be explained, by printing them in italics. It is important that responses focus only on these words, and explanations should comprise either acceptable synonyms or a more developed paraphrase. Responses that attempt to define a word by using a different grammatical form of the same word will not be credited.
- 3 Centres are advised to encourage candidates to be aware of the distinction between the purpose of questions such as **1(f)**, as explained above, and questions such as **1(g)**, the six mark language question assessing an understanding of the *effects* of language choices made by the writer of the passage. The revised format of the latter question clearly identifies the phrases for comment. Responses should focus primarily on explaining *how* the language used helps to convey the writer's experience (in this case, his feelings while being in the middle of a volcanic eruption). This question does not require a paraphrase or definition of the vocabulary used and any explanation of the meaning of the words should be subsidiary to the main purpose of the question.

The above points will be considered in greater detail in the following sections of this report.

General Comments

The reading passage for the paper seems to have been well received and proved to be an appropriate stimulus for both the writing and reading questions as well as an effective discriminator of understanding for a core paper of this nature. There was very little indication that responses suffered from timing problems and most produced answers of adequate length for all questions. There was very little evidence of serious misunderstanding of either the passage or the questions and the paper proved successful in terms of discrimination in that it required careful reading. However, evidence from a large number of responses would seem to suggest that even those with an apparently secure understanding of the reading passage showed inexperience in slow, careful reading of both question paper and *questions* with the result that some answers did not focus on the precise details of what was being tested.

Question 2, the Directed Writing task, in general, was answered at least satisfactorily, with a pleasing number of responses making a confident attempt to write in a tone appropriate to the required genre (a letter to friend about a holiday in the hotel with recommendations), although in doing so some responses lost sight of the requirement to base their content on details taken from the passage and referred to what may have been personal experience gained from a holiday by the writers. However, there did not seem to be any evidence of candidates who might have had actual knowledge of Key Largo were in any way advantaged over those who had never visited there.

Although there were reports that some handwriting was very difficult to read, overall presentation and handwriting were generally of a good standard and nearly all responses gave clear evidence that the examination was being taken seriously and all were trying their very best to do well.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) Many responses scored the one mark available by giving the answer 'Jules Verne Lodge'. A common misunderstanding of this question came in responses that gave the name of the hotel as Emerald Lagoon, which is the area in which the hotel is located.
- (b) A very large number of responses gained the full two marks for this question with many candidates identifying the rooms as having round windows and accommodation up to six people in bunks with an attempt to express these details via some form of paraphrase of the wording in the passage.
- (c) Very few candidates obtained more than one mark for this question and, indeed, only a relatively small number gained one mark. The commonest misinterpretation of this question was by candidates who attempted to explain the word 'exclusive' or gave reasons why the hotel would be considered to be exclusive. Those gained a mark for this question generally did so by making some attempt to comment on the use of a short sentence used for emphasis.
- (d) (i) Many candidates gained the 2 marks available for this question by giving appropriate details of the content of the orientation programme. Those who did not get the 2 marks tended to focus on other details such as who led the programme or reasons for having to take it.
- (ii) Many candidates obtained 1 of the 2 available marks for making some attempt to identify an example of the sarcasm used by the writer. A smaller number gained the second mark by giving an explanation of why it was sarcastic.
- (e) The candidates who gained the two marks for this question did so by focussing on the trip down to the hotel to the point of entering the dive port. These answers attempted to explain this process in their own words, although the term 'dive port' was accepted. Candidates who did not get the full 2 marks tended to focus on what happened after entering the hotel.
- (f) (i) Many candidates gained 1 mark for this question by explaining the implication of being the 'capitol' of water sports. Of those who did not get the second mark, a significant number found difficulty in explaining the meaning of 'self-proclaimed'.
- (ii) Again, a large number of candidates gained 1 mark by giving an explanation of 'veering' off the road. Those who did not get the second mark tended to repeat the wording 'hi-tech' rather giving an explanation of what this term means.
- (iii) There many candidates who gained the full two marks for this question and there was some variety in the ways found to explain both 'limitless' and 'opportunities' either individually or by using an alternative phrasing.
- (g) Many responses did not clearly explain *how* each of the selected phrases helped the reader to understand how the writer was attempting to make fun of his experience in the underwater hotel. Many merely paraphrased the phrase in question or repeated it, changing one or two words, or rearranged the syntax. In some cases candidates explained the meaning of the phrase without reference to the writer's intention in using it. Frequently, the 'explanation' offered was done for all three phrases without reference to the context. The phrase most appropriately commented upon was about the secret of putting on flippers which many had already referred to in commenting on the use of sarcasm in (d) (ii). An explanation of this in terms of the use of contrast or in building up suspense and then deflating expectations would have gained one or two marks depending on the precision of the candidate's expression. Another phrase that produced an overall good response was about the fish observing tourists in the colourful pyjamas in which candidates identified the humorous reversal of normal experience (where tourists watch colourful fish).
- (h) The most successful responses to this question showed a secure understanding of the requirements of the 7 mark summary question with scores of 5 or more being quite common from those who focused closely on what the visitor would experience and what there is to do at the underwater hotel. Less successful answers tended to focus less clearly on the stated topic and to include irrelevant details sometimes copied directly from the passage or with much unnecessary repetition. The least successful responses tended randomly to copy sections of the passage.

without evidence of attempting to isolate individual points. There were ten points (stated below) from the passage which could have been identified up to a total mark for the question of 7:

- 1 You have to show a diving certificate.
- 2 You may have to attend the orientation programme/learn about the taste of sea water/how to put on flippers.
- 4 You meet a mermaid/Carla.
- 5 You learn how to breathe underwater/about your equipment.
- 6 You dive down to the hotel entrance.
- 7 You take off your equipment.
- 8 You go to your room.
- 9 You pass the time (eat, watch tv, make phone calls, look at the sea, watch sealife)/ get your shoes cleaned).
- 10 You go to the surface and decompress.
- 11 You receive your certificate.

Question 2

Reading

The most successful responses showed a clear understanding of the requirements of the task, were written in a register that was fully appropriate to a letter to friend about a holiday experience and offering suggestions about which aspects of the experience would be most suited to the friend. A number of successful responses identified the tone of sarcasm in the original and developed a response that identified some of the less appealing aspects of going to the hotel (for example the lack of useful content in the initiation programme or the lack of entertainment underwater). Such responses achieved a balance of organising and developing passage-based material in their own words in a suitably persuasive tone. Less successful responses tended to lift quite extensively from the passage or to simply repeat the information without developing it and, as a result, included a good deal of unnecessary material. The least successful strayed away significantly from the passage, tending to be accounts of holiday experiences but in other resorts; these responses were often both interesting and entertaining but revealed only a limited understanding of purpose.

Writing

Only a very small number of responses contained so much error that their meaning was so blurred that it could not be understood and, as has been the case in previous sessions, the overall standard of writing was of a pleasing standard for Core tier responses. Some responses were accurately expressed but extremely brief which meant that they denied themselves the opportunity of being placed in the top bands, whereas others were unnecessarily lengthy which led to careless errors of expression becoming intrusive and which could have been avoided with more careful initial planning. The most successful responses showed clear evidence of planning and checking work for errors, and there were some very good attempts at achieving an appropriate register and tone. Misspellings of straightforward vocabulary (for example ‘intressting’, ‘trueley’, ‘definetly’, ‘extordinary’), insecure sentence punctuation and misuse or omission of the apostrophe were the most frequent errors made in the less successful responses.

The most successful responses were well planned and organised through constructive use of paragraphs. Less successful ones tended to have a good opening paragraph but then introduce further material in a somewhat random fashion with the result that the response was out of balance with too much detail from the passage, but lacking any evaluation of reference to what the friend might like or dislike.

In conclusion, most responses scored within bands 2 or 3 as they were able to identify and, at least, discuss details from the passage and to acknowledge some attractions. Only a small number scored in band 4 and below and this was often because the answer was below an acceptable length. It is perhaps worth remarking that many candidates gained a slightly higher reading mark than their writing mark for **Question 2** and this suggests that some more focus on expression would be of great benefit.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/13

Reading Passage (Core)

Key Messages

- In responding to all questions, it is advisable to consider carefully the **specific implications of key words** within the question or within the phrase under analysis.
- The revised format of Question 1(g), the six mark language question assessing an understanding of vocabulary used in the passage, **clearly identifies the words that are to be explained**, by printing them in italics. It is important that responses **focus only on these words**, and explanations should comprise either acceptable synonyms or a more developed paraphrase. Responses that attempt to define a word by using a different grammatical form of the same word will not be credited.
- Centres are advised to encourage students to be aware of the distinction between the purpose of questions such as 1(g), as explained above, and questions such as 1(h), the six mark language question **assessing an understanding of the effects of language choices made by the writer of the passage**. The revised format of the latter question clearly identifies the phrases for comment. Responses should focus primarily on **explaining how the language used helps to convey the writer's experience** (in this case, his feelings while being in the middle of a volcanic eruption). This question does not require a paraphrase or definition of the vocabulary used and any explanation of the meaning of the words should be subsidiary to the main purpose of the question.
- **Question 2** test both Reading and Writing objectives and thus the content if a **response must be closely grounded in the stimulus passage**.

General Comments

The reading passage for the paper seems to have been well received and proved to be an appropriate stimulus for both the writing and reading questions, as well as an effective discriminator of understanding for a core paper of this nature. There was very little indication that responses suffered from timing problems and most produced answers of adequate length for all questions. There was very little evidence of serious misunderstanding of either the passage or the questions and the paper proved successful in terms of discrimination, in that it required careful reading. However, evidence from a large number of responses would seem to suggest that even those with an apparently secure understanding of the reading passage showed inexperience in slow, careful reading of both question paper and questions, with the result that answers did not focus on the precise details of what was being tested.

Question 2, the Directed Writing task, in general, was answered at least satisfactorily, with a pleasing number of responses making a confident attempt to write in a tone appropriate to the required genre (a journal entry by an experienced climber visiting the hotel), although in doing so, some responses lost sight of the need to write as an experienced climber and tended to focus too much on the idea of being on an exotic holiday and on the excitement of staying in a luxurious hotel.

Although there were reports that some handwriting was very difficult to read, overall presentation and handwriting were generally of a good standard and nearly all responses gave clear evidence that the examination was being taken seriously and all were trying their very best to do well.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) The majority of candidates gained the available 1 mark for this question by identifying that the wealthy guests travel to the hotel by plane.
- (b) Again, a pleasing number of candidates gained both of the two marks available for this question by explaining the two essential problems with water – that it had to be carried up to the hotel and that a lot of water is required for baths and to flush toilets.
- (c) Many candidates obtained one mark by identifying that professional climbers are aware of the increased risk of altitude sickness when making a rapid ascent. The more successful answers gained the second mark by explaining that they preferred to spend time acclimatising before ascending the mountain.
- (d) (i) Many candidates obtained the one mark available for this question by stating that the hotel deals with the problem of altitude sickness by providing oxygen for their guests.
- (ii) Again, many candidates gained the 1 mark available by identifying the hotel as being unique, in being the only hotel to provide oxygen via room service.
- (e) This 3 mark question proved quite demanding for candidates with many obtaining either 1 or 2 marks and far fewer gaining the full 3 marks. In order to do so it was necessary for candidates to provide quite carefully detailed responses: to identify clearly that modern climbers tend to not take rucksacks for ease of climbing; that this means they do not carry oxygen (the cylinders containing the oxygen being carried in these rucksacks) and that this was an unwise decision (hence ‘leaving their common sense in the rucksack’).
- (f) There were three points that candidates could, any one of which would have been acceptable in gaining the 1 mark available for this question. The majority of candidates obtained a mark either by identifying that with airtight doors guests would have to spend most of their time indoors, or that they would be less likely to suffer from altitude sickness. A smaller number gained the 1 mark by stating that there would be less for guests to do if the doors were fitted.
- (g) (i) Many candidates gained at least 1 mark for this part of the question by showing an understanding that ‘progress’ meant development/movement. It was sufficient for the second point that they explained ‘rapidity’ – however, many saw that frightening rapidity meant great speed. The most common error on this question was by candidates who were distracted by the word ‘frightening’ and attempted to account for a sense of fear (possibly of becoming ill).
- (ii) A very large number of candidates obtained 2 marks for this question – the majority of candidates understanding that an estimate was a guess of some sort. The second mark was gained by the additional understanding that this guess was an underestimate, or a careful guess.

- (iii) Again, many candidates obtained 2 marks for this part of the question giving clear explanations of 'confusion' and 'disorientation'. Candidates who gained only 1 mark tended not to distinguish between the two words with sufficient care.
- (h) Many responses did not clearly explain *how* each of the selected phrases helped the reader to understand how the writer was expressing hostility towards the wealthy tourists. Many merely paraphrased the phrase in question or repeated it, changing one or two words, or rearranged the syntax. Frequently, the 'explanation' offered was done for all three phrases without reference to the context. The phrases most appropriately commented upon were: 'a pretty superficial appreciation' and 'if you simply hop on a private plane' where candidates identified the different (lesser) experience that a wealthy tourist had by not putting in the effort to climb the mountain. The least successful explanation tended to be for the phrase 'a form of sickness which affects fast-lane tourism everywhere' as there was no indication that the writer was using 'sickness' metaphorically and it was not usually clear that candidates had understood the phrase: 'fast-lane tourism'. Only a small number of responses did not use the given phrases and selected others randomly from the text or, indeed, split one given phrase into three smaller parts. The least successful responses tended to give an explanation that encompassed ideas from all three phrases chosen, hence mostly gaining 1 or 2 marks overall. Only a relatively small number successfully confronted the requirement to 'explain how the phrase helps you to understand his dislike' and did so sufficiently fully to gain more than 1 mark for each phrase. As mentioned at the beginning of this report, Centres are advised to focus on this aspect of the paper when preparing candidates for this examination.
- (i) The most successful responses to this question showed a secure understanding of the requirements of the 7 mark summary question, with scores of 5 or more being quite common from those who focussed closely on the need to identify points related to causes, effects and treatments for altitude sickness. Less successful answers tended to focus less clearly on the stated topic and to include irrelevant details about the hotel and its services. Another feature of such responses was that they contained much unnecessary repetition, for example by devoting too much of the answer to identifying details of the effects and symptoms. The least successful responses tended to copy sections of the passage randomly, without evidence of attempting to isolate individual points. There were fourteen points (stated below and divided under the three headings) from the passage which could have been identified up to a total mark of 7. It was not necessary for the candidate to divide their answer with headings:

Causes

- 1 Low air pressure.
- 2 Lack of oxygen.
- 3 The speed of ascent.

Effects

- 4 Fluid accumulates in the lungs and brain tissue.
- 5 The mild form produces coughs/headaches.
- 6 Difficulty in sleeping.
- 7 The more serious form leads to breathlessness/mental confusion/loss of co-ordination.
- 8 It can result in death.
- 9 The onset can be very rapid.
- 10 The sickness increases with the speed of ascent.

Treatments

- 11 Can be treated with oxygen.
- 12 Can be treated with drugs.
- 13 Getting the sufferer quickly down the mountain.

14 The Gamow bag.

Question 2

Reading

The most successful responses showed a clear understanding of the requirements of the task and were written in a register that was fully appropriate to a journal; the key to obtaining a mark in the top bands was the recognition by the candidate that the writer is an experienced climber (for example, knowing about the causes and effects of altitude sickness) and conveying a convincing sense of the writer's attitude towards the wealthy tourists (and 'fast-lane tourism'). Such responses achieved a balance of organising and developing passage-based material in their own words and conveying a believable response to the attractions of Everest and the need to experience it the hard way. Less successful responses tended to lift quite extensively from the passage and, as a result, included a good deal of unnecessary material, or simply reproduced the article. The least successful strayed away significantly from writer's attitude as expressed in the passage, often giving the sense of an inexperienced tourist, perhaps by suffering themselves from altitude sickness, and of too great an enthusiasm for the luxuries and comforts provided by the hotel.

Writing

Only a very small number of responses contained error to the extent that their meaning could not be understood and, as has been the case in previous series, the overall quality of writing was of a pleasing standard for Core tier responses. Some responses were accurately expressed but extremely brief, which meant that they denied themselves the opportunity of being placed in the top bands, whereas others were unnecessarily lengthy which led to errors of expression becoming intrusive, and which could have been avoided with more careful initial planning. The most successful responses showed clear evidence of planning and checking work for errors, and there were some very good attempts at achieving an appropriate register and tone. Misspellings of straightforward vocabulary (for example 'intressting', 'truley', 'definately', 'extordinary'), insecure sentence punctuation and misuse or omission of the apostrophe were the most frequent errors made in the less successful responses.

The most successful responses were well planned and organised through constructive use of paragraphs. Less successful ones tended to have a good opening paragraph but then introduce further material in a somewhat random fashion, with the result that the response was out of balance, with too much information on the hotel and limited focus on conveying opinion.

In conclusion, most responses scored within bands 2 or 3 as they were able to identify and at least discuss details from the passage and to acknowledge some attractions. Only a small number scored in band 4 and below and this was often because the answer was below an acceptable length. It is worth noting that many candidates gained a slightly higher reading mark than their writing mark for Question 2 and this suggests that some more focus on expression would be of great benefit.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/21

Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for reading (40 marks), although there were 10 marks available for writing: 5 marks in Question 1 and 5 marks in Question 3. The requirements for doing well were to:

- give equal attention to all sections of each question
- plan each question response; cross out material which is not intended to form part of the final answer
- explain points concisely, but in sufficient detail to convey clear meaning
- use your own words; do not lift whole phrases or sentences from the passages
- select only the material that is appropriate for the response to the question
- only make a point once in a response
- give thought to the structure and sequence of the material in the response
- adopt a suitable voice and register for the task, different for each question
- pay attention to length
- practice note-making, sequencing and concise expression.

General comments

The candidature for this syllabus has continued to increase, particularly for the 0522 variant. Many Centres did not prepare candidates appropriately, despite support provided in the Examiner's report for November 2012, and many candidates were not familiar with the requirements of the questions and form of the responses. Centres need to make sure that candidates realise the need to convey both explicit and implicit reading comprehension for higher band marks, that copying from the passages is to be avoided, and that responses should be in continuous prose.

Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible and were able to finish the paper within the time allowed. Most candidates had been entered for the appropriate tier, though some clearly would have benefited from being entered for the core tier. There did not seem to be many common misunderstandings of the content of the passages, other than the context of Passage A and the times and places mentioned in the passage. The belief that Calumet Camp was a venue for an outdoor pursuits holiday caused misunderstanding and a loss of focus on the task. Copying was often evident in **Question 1**, especially **Section (a)**; there is a significant difference between using textual detail in support of points and lifting quantities of material from the text. The former is evidence of understanding, whereas the latter gives the opposite impression. Candidates must change the language of the passages in response to **Question 1** and **Question 3** in order to achieve a higher Reading and Writing mark.

For **Question 2**, in order to achieve higher marks, candidates must make appropriate choices in **Section (a)** and need to make specific and detailed comments about these choices. Candidates wishing to score high marks should have a wide, appropriate vocabulary in order both to express themselves and to understand the nuances of the use of language in the passages. Weaker responses tried to explain the selected language in the same words as the choice. Candidates should not use a grid or table format to respond to this question, as it limits their ability to explore the choices they have selected.

In **Question 3** many candidates managed to earn a mark in double figures by finding a reasonable number of points, but many responses contained repeated ideas. There were many repetitions of the firewood point in **Section (a)** and of the frostbite point in **Section (b)**. While a change into own words is desirable when expressing an idea, the meaning must not change so that the summary is factually inaccurate. This happened frequently when describing the weather in Passage B and the hazards in Passage A. Ideas not included in the passages should not be included in the summary of the passages; mountain avalanches and

wild animals were often found in **Section (b)**. Candidates should avoid writing overly long responses, beyond a page of normal handwriting, as this limits their Writing mark. Many candidates gave their response either partially or entirely in note form as bullet points and thereby incurred a reduction of the Writing mark, as well as of the Reading mark if those notes were not in their own words.

On this Reading paper 20% of the available marks are for Writing. Candidates therefore need to consider the quality of their writing and avoid using a high degree of lifted material from the passages. Most responses were written in an appropriate register. There were no marks given for accuracy in this paper, although some Writing marks were affected by unclear or limited style, over-reliance on the language of the passages, or structural weakness and incoherence. Candidates should ensure that they pay attention to the length guidelines for their response to this question.

It is essential that the skills of selection and modification are demonstrated in all three questions on this paper. In addition, there needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions. Candidates should aim to plan their responses; effective planning ensures that there is no repetition between sections of a question, that they are all given equal attention and coverage, that there is a recognisable structure to the response. It also helps to ensure that the response includes the three assessment objectives: the use of ideas to demonstrate explicit understanding; the use of detail to show close reading; the development of ideas to prove implicit understanding. Checking is also advisable, as marks can be lost through slips of the pen which suggest basic misunderstanding, confusing Calumet Camp and Cherry Creek in **Question 1** for instance, or 'bitter' and 'bitten' in **Question 2**.

Question 1

You are Tom Vincent advising recent newcomers to Calumet Camp. Write the words of your talk to the newcomers. In your talk you should: tell the newcomers about your recent hazardous walk; explain the skills and knowledge needed to survive in the environment; share what you learned about yourself from this experience.

(20 marks)

Stronger responses to this question selected and condensed the events in the passage and modified the ideas to create a convincing characterisation for someone who had been through a humbling and near-fatal experience, and who had been chastened by it. They were able to sustain the use of supporting detail throughout the response. The carefully selective use of material for the second bullet ensured that the advice could apply generically to other travellers in a similar situation. Stronger responses did not repeat the same points again in the third bullet, but dealt with the latter by presenting both the positive and negative things he had learned about himself, and by giving it a personal focus in response to the wording of the question. They were able to contextualise Calumet Camp and the reason for giving the talk, and to convey a sense of danger and urgency, using own words to produce a dramatic and considered talk.

Middle-range responses made reasonable use of the passage, with some attempt at own words, but tended to stick closely to the events and ideas in the passage, and to present them in the same order as in the passage, often using some of the same words. An attempt to address bullets two and three was evident. Opportunities were missed for the development of ideas and the drawing of conclusions. For example, medium quality responses advised that generally travellers should be well equipped, or repeated the idea of not travelling alone. Points for the third bullet were restricted to commenting that that he had learned to take advice and to persevere.

Weaker responses copied out parts of the passage without recognition of the need to select, develop and modify the content, structure and language of the original. They generally took the form of giving an unselective narrative retelling in the first section, despite the fact that the question asks only about the hazards of the walk. Some careless reading was evident in the misuse of facts, with claims that the walk was 15 kilometres long and that Tom returned to camp rather than continued to Cherry Creek. In the other two sections weaker responses lifted phrases from the passage without modifying them to the question or the viewpoint. Such responses were unable to demonstrate any significant understanding of the passage. Many believed that Calumet Camp was a holiday destination, and that he had been in an avalanche; some believed that there were creatures in the lake, that a creek was a kind of noise, and that he had been on his way to attend a party. Weak answers were often thin, simple or short. Some invented their own material, referring to wild animals or avalanches or the need for a mobile phone. A surprising number of candidates had not read the task introduction and had not noted that the events were recent. Where the entire response consisted of unmodified material from the passage, the highest mark available was the top of band 5; where two sections consisted entirely of reproduced chunks from the passage, a top mark of 5 was awarded.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity, fluency and coherence of the response and how well it used vivid language to capture the sense of the hazardous nature of the walk and the role played by Tom Vincent in wanting to pass on his experience. The better written responses had a lively and engaging voice, a convincing style, and a mixture of informative and reflective content.

Here are some ways in which this type of response could be improved:

- Answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three sections
- Answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to the form and viewpoint of the response
- Use all the main ideas in the passage and use detail to support them
- Develop and extend some of the ideas relevantly
- Create a suitable voice, tone and style for the persona in the response.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of (a) the intense cold in paragraph 3; and (b) the lighting of the fire in paragraph 5. Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.

(10 marks)

It was expected that the response would take the form of continuous prose to allow candidates to explore their choices fully. Marks were given for the validity of the words and phrases chosen to answer the question, and for the quality of their explanations. Three marks were available for a range of appropriate choices in each section. Responses that also gave the meanings of the words were awarded up to a further three marks, depending on how specific and contextual the meanings were. Responses that also explored the effects that the use of particular words had on the reader could score up to the highest mark of ten. The majority of candidates found this question the most demanding of the three, as it requires a wide vocabulary, close reading, and an ability to relate to subtleties of language beyond explicit meaning.

Candidates should avoid the use of a grid or table format in their response as often the same material is duplicated in two of the three columns. This approach also often forced responses to be expressed very briefly or in note form.

The most successful responses to **Question 2** showed precise focus at word level and were engaged and assured in their handling of their appropriate choices. They selected carefully, including images, put the choices in context, and answered both parts of the question equally well. They were able, for example, to explain the excitement and hope evoked by the sudden spurt of light when the ‘bark burst into bright flame’. A link was made between the appearance of the landscape and what was happening to Tom’s face, suggesting that the frost was claiming him and turning him into a creature of ice.

The following response includes all of the selected quotations in the mark scheme; fewer choices than this would be sufficient for the award of the top mark, provided that the quality of the explanation was high and consistent. This model answer is given as an indication of what constitutes an appropriate type of response to the question.

(a) the intense cold in paragraph 3

Tom’s ‘numbing fingers’ are a sign that he is losing body heat and control of his limbs, and they signify the beginning of his battle with the cold as the frost sets to work on his exposed flesh with a ‘bitter swiftness’. This composite phrase of two ideas suggests both the extreme speed with which the enemy attacks and the intensity of the pain being inflicted. The ‘frost had bitten’ like a wild animal latching on to its prey with its teeth. The lips ‘crusted.... with ice crystals’ have lost their natural, smooth, warm, pinkness to a sinister, sharp whiteness. The impression that the sub-zero temperature is winning is confirmed by the description of his chin as a ‘miniature glacier’, which makes it seem as though a serious and permanent ice formation has taken him over and is blending him in with the frozen landscape. When ‘sensation abandoned his face’ the battle seems lost, as even Tom’s own blood is forsaking him, leaving him to his lonely fate. When his face ‘burned with the returning blood’, it is a painful but welcome reversal; red and heat have defeated white and cold, and this image prefigures the lighting of the fire and the restoration of feeling to his body.

(b) **the lighting of the fire in paragraph 5**

The use of the word ‘kindle’ could be seen as not only an introduction to the delicate building of a fire but a pun on the idea of the kinship Tom has with it. The ‘nest of fire’ is a circle of woven twigs providing an image of safety, warmth and birth. When the ‘bark burst into bright flame’ the explosive succession of monosyllabic ‘b’ sounds conveys the delight at the appearance of the sudden and welcome appearance of light and heat in the deadly wasteland. Tom ‘fed it with the smallest twigs’ as a bird builds a nest and feeds its young; his ‘cherishing it with the utmost care’ continues the idea of protecting something precious; he is desperate for the fire to become his missing companion, and his ‘gently nurturing it’ is the action of a parent rearing vulnerable offspring. After much patient handling the fire, although still a ‘very young one’, has taken hold and will now grow. It is not only the fire which is ‘alive’, but also Tom’s hope of survival.

Less successful responses attempted effects by making generalised comments about the way Tom treated the fire as a child in **Section (b)**; these perceptions were not directly related to the meanings of the words selected, and they were sometimes repeated after every choice. Responses often went straight to a weak effect without first establishing the precise meaning of the choice; e.g. they commented that ‘burned’ meant painful without explaining what the word means and how it is paradoxical in the context. There was some awkwardness in claiming the fire to be both a bird in its nest and a baby human created as a companion for Tom. These less successful responses often took the form of a commentary on the entire paragraph for each half of the question, containing some relevant choices and some brief explanation of them. There was a dependence on the general idea of personification in both sections. In this range of scripts, seven or eight relevant choices were offered, with mixed quality comments on them.

Here are some ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- re-read the whole paragraph before making selections; choose the best and not those which happen to come first. Remember that you are not being asked to write about the whole paragraph but only about the language which relates to the particular question.
- choose a range of words and phrases that seem powerful. Do not write out whole sentences, but also do not give only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase. Do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle.
- remember to put quotation marks around your choices. This makes it easier for the Examiner to identify them and makes it easier for you to focus on the exact wording.
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them.
- avoid general comments such as ‘the writer makes you feel that you are really there’ or ‘this is a very descriptive phrase’. Such comments will not earn any marks at all.
- if you are not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning, in context, for each of your choices. That can earn half marks for the question.
- to explain effects, think of what the reader sees and feels when reading the word or phrase, because of the connotations and associations of the language. Often there is more than one possible related effect.
- include images from each paragraph, and try to explain them (but you do not need to know or give their technical names); think about sounds as well as visual effects.

Question 3

Summarise (a), the hardships of the living conditions, as described in Passage B; and (b) the dangers of walking in Alaska, as described in Passage A.

(Total: 20)

To answer this question successfully, responses needed to identify fifteen points that were relevant to the question and to present them succinctly and in their own words. This is an exercise in informative writing, which should be clear and to the point, and in a different form from the passages. There were twenty-three possible answers in the mark scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. Most responses showed awareness of the appropriate style for a summary. **Section (a)** invariably contained more points than **Section (b)**, which tended to revert to the story of Tom’s journey rather than answer the question. Point 8 in **Section (a)** and half of the points in **Section (b)** were rarely made. There was occasional confusion between the two passages, with lack of clothing and lack of water appearing in the second section.

The question paper instructs candidates to use full sentences in continuous prose of not more than a page, so the notes were not credited. Responses should therefore not be written in note form. The response to **Section (b)** tended to be repetitive, making many different references to what was only one point, the

intensity of the cold. Consideration needs to be given to the amount of material included in a summary, as well as to the language in which it is expressed. Higher marks for writing are awarded to responses consisting of own words, and varied and fluent sentence structures, containing just enough information about the points to convey each one clearly.

The most successful responses selected and re-ordered the relevant information from the passages, with a clear focus on the actual questions, and wrote them in fluent sentences, within the prescribed length and using own words as far as possible. They avoided writing introductory statements and making comments, and concentrated on giving a factual objective summary, more or less equally balanced over the two sections. While it was acceptable to give the points in the order in which they appeared in the passage, more able candidates changed the sequence so that related points could be grouped together. For example, in Passage A the effects of frostbite on hands and feet follow logically from mention of the deep frost; and in Passage B the different types of unpleasant weather can be sensibly grouped together.

The following model answer makes the paraphrased points simply and clearly. It includes all 23 points, but if handwritten would easily fit onto one page.

Section (a)

The cold at high altitude in winter was accompanied by strong winds, penetrating mists and frequent rainfall. The rain made the mountain-side slippery and the steep slopes even more hazardous to climb. The sharp rocks wrecked the soldiers' boots. The men could not keep warm because of the shortage of firewood and the lack of clothing and blankets. All their possessions, including their rifles, became covered with mud and they felt dirty all the time. There was insufficient water for washing, and the water they did have looked unpleasantly cloudy and unpalatable to drink. Having to sleep in their clothes was an additional discomfort, as was having to share the trenches with rodents.

Section (b)

The long distances and lonely landscapes of Alaska make walking risky as help is unlikely to be available. The extremely low temperatures make it dangerous to stop moving, and this is exacerbated by getting wet when falling through an icy surface into a hidden pool. Numb hands do not perform necessary tasks well, and frostbitten feet make it difficult to walk to safety and could mean having to spend the night unprotected in the wilderness. The most serious danger is not being able to make a fire to provide necessary heat, as there are many possible difficulties.

Less successful responses were more confused and did not adopt the correct focus for this question, instead presenting the first part of the summary as a first person re-telling of the passage, with firewood mentioned three times and references to how the soldiers passed their time. There was frequent copying of the phrases 'the cold was unspeakable', 'shrieking winds', and 'rats and mice abounded', though these were easy to paraphrase and thereby demonstrate understanding. The introduction to Passage B was often used as an introduction to summary **Section (a)**, wasting space as summaries require no introduction. Many of the points in **Section (a)** were loosely expressed to the extent that they were not accurate, for example in saying that the drinking water was unclean rather than unclear. The less successful **Section (b)** responses mentioned many times in different ways that it was cold in Alaska, and offered solutions for keeping warm rather than mentioning the other dangers. They also talked about Tom Vincent and his particular journey rather than widening the response to apply to anyone walking in Alaska, as was required by the question. A few compared the conditions in the trenches with those in Alaska. The inclusion of irrelevant or repeated material diminished the focus and depressed the Writing mark.

Here are some ways in which summaries could be improved:

- re-read the passage after reading each part of the question, in order to find the precise information to answer it
- only select points which answer the specific question
- do not write a narrative, or in the first person, or in any other inappropriate form
- make points briefly, but in sufficient detail to make it clear what they mean
- do not copy whole phrases from the passages
- write no more than one side of average handwriting
- write in an informative style and never comment on or add to the content of the passage
- be careful to include only the information that answers the question
- make each point only once
- do not generalise the content of the passage.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/22
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for reading (40 marks), although there were 10 marks available for writing: 5 marks in **Question 1** and 5 marks in **Question 3**. The requirements for doing well were to:

- give equal attention to all sections of the question
- explain points concisely, but in sufficient detail to show their significance in the context
- use your own words where appropriate; do not copy whole phrases from the original
- be careful to give only information that is focused on the question
- only make the point once
- give thought to the structure and sequence of the material in the response
- adopt a suitable voice and register for the task
- pay attention to length.

Key messages about how candidates can improve their performance for each of the three types of questions will be considered in greater detail below.

General comments

This paper was similar in difficulty level to last year's paper and produced a similar standard of response to all three questions, which covered a wide range. Candidates found both passages equally accessible and were able to finish the paper within the time allowed. For **Question 1** and **Question 2**, to achieve marks in the top band, candidates were expected to demonstrate thorough use of the passage and a wide range of discussion on language. Candidates wishing to score high marks should have a wide, appropriate vocabulary, both to express themselves and to understand the use of language in the reading passages.

In **Question 3** most candidates managed to earn a mark in double figures by finding a reasonable number of points, but some responses contained examples of lifting phrases and sentences from the passages rather than the use of own words. It is important that they use their own words since it suggests that they do not understand the wording of the original. On the other hand, when they rephrase a fact, the meaning should not change. It is vital that responses are not overlong, well beyond the one page of normal handwriting required. The mark scheme for Quality of Writing indicates the marks awarded where the response exceeds the permitted length. If a response is copied from the passage the candidate would not score highly. Some responses relied heavily on listing of features in **Section (a)**.

There did not seem to be any common misunderstandings of the passages. To achieve marks in the higher bands candidates were required to develop and assimilate the material in Passage A for **Question 1**. Most responses understood the need to modify the passage and to explain the circumstances and events of the prank from Andres' viewpoint. They also explained his motivations, thereby giving the reader an insight into his character. Some candidates created a convincing voice for Andres and wrote an engaging account of the trick by adapting and developing the detail from the passage.

While quality is more important than quantity on this paper, there needs to be enough of a response to meet the top band descriptors and for all parts of the question to be covered. It is essential that the skills of selection and modification are demonstrated in all three questions. In addition, there needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions. The importance of planning cannot therefore be overemphasised. Checking is also advisable, as marks may be lost through simple errors, for example, confusing the lake with a river. There was evidence that some Centres now expect their candidates to plan

first, with a corresponding improvement in the structure of responses and the coverage of all of the questions.

Most candidates answered their questions in appropriate English. There were no marks given for accuracy in this paper, although some responses were affected by unclear or limited style, or over-reliance on the language of the passages. The majority of responses were within the recommended length guidelines.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1: Imagine that you are Andres, boasting to a friend later in the day. Write an account of the practical joke you played. In your account, you should explain: the setting for the practical joke; how you were able to carry out the trick; why you enjoy playing jokes of this sort. Base your account on what you have read in Passage A.

(20 marks)

For the first part of the task, many responses included some details of the lake and its surroundings; not all explained why they were significant in allowing Andres to carry out his prank successfully. Good responses developed the details and explained how the setting provided the ideal conditions for him: the tall trees and hills provided some cover for him; his hut, containing the joke footprints, was nearby and therefore handy; the lake was sufficiently deep in the Centre for people to believe that there could actually be monsters residing there. Less successful responses included few features; some contained references to the weather without explaining that the fine sunny morning made it more likely that someone would visit the lake, or that the 'notorious winds that blew up out of nowhere' were likely to occur later and were vital for the execution of the prank. This first section of his account is important and better responses conveyed Andres' excitement at being provided with the ideal conditions and circumstances to try out his idea. They displayed a good understanding of his character; Andres was clever enough to realise that he had to seize the opportunities presented to him. Less successful responses used the detail mechanically without explaining the importance of the surrounding conditions, and some contained a misunderstanding about the 'first beautiful day of the year', assuming that it was New Year's Day.

For the second bullet point, good responses contained relevant details from the passage; these were developed and well integrated into Andres' account of the trick and the circumstances that allowed him to execute it perfectly. They also gave an insight into his thought processes at various stages of the events. It was made clear that rumours of monsters in the lake made the children more receptive to the idea that Andres had seen a monster; they were the perfect audience: gullible and suggestible. Good responses explained that the distance across the lake gave him the opportunity to make the footprints while the girls ran to help him, and the muddy shoreline provided excellent conditions. Better accounts made reference to Andres' excellent acting skills, his speed at running, and to the fact that his distinctive appearance ensured that Katrin and Anya would notice him from a distance. Less successful responses contained a straightforward narrative of events that displayed little modification and were sometimes similar to the wording of the original. Some responses included detailed descriptions of the construction and operation of wind and wave making machines that were used to create the storm. These did not indicate an accurate reading of the passage or an understanding that sudden storms were a feature of the lake area. Some responses did not include an explanation of how the footprints were made. Candidates could decide whether they had been prepared in advance, as one of Andres' projects, or whether they were made quickly, at the time. They were an important part of the prank; responses that followed the narrative sequence of the passage often omitted them or included them as an afterthought. Careful planning of the account would have allowed candidates to make the decision about the prints beforehand and this would have resulted in a more cohesive response.

In most responses the third part was the least developed. Even responses that demonstrated a clear understanding of Andres' character and which created a convincing voice did not fully explain why he enjoyed playing such tricks. This section provided an opportunity for candidates to display an implicit understanding of some details from the passage by developing them and integrating them into their own ideas. Good responses used details and clues to suggest that Andres wanted to add to the stories told at 'late night gatherings', that he wanted to teach gullible people a lesson, or that he enjoyed plotting tricks and proving to everyone that he was still active and capable of out-witting people. It was made clear that he saw himself as a popular figure: the village clown and entertainer. Some made reasonable assumptions: that playing pranks prevented him from being bored, that they kept him feeling young and that they assured him a place in village folklore. Less effective responses included general explanations, for example, that he is a fun loving character, or included points from the passage, for example, 'ready wit', 'impish' and '60 years of age', without developing them. Some responses created explanations that were not derived from the

passage, giving details of his childhood or of his previous experiences. Responses that included invented explanations for which there was no basis in the passage were unlikely to achieve high marks as they were not dealing with the clues that were there. The least successful responses did not attempt this section and some ended the account when the footprints were discovered. The bullets in the wording of the question are designed to help candidates focus on the three key areas required in order to display an understanding of the ideas of the passage. All three sections need to be addressed in order to achieve marks in the top bands.

A few responses made no relevant references to the passage and contained creative writing, relating a joke of their own invention. These displayed only a cursory reading and insecure understanding of the passage and therefore scored very low marks for reading.

Successful responses created a convincing voice and personality for Andres. Some successfully conveyed the idea of a mischievous, lively and fun-loving person who relished his role as a prankster and was proud of his acting skills, inventiveness and wit.

The writing mark reflected the clarity and fluency of the account and how well it used language to explain the prank and Andres' thoughts and feelings. Higher writing marks were awarded for a range of effective and interesting vocabulary. Good responses were well structured and used an appropriate register and language. Less successful responses relied on the wording of the passage and used a limited range of appropriate vocabulary.

Here are some ways in which this type of response could be improved:

- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to all of the sections.
- answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to the type of response you are writing.
- be aware of the main issues and themes in the passage and use plenty of detail to support your ideas.
- create a suitable voice and tone to show your understanding of what you have read.

Question 2: Re-read the descriptions of (a) the monsters in paragraph 1, beginning 'My mother....' and (b) Andres in paragraph 3, beginning 'It was quite...'. Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.

(10 marks)

Candidates are required to select examples of appropriate language from both paragraphs. Most responses were balanced and many candidates identified a sufficient number of words and phrases in both sections. Paragraphs 1 and 3 contained a range of interesting language and images from which appropriate examples could be selected. Less successful responses only included one or two examples in each section; this is not sufficient to display an understanding of the writer's use of language and to secure marks in the higher bands. Some responses in **Section (a)** were not always focused on the task and included examples from the beginning of paragraph 1. 'Notorious winds that blew out of nowhere' was not relevant to the description of the monsters and could not be rewarded. Credit is given for the ability to select evocative or unusual words that have an extra layer of meaning, or which have certain connotations, and for displaying an understanding of their effects in the context of the passage. Less effective responses contained examples of quite ordinary language; 'always to take a friend' and 'I know it sounds stupid'. These phrases do not contain deeper meanings and explanations were given about why people should not go to the lake alone or believe in monsters, and were not focused on language use. **Section (b)** was generally more focused. Less successful responses included the words 'Just imagine' or 'perhaps 60 years' and these were not rewarded as relevant choices. However, they could have been used effectively in **Question 1** as relevant details.

The most successful responses in **(a)** included an overview of the monsters as ferocious, fearsome creatures, almost mythical or cartoon like in their appearance and behaviour. Candidates can be rewarded for giving an overview, if it is supported by specific examples and precise explanations. Good responses gave clear explanations of the meanings of the words 'vicious teeth' and 'hideous curved claws' and how such language would evoke thoughts of pain and danger, or feelings of fear in the reader. Less good responses contained general comments, for example, 'the creature is frightening', and did not explain how the effects were achieved. Good responses linked words and phrases that conveyed similar meanings or which had similar connotations, for example, the references to military tanks and medieval armour and the teeth that 'gnash and grind'. They also examined the humour and exaggeration of the descriptions of a stereotypical monster.

In **Section (b)** some responses displayed an understanding of Andres as an eccentric, childlike and lively character. Few understood the implicit meaning: that he could be a little tiresome and wearing due to his

'exuberance', 'ready wit' and 'irrepressible' nature. These successful responses grouped aspects of his appearance and linked it effectively to descriptions of his behaviour.

The naming of a linguistic or literary device, even when accurately identified, can only be rewarded when accompanied by an explanation of how it is working within context. Repetition of the original wording to explain meanings, for example 'unruly mop means that his hair looks like a mop and is unruly', does not display a full understanding of the writer's use of language and cannot be credited.

The most successful responses contained short quotations with precise and clear explanations of specific words. Less effective responses included long quotations and general comments that did not refer to individual words. These do not demonstrate the skill of selection and count as one choice. Even in shorter examples, not all of the selected words were explained. Some responses did not explain the words 'stringy' or 'fell loosely' when included in an example. Some choices were incomplete; the word 'chatter' was often chosen without 'exuberantly' and a full explanation of the effects of this word.

Some responses were written in a grid format with word-meaning-effect headings to the columns, and not in continuous prose. The responses were usually undeveloped and mechanical and were usually awarded marks in the lower bands. They often contained literal meanings that were not explained in context, and repetition of meanings and effects. A grid format reduces choices to single words, and there is no opportunity to group examples or provide an overview.

The following specimen response includes several quotations in the mark scheme; fewer choices than this would be sufficient for the award of the top mark, provided that the quality of the explanation was high and consistent enough. This sample answer is given so that Centres and candidates can appreciate what constitutes an appropriate type of response to the question.

(a) the description of the monsters in paragraph 1

The monsters are portrayed as fierce and dangerous creatures; the language has been exaggerated to show them as stereotypical monsters, partly mythical and partly cartoon-like. They are described as 'gigantic creatures' of a colossal size, far bigger than humans and therefore a huge threat. The word 'creatures' makes them appear more mysterious and therefore more frightening; we are not sure what species they are, whether they are animal or human. They are 'clambering clumsily' showing them to be ungainly and awkward, too heavy to move gracefully and unable to support their huge bulk. This makes them appear quite comical. However, they are potentially dangerous as they 'annihilate the undergrowth' or completely destroy the vegetation. The simile 'like military tanks' gives an image of unstoppable and aggressive machines of war, made of metal that cannot be penetrated. They are covered in sharp scales, like 'medieval armour'. This description reinforces their strength and invulnerability; they are formidable enemies and should be feared. The word medieval implies that they are from a bygone era and this gives them a mythical quality. The words 'gnash and grind' suggest a merciless and mechanical quality, similar to tanks but also resembling the actions of a cartoon character eating its enemies.

(b) Andres in paragraph 3

Andres is portrayed as a lively, energetic, almost eccentric character with child-like qualities. He has a 'ready wit' suggesting that he always has a clever remark to hand, and 'infinite fund' implies that his supply of jokes and stories never runs out, that he entertains continuously. He would 'chatter away exuberantly' or talk non-stop like an excited child, and was also described as 'irrepressibly lively', suggesting that he had the energy of a child and could not be contained or controlled, even when people tire of his enthusiasm. The fact that he 'ran like the wind' also suggests that he is rather elusive and could not be restrained, owing to his speed and energy. He seems younger than his 60 years; the word 'impish' gives us an image of a small mischievous character, a bit of a nuisance, and often found in fairy tales and myths. His 'unruly mop of stringy hair' suggests that Andres does not pay attention to his appearance; he looks unkempt and his hair seems as uncontrollable as his behaviour. He allows it to be free and 'fall loosely around his shoulders' in a careless manner. We have the impression that he is more concerned with having fun and being popular than with looking conventional and tidy.

Here are some ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- avoid general comments such as 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there' or 'this is a very descriptive phrase'. Such comments will not earn any marks at all.

- your first task is to choose some words and phrases that seem powerful to you. Do not write out whole sentences but use single words or phrases of two or three words. Do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle.
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them.
- if you are not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning, in the context, for each of your choices. This approach can give you up to half marks for the question if the meaning is accurate.
- when you explain effects, think of what the reader sees and feels when reading the word or phrase. It may suggest more than one thing.
- learn to recognise images and explain them (but you do not need to know or give their technical names). Say what they convey within the paragraph, and how they reinforce each other, if this is the case.

Question 3: Summarise: (a) the appearance and the behaviour of the Kongamato, as described in Passage B, and (b) the appearance of the lake before and during the storm as described in Passage A.

(20 marks)

To answer this question successfully candidates needed to identify 15 points that were relevant to the question and to present them succinctly in their own words. This is an exercise in informative writing, which should be clear and to the point. There were 23 possible answers in the mark scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. This was the highest-scoring question for many of the responses. Most candidates were aware of the appropriate form, style and tone for a summary. Better responses avoided introductory statements and commentary and concentrated on factual summary, more or less equally balanced across the two sections.

In most responses part (a) contained more relevant points than part (b). Many secured high marks for content, some achieving the maximum of 15 points. The marks for writing were not high; few responses were awarded marks in Bands 1 or 2. The material was not always re-organised effectively which often resulted in repetition and a loss of concision.

Passage B referred to several sightings of the Kongamato by various people who gave similar and conflicting descriptions of the creature. There were several references to its flying ability and powerful wings, and also to its colour and shape. It was necessary to select information from different parts of the passage and to collate them into a succinct and informative summary. Successful responses displayed an effective organisation; similar points were grouped together which enhanced the concision and fluency of the writing. Less effective responses presented the information in the same order as the passage, which led to repetition. They also included unnecessary details about the locations of the sightings and the names of people that had encountered the beast or witnessed its attacks. In part (b) the copying of words and phrases resulted in a lack of concision. Some responses were written as narrative and included descriptions from the passage, for example, 'huge ripples that swelled into waves appeared in the middle of the lake' and, 'The water was still with only the rarest of ripples'.

Some of the writing marks are awarded for focus. In most cases part (a) was well focused on the appearance and behaviour of the Kongamato. Less successful responses included descriptions of encounters with the beast which were often written as narrative accounts of the attacks on different people. In part (b) some responses were not focused on the lake and made references to the isolation and quietness of the area and the 'fresh light air'. Some gave details of the lake after the storm; these were not relevant and could not be rewarded.

Writing marks are also awarded for the use of own words. In less effective responses words and phrases were copied from both passages even when there were opportunities to use suitable alternatives. Part (a) contained examples of lifting, in particular, 'an uncanny resemblance', 'not buried to a sufficient depth' and 'overwhelmer of boats'. In part (b) the phrases 'storm without rain' and 'could have painted a picture of the lake' were often used. In better responses alternative words were given for 'ferocious', 'huge' and 'overturn'. Copying of phrases led to a lack of concision and large scale lifting resulted in a 0 mark for writing.

Not all of the summaries were written with fluency. Higher marks are awarded where candidates use varied and fluent sentence structures. Both parts were sometimes list-like or rather stilted with points expressed in short sentences. Better responses linked similar points together and wrote more complex sentences. In some scripts there was little evidence of note-taking or planning of responses. Taking brief notes of the salient points from the passage helps to avoid the copying of phrases and the inclusion of unnecessary detail or explanations. It also indicates where points have been repeated. Relevant information can be re-

organised and similar points can be combined into longer sentences, enhancing the fluency and also the concision of the writing.

Candidates should be advised that responses should follow the guidance for length, as responses longer than the permitted length will achieve low writing marks for this question. The expectation is a side of A4 of average handwriting (8/9 words per line). Responses which are 'excessively long' (i.e. more than a page and a half of average handwriting) score 0 marks for writing. Some candidates with very small handwriting clearly wrote at too great a length, even though their answers fitted onto a page; small handwriting and word-processing can fit up to 18 words onto a line, and this must obviously be taken into account. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the amount of material included in a summary, as well as to the language in which it is expressed.

When reading the following specimen answer, candidates should note that the points are explained simply, and are also paraphrased into the writer's own words. The response includes all available points, but if handwritten it would fit onto a side of paper with space to spare.

Section (a) The appearance and the behaviour of the Kongamato (Passage B)

The Kongamato resembles an enormous flying reptile or pterosaur and has been described as either crimson or black. Some say it looks like a bat with leathery skin, others that it looks like an eagle with large powerful wings that allow it to dive at speed from the sky, capsize boats and attack the people on board with its elongated beak and pointed teeth. It has been known to feed on carrion. It has a long tail which drags on the floor and people believe that looking at the creature will result in death.

Section (b) The appearance of the lake before and during the storm (Passage A)

Before the storm the lake was picturesque with clear blue water and a surface so still that it mirrored the surrounding trees and hills. During the storm the lake changed colour as huge waves splashed onto the steep slopes and turned the banks into soft mud.

Here are some ways in which summaries could be improved:

- make points briefly, but in sufficient detail to show what they mean.
- use your own words as far as possible. Do not copy whole phrases from the original.
- write no more than one side of average handwriting.
- write informatively and never comment on the content of the passage.
- be careful to give only information that answers the question.
- make a point only once.
- be specific; do not generalise.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/23
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for reading (40 marks), although there were 10 marks available for writing: 5 marks in **Question 1** and 5 marks in **Question 3**. The requirements for doing well were to:

- give equal attention to all sections of each question
- explain points concisely, but in sufficient detail to show their significance in the context
- use your own words where appropriate; do not copy whole phrases from the original
- be careful to give only information that is focused on the question
- only make the point once
- give thought to the structure and sequence of the material in the response
- adopt a suitable voice and register for the task
- pay attention to length.

Key messages about how candidates can improve their performance for each of the three types of questions will be considered in greater detail below.

General comments

Taken as a whole, this paper was similar in difficulty level to last year's paper and produced a range of responses to all three questions. Some candidates were able to access both passages and most were able to finish the paper within the time allowed. For **Question 1** and **Question 2**, marks in the top band were given to answers which demonstrated thorough use of the passage and a wide range of discussion on language. Candidates wishing to score high marks should have a wide, appropriate vocabulary, both to express themselves and to understand the use of language in the reading passages.

In **Question 3** some candidates managed to earn a mark in double figures by finding a reasonable number of points, but occasionally responses contained examples of lifting phrases and sentences from the passages rather than the use of own words. Less secure answers included repeated information, but phrased differently. It is important that candidates use their own words since to do otherwise suggests that they do not understand the wording of the original. On the other hand, when they rephrase a fact, the meaning should not change. It is vital that responses are not overlong, well beyond the one page of normal handwriting required. The mark scheme for Quality of Writing indicates the marks awarded where the response exceeds the permitted length. If a response was a whole or partial copy of the passage, the candidate would not score highly. Where a response was not all in own words, the mark was between 0 and 2 depending on the amount of copying. Some responses relied on listing of features for **Section B**.

There did not seem to be any common misunderstandings of Passage B. Passage A was open to a number of interpretations and some candidates seemed unsure of what to make of it. To achieve well, responses were required to develop and assimilate the material in Passage A for **Question 1**, to differentiate between the dissatisfaction deriving from the man's daily working life and the features of one particular night's journey on a train which had brought him to make a decision to change his life. It then also required a consideration of what might ensue if changes were not made.

While quality is more important than quantity on this paper, there needs to be enough of a response to meet the top band descriptors and for all parts of a question to be covered. It is essential that the skills of selection and modification are demonstrated in all three questions. In addition, there needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions. The importance of planning cannot therefore be over-

emphasised. There was occasional evidence that some Centres now expect their candidates to plan first, with a corresponding improvement in the structure of such responses, especially in **Question 1**.

Most answers were in appropriate English. There were no marks given for accuracy in this paper, although some responses were affected by unclear or limited style, or over-reliance on the language of the passages. Some responses were within the recommended length guidelines and thus were focused and without repetition, which can come with excessive length. Some scripts were brief across all three questions with lack of coverage a consequence. A few candidates chose to make no response to any of the questions.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1: Imagine that you are the 'you' in the story. When you eventually get home to your family, you decide that you need to change your lifestyle. You write an entry in your journal, explaining why you have arrived at your decision. Write the entry. In your journal entry you should explain why you are generally dissatisfied with your daily working life, how tonight's journey has forced you to make your decision and the possible consequences of not making these changes.

(20 marks)

Some candidates had difficulty appreciating that the 'you' in the story was a man in his thirties and that he travelled in a train. Most candidates understood that the task was to write a reflective piece later the same evening as the train journey, rather than a letter to a family member. Most responses showed an attempt to focus on the three bullets.

Better responses concentrated of the man's working life in the first part, citing the routine nature of his work, the long hours, tiredness and hunger in the evenings and the frustration felt, without merely lifting the sentence 'You are tired, hungry, frustrated'. Such better responses often also contained a range of factors about that evening's train journey which had brought about the life-changing decision, such as the train stopping at many stations, the unfriendliness or grumpiness of other commuters and the rudeness of the stationmaster when the narrator finally got off the train. The best responses tackled the encounter with the man in the yellow raincoat and the warning which seemed to be contained in the haiku he left on his seat. These responses attempted an interpretation of the haiku and drew conclusions from it. In response to the third bullet, better responses captured the man's feeling of being trapped in his life, that looking back on it in later years it would be seen as a mere existence rather than a positive experience, that he would become increasingly isolated from family and friends, with a resultant increase in stress, possibly leading to insanity or depression. Very occasionally a response would consider the possibility of being attacked or robbed at some future date.

Better responses were able to incorporate a range of supporting detail like the narrator's watch, the compartment he and the other man shared, the window, their reflections, that the man in the yellow raincoat was staring, the paper (not plastic) bag, and the narrator's final thought as he walked home of 'Enough is Enough'. There were plenty of other details which could have been woven into a response, like the rain on the window, the intrusive bells and lights, and the cityscape viewed from the window.

Some less confident responses did convey the central thrust of the story, that the protagonist had an unusual encounter with a strange man whose haiku prompted a decision. Some considered that man was a reflection of his own self. Others presented him as someone who had cut free from convention and perceived in the narrator a need to do likewise. Overall some of these responses were less successful because they did not deal with either the first or third bullet of the question and/or using virtually no supporting detail.

The least assured responses concentrated on the second bullet almost to the total exclusion of the other two, in some instances carefully avoiding any mention of the man in the yellow raincoat or the poem. Others used the passage as a springboard into personal soul-searching, some elaborating on what was seen as current or future problems in their own lives, for example to do with weight gain, failure to exercise, or plans to go to college before taking up a first job. Some of the latter type of response had virtually no relevance to the question or the passage.

Most of the marks for this question were given for showing understanding of the passage and for using ideas within the framework of the question's three bulleted sub-sections. Those who planned effectively ensured that there was no repetition between sections and that they were all given equal attention and coverage. The use of ideas demonstrates explicit understanding, whereas the use of detail is necessary to show close reading. There is, however, a difference between details from the text and wholesale copying of long

phrases or complete sentences. Development proves implicit understanding. Responses need to convey all three levels of reading comprehension to attain higher band marks.

The first section of the answer required a focus on the man's daily working life rather than life in general. The first paragraph of the story mostly contains information useful in answering the second bullet, for example the frequent stops at dull stations and the unsmiling commuters. It is possible that it is for this reason some responses moved straight to the second bullet without consideration of the first.

The second section of the answer required an appreciation of that evening's journey. This was the section where the most explicit understanding could be demonstrated. Some responses showed the candidates had experienced difficulty understanding the exact focus of the question, i.e. that it is about features of one journey and not events experienced over a period of time. Elsewhere, details were lifted from the text without it being made clear that there were points to be made, for example that a whistle blowing signals the train's departure from the station, without actually stating the point that the narrator had missed his stop.

The third section of the answer was the most implicit and any ideas from earlier in a response needed to be recast, so that, for example, finding the job boring which was an appropriate point early on in the response might become a fear of spending years trapped in a meaningless job. Once again, careful reading of the question would have revealed that actual plans for what the narrator might do in the future were not required.

The Writing mark reflected the fluency and convincing nature of the voice of the narrator. Better responses conveyed disappointment with the current situation and a determination that it should end, allied to fear of the future if changes are not made. A number ended with triumphal determination summed up in 'Enough is Enough'. Such characterful writing did not overwhelm the informative content or detract from the central focus. These responses were well-structured and avoided repetition.

Here are some ways in which this type of response could be improved:

- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three sections;
- answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to the form and viewpoint of the response;
- be aware of the main issues and themes in the passage and use plenty of detail to support your ideas;
- develop and extend some of the ideas relevantly;
- create a suitable voice, tone and style for the persona(e) in the response.

Question 2: Re-read the descriptions of (a) what you see and hear in paragraph 5, beginning 'A light rain...' and (b) the man's actions and your reactions in paragraph 7, beginning 'The man has begun...'. Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.

(10 marks)

Marks in the top band require precise focus at word level. The two parts of the question tended not to be answered equally well, with (a) often being fuller than (b). Some responses provided relevant choices, including imagery, in both paragraphs. There was some evidence that candidates stopped when they thought they had written enough, without considering the balance of their response. Many responses said something about 'clang' in paragraph 5, 'gaze ... frozen' and 'like a wild beast' in paragraph 7. Comparatively few picked 'buckled' and virtually no responses paired 'grow' with 'fading', or 'blinking' with 'unblinking eyes', both pairs of which constituted one choice each. Some responses might have included 'grow', 'fade', 'unblinking' and 'unblinking eyes', counting them as four choices when they were actually two.

A wide vocabulary is essential for scoring highly on this question in particular. Close reading is necessary in order for misunderstanding to be avoided. Weaker responses gave a commentary with quotations incorporated in it, and needed to examine the writer's use of vocabulary and imagery. Repeating language of the passage can gain no credit, as understanding is not thereby demonstrated. Naming literary or linguistic devices, even when accurately identified, attracts credit only when accompanied by an explanation of how it is working in this particular context. Candidates should avoid explaining an image in the form of another image. Some responses consisted of a paraphrase of each paragraph.

The first level in approaching this question is to identify words that have an extra layer of meaning, and the second level is to be able to explain why the writer used them. An example from paragraph 5 is the 'clang' of the bell which 'sounds loudly in your window'; weaker responses simply quoted it or said it is a loud noise usually made by pieces of metal hitting each other. Better responses went on to say that it is an unpleasant,

disturbing sound demonstrating the fear the central character felt that the sound is coming through the window and is threatening him. Bells are a traditional symbol of death or summoning one to account.

Some responses were only a few lines long. Other candidates chose to use page 6 of the answer booklet for (a) and page 7 for (b). The length of response itself is no guarantee of a quality answer. However, less than a full page of writing is unlikely to produce a range of choices, with their explanatory meanings and effects, for each half of the question. One or two choices from each paragraph are not sufficient; the response would be considered to be 'thin' and therefore given a mark in Band 5 or below. A significant number of responses were limited to only three choices for each section, though there were many possible appropriate choices from each paragraph; a significant number of responses focused on only one or two choices per section.

Where selections occurred, they were sometimes of individual words and short phrases, each being treated separately, but some responses gave choices which were restricted to only one word when the effectiveness depended on two or three words being used in combination, e.g. 'waiting patiently, like cows' has a different and more subtle connotation than just 'cows'. Overviews were rare.

Many responses contained, in both sections, lists of choices or overlong quotations containing several choices, followed by general comments. Large chunks of quotation from one short paragraph do not demonstrate the skill of selection, and they can only be credited as one choice regardless of how many they contain. Some responses used the words of the choice in an attempt to explain its meaning or effect, e.g. for 'hair's breadth', it showed the distance between the men was a hair. Responses which relied on words from within them were not demonstrating clear understanding. Similarly, explanations which depended on other phrases from the passage did not show an appreciation of the choice, e.g. 'gaze ... frozen' explained as the man being unsure where to look.

The key to paragraph 5 (**Section (a)**) is that the sights and sounds are transitory and blurred, creating a disconcerting and dream-like effect in the dark. Some more successful answers focused on the depressing nature of the 'light rain (streaking)' the window, and the cars 'waiting patiently, like cows' given that the commuters driving the cars are little better than farmyard animals, docilely in a herd, demonstrating that the narrator is leading a depressing life over which he has little control.

In **Section (b)**, based on paragraph 7, 'like a wild beast' was often quoted but the incongruity in the context of a commuter train of a sudden transformation from a smiling fellow passenger to a predatory animal was rarely noted. 'Hair's breadth' and 'buckled' were rarely selected.

The following specimen response includes the selected quotations in the mark scheme, and fewer choices than this would be more than sufficient for the award of the top mark, provided that the quality of the explanation was high and consistent enough. This sample answer is given so that Centres and candidates can appreciate what constitutes an appropriate type of response to the question.

(a) What you see and hear in paragraph 5

This paragraph creates the impression of impermanence and alienation. Raindrops create a veil between the man and the outside world as 'light rain streaks.' There is a smearing quality to 'streaks' like tears slowly seeping down cheeks – a sad image. At one point the man is aware the bells 'grow' and later they are 'fading'. Clearly bells neither grow nor fade, yet the moving train gives this surreal effect to the passenger as the train approaches them and then leaves. At the point where the train passes them, the bells 'clang', an onomatopoeic word enhancing the harshness and the fact they are 'in' the window is frightening as soon they might invade the carriage. There is then a disconcerting juxtaposition between the 'blinking' of the red lights and the 'unblinking' eyes of the car headlights. These headlights are full on, a stare, making the man feel uncomfortable. The cars are compared to '..waiting patiently, like cows..'. We associate cows with herds; they are not individual, and are also thought of as rather stupid. These cars (with their drivers) have no more sense than to behave in a controlled and herd-like manner. The writer is also, therefore, saying commenting on the unthinking and controlled lives the drivers must lead.

(b) The man's actions and your reactions in paragraph 7

In contrast the second paragraph has much action from both characters, one extreme and aggressive and the other uncertain and fearful. Initially the man is staring 'intently'. He has an intention, unknown, which provides suspense. In response the narrator's 'gaze (is) frozen'. His face muscles cannot move as if he has been turned to ice by fear or surprise. The other man now moves 'abruptly', a sudden, unexpected movement which disturbs. He 'rushes impulsively'. This fast movement is without thought, a contrast to the intensity of the stare earlier. Such a sudden change might indicate mental instability; the narrator could be in

danger. The man 'leaps up', an energetic movement again suggesting some purpose. We associate leaping with animals and soon we are told he is 'like a wild beast'. The smiling man has become a predatory animal, one who cannot be reasoned with nor escaped. The response of 'throwing up arms and legs helplessly' is a panic reaction, limbs flailing without any real hope of self-protection. The man stops within a 'hair's breadth'. This is most strange. He has gone from sudden, fast actions to a standstill, yet there could only be a hair separating the two men. Danger has been narrowly averted but for how long? Finally our narrator has his legs 'buckled', like twisted steel. He has crumpled both physically and mentally.

Here are some ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- avoid general comments such as 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there' or 'this is a very descriptive phrase'. Such comments will not earn any marks at all.
- re-read the whole paragraph before making selections; choose the best and not those which happen to come first. Remember that you are not being asked to write about the whole paragraph but only about the language which relates to the particular question.
- your first task is to choose some words and phrases that seem powerful to you. Do not write out whole sentences but use single words or phrases of two or three words. Do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle.
- try to remember to put quotation marks around your choices. This makes it easier for the Examiner to identify them and makes it easier for you to focus on the exact wording.
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them.
- if you are not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning, in the context, for each of your choices. This type of response can give you up to half marks for the question if the meaning is accurate. Explain in your own words what the word or phrase means in the context of the passage.
- when you explain effects, think of what the reader sees and feels when reading the word or phrase. It may suggest more than one thing.
- learn to recognise images and explain them (but you do not need to know or give their technical names). Say what they convey within the paragraph, and how they reinforce each other, if this is the case.

Question 3: Summarise (a) what tourists found memorable about 'The Palace on Wheels' and their tours, as described in Passage B; and (b) the sights and sounds outside the carriage window during the journey, as described in Passage A.

(20 marks)

To answer this question successfully candidates needed to identify 15 points that were relevant to the question and to present them succinctly in their own words. This is an exercise in informative writing, which should be clear and to the point. There were 23 possible answers in the mark scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. This was the highest-scoring question for many of the responses. Most candidates were aware of the appropriate form, style and tone for a summary. Better responses avoided introductory statements and commentary and concentrated on factual summary, more or less equally balanced across the two sections.

Section (b) was generally more successfully done in terms of giving relevant points and adopting an appropriate writing style. Less effective responses concentrated on Passage B and were dominated by lengthy examples, e.g. the 'pink upholstery, silver-embroidered curtains, teak wall panels and traditional carpeting' which were lifts as well as being unnecessary to gain a point about internal decor. Some answers of this nature extended to nearly a full page in length for **(a)**. Successful responses were the result of a methodical reading of both the passages. Better summaries avoided repetition and listing explanatory information, for example the details of the spacious accommodation. While it was acceptable to give the points in the order in which they appeared in the passage, more able responses changed the sequence so that related points could be grouped together. For example, in Passage A all the sights might be put together, followed by the sounds. Some candidates found it easy to identify relevant material in both passages and picked up a reasonable number of Reading marks in both sections. There was some lack of precision, for example the ways in which the steam engines of Point 4 might be memorable. Responses could have scored three separate points with regard to light/s from Passage A, but they needed to be clearly differentiated: thus Point 16 was to do with the changing of lights in different areas, Point 19 about the lights of the crossings and Point 17 for the reduction in daylight. Candidates need to be aware that this question is a test of the ability to summarise given information in a selective way: rain is seen in the passage, not heard; cars are stationary, not moving. Some responses did not always make it clear that the point was being covered, thus passengers disembarking at a station were seen yet the station was an accidental reference.

Less successful responses needed to be expressed in complex sentences with different beginnings rather than presenting points in lists. In Passage B, there are several long sections which are lists, to do with the steam engine, the decor, the extra carriages, the features of the historic cities and what constituted a welcome on platforms. Candidates should be advised that comparisons between the two passages are not required. Unusually, for this paper some responses to (b) became an attempted analysis of the language used to describe the sights and sounds, which would have been more appropriately dealt with in **Question 2**.

Candidates should be advised that responses should follow the guidance for length as responses longer than the permitted length will achieve low writing marks for this question. The expectation is a side of A4 of average handwriting (8/9 words per line). Responses which are 'excessively long' (i.e. more than a page and a half of average handwriting) score 0 marks for writing. Some candidates with very small handwriting clearly wrote at too great a length, even though their answers fitted onto a page; small handwriting can fit up to 16 words onto a line, and this must obviously be taken into account. Even where responses paid no attention to the length requirement, they rarely gained all 15 reading points, yet lost Writing marks. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the amount of material included in a summary, as well as to the language in which it is expressed.

Attention should be paid to the amount of copying from the passages. From Passage B the information about the suites in the train and the welcoming party on the platform was often lifted word for word or were very closely paraphrased; there was also some copying from Passage A of the 'fading lights of the metropolis' and 'the approaching lights of the outer suburbs'. These are all examples of wording that needed to be changed to show understanding. On the other hand, it would prove difficult to find an economical substitute in Passage B for 'Taj Mahal' and 'train whistles' in Passage A, and a paraphrase was not expected.

Section (b) asked what were the sights and sounds outside the carriage window during the journey. Some responses included what could be seen inside, for example, the reflection of the other man, or what could be seen later on, for example, the stationmaster and his newspaper. While no marks are deducted for adding in points which are not related to the focus of the question, the inclusion of extra points like these reduced the likelihood of scoring full marks, not only for the Reading but also for the Writing.

Higher marks for Writing are awarded where there are varied and fluent sentence structures, and just enough information is given about the points to convey each one clearly. Summaries which were written clearly, concisely and fluently, without long explanations or repetition, and in own words, scored the full five marks for aspects of Writing.

When reading the following specimen answer, candidates should note that the points are explained simply, and are also paraphrased into the writer's own words. The response includes all available points, but if handwritten it would fit onto a side of paper with space to spare.

Section (a)

Tourists would remember the beautifully and historically interesting cities visited on this tour, which had the added enjoyment of a lively and colourful welcome at certain stops, lunch in a palace, as well as a visit to the famous Taj Mahal. The train itself has many historical associations with famous people and the impressive engines which haul it have been named to stress associations with iconic Indian places. Externally the carriages are colourful and highly decorated. Rich decoration is continued inside, and guests would remember the spacious suites they occupied while being waited on by servants. Superb food and wines would be recalled. A range of extra carriages cater for different needs.

Section (b)

The man in Passage A saw rain on his window, through which he glimpsed the changing cityscape of backyards, malls and housing. The lights in these areas came and went. It was getting dark so the red lights of the level crossing were obvious. Here were cars waiting for the train to pass. He watched passengers leaving the train at various stations. He could hear the noise of warning bells and the train's whistle.

Here are some ways in which summaries could be improved:

- make points briefly, but in sufficient detail to show what they mean.
- use your own words as far as possible. Do not copy whole phrases from the original.
- write no more than one side of average handwriting; small handwriting will not deceive the Examiner.

Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education
0500 First Language English (Oral Endorsement) June 2013
Principal Examiner Report for Teachers

- write informatively and never comment on or add to the content of the passage.
- be careful to give only information that answers the question.
- make a point only once.
- be specific; do not generalise.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/31
Directed Writing and Composition

Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for writing, although there were ten marks available for reading in **Question 1**.

In order to achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- use an appropriate form and style, adapted for the intended audience and genre
- structure ideas logically and organise their writing effectively
- create thoughtful and well-structured arguments, produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct sentences accurately and vary sentence types to create effects
- select appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary with precision

General comments

Most scripts showed a good grasp of what was expected in both the directed writing and the composition. Responses were substantial and purposeful, on the whole, with relatively few brief or undeveloped answers. There was evidence in many scripts of a clear awareness of how marks were awarded in the different questions and writing genres, although rather more frequently than in previous years too many questions were attempted which inevitably had an impact on the quality of the writing.

Most responses showed an understanding of the topic in **Question 1** and made sensible use of the reading passage in their letters. Better answers questioned the writer's arguments about the Olympic Games, developing their own views and opinions based on the passage, while most in the middle mark range tended to reproduce the points made in it. Weaker answers drifted away from the material or listed some points simply.

In the compositions, better responses showed a clear understanding of the features of argumentative, descriptive or narrative writing and in all three genres there was developed and structured writing. Some weaker descriptive writing tended to slide into narrative or in some cases was entirely narrative in character and these responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good descriptive style, such as a focus on detail and a more limited time span.

The best responses in both questions were characterised by the careful selection of precise vocabulary and sentence structures to create specific effects. The reader was often intrigued in the early stages of compositions and the writing was consciously shaped in all three genres in order to engage and sustain the reader's interest. In weaker responses, an appropriate register and effective style was more difficult to achieve. In **Question 1**, for example, the recipient of the letter was sometimes forgotten or the format of a letter was accurately reproduced at the beginning but not the end. The style was occasionally rather insulting or too informal. In this question and in the compositions, there was insufficient attention paid to basic punctuation in weaker answers. Capital letters were sometimes used rather indiscriminately, appearing frequently where not required but not used for proper nouns, in speech or at the beginnings of sentences. The lower case 'i' for the personal pronoun was surprisingly commonly used and there were some instances of colloquialisms such as 'gonna' and 'wanna' in writing which was otherwise formal in register. Semi-colons were much in evidence but only quite rarely used accurately.

Section 1: Directed Writing

Question 1: Read carefully the article by Ravenna Reach about the Olympic Games in the Reading Booklet Insert. Then answer **Section 1, Question 1** on this Question Paper. Write a letter to Ravenna Reach, expressing your views on what you have read. You may agree or disagree with the writer's arguments.

In your letter you should:

- identify and evaluate the writer's views
- use your own ideas to support your comments on the writer's views

(25 marks)

25 marks were available for this question, of which 15 were for the quality of the writing and 10 for the understanding and use of the content in the passage.

Most answers showed an understanding of the purpose of a letter in response to a magazine article and in better responses the writer's arguments were scrutinised and commented on purposefully. At this level, some contradictions in the writer's views were discussed, such as her appreciation of the global interest in the Olympics alongside her irritation at the media hype surrounding it. Other thoughtful responses referred to the potential for conflict, rather than 'world peace', inherent in the intensity of competition. Many, however, simply listed and agreed with the writer's views on the different points and did not adopt the critical stance which is required for marks in the higher bands. Weaker responses focused on only a few points, often the cost of the Games, and did not cover the range of points made in the article.

The marks for reading

Good responses followed the bullet points but adopted the evaluative stance required for marks above Band 3. For example, the cost of the ceremonies and facilities was discussed with reference to the huge numbers of athletes and visitors in need of accommodation and to the possible economic benefits derived by host nations. The extravagance and excess implied by the writer was sometimes countered by her own assertion that the Games were 'a spectacle' and 'awe-inspiring', with good responses pointing out an inherent contradiction in her views here. The history of the Games, included in the passage, was sometimes not referred to but good responses did make use of it, suggesting that a long tradition of sporting competition should not be under-valued and that the happiness and harmony between nations, however short-lived, was a benefit to the world in general. An equally valid and thoughtful approach was adopted by some in suggesting that this harmonious atmosphere was illusory and that the intense competition between nations was unsavoury and unhelpful. The inclusion of the Paralympic Games was commonly mentioned although better responses tended to go further than a simple agreement that it was 'a good thing', with some questioning whether Paralympians really did have parity with their able-bodied counterparts. This kind of evaluative approach to the material in the passage was required for marks in Band 2 and above. 7 was given where there were glimpses of evaluation of some of the points but a more consistently critical stance was required for higher marks.

Where responses reproduced the points made in the passage, often with straightforward agreement, Examiners could not award marks above Band 3. Although some responses covered the points made in the article systematically, agreeing with some and disagreeing with others, there was at this level less scrutiny of the ideas in it and limited comment on them. A more superficial grasp of the facts and figures in the passage, rather than the underlying issues, was evident in this range. In these responses, candidates agreed or disagreed that the Games were too costly and extravagant at a time of recession and included some detail about the fireworks or the sportswear before moving on to the next issue. This simple agreement or disagreement did not, however, always amount to the evaluation described above in relation to better responses. A mark of 5 or 6 could be awarded, depending on the breadth of coverage in the answer and the extent to which candidates used their own language and expression rather than the writer's. In other cases, there was a little evaluation of one or two points – usually some discussion of the idea that the costs could be offset by the economic benefits brought to host countries – but other ideas in the passage were not referred to at all. Here, despite some evidence of depth in the response, the range of points covered was too narrow for a mark in Band 2. Responses at this level could have been improved by a wider coverage of the points made by the writer as well as a deeper grasp of the issues being weighed up in the article.

One unproductive approach in responses at this level and below was the inclusion of invented experts or invented statistics. Fictitious bodies with unlikely sounding names were quoted as evidence of the athletes' satisfaction with the facilities; Londoners' opinions of the Games or in some cases invented young or old

people were lobbied for their views on the costs of the Games or the cuts to their services. These features suggested an insecure grasp of the task in **Question 1**. In a few responses, another inappropriate approach was adopted in which the style of the writer's article was commented on rather than its content. Her 'emotive language' and 'short sentences for effect' or exclamation marks were indicated with little reference to the arguments made. Other less successful approaches included a tendency to drift away from the passage into details which were not in the article and were not really suggested by it either. For example, some responses gave details about the displacement of people whose homes were demolished to make way for the London Games and others suggested elaborate schemes in which sponsors could be made to compensate old people in host countries. Ideas and details which could be inferred from the passage were rewarded by Examiners, but in some less successful responses candidates' own views were detached from the source material and sometimes a little naïve. For example, some believed that the Games paid the host country or that athletes paid for their own accommodation and there was some muddle concerning whether 30 million pounds was spent on the British team, the opening ceremony or the fireworks. A better understanding of the requirements of the task, as well as how marks are awarded, was needed in these cases.

The marks for writing

15 marks were available for style and audience, the structure of the answer and technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Style and audience

The majority of responses were appropriately set out in letter form and used the appropriately formal register and style that would be expected in a letter to the press. Most, across the mark range, wrote an introductory paragraph making clear the purpose of the letter, though better responses showed more awareness of their audience in the way their openings were phrased. For example, some signalled their attitudes to the article early on by suggesting that 'sacrifices have to be made to achieve the spectacle you describe' and some mentioned explicitly that there were contradictions in her stance. Many candidates in the middle range were extremely complimentary toward the writer in their introductions and conclusions and although the tone of these paragraphs was appropriate, perhaps the evaluation of the article was rather limited by this over-enthusiastic style. In weaker responses, introductions were more perfunctory and some did not refer to the article itself. More often at this range, the format and intended audience were forgotten, so that the letter was not finished formally or reference was made to 'the writer' rather than a direct address made.

Structure

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for writing, handled the material confidently and presented their own arguments cogently. At the highest level, an overview of the issues involved emerged rather than, or as well as, a discussion of the discrete points made by Ravenna Reach. A sense that there was a balance of factors to be weighed was conveyed by these successful responses which were often subtly argued but yet clearly structured. Responses given 8 or 9 for writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the article in a response which was adequately structured, often with some concluding comments outlining the candidate's own view.

Responses given marks below Band 3 were characterised by some confusion about the writer's point of view so that simple agreement with the writer led to apparent contradiction from one paragraph to another. Some, for example, expressed outrage at the cost of the London Games but moved without comment to praising the spectacular opening ceremony or the Olympic facilities.

Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in Band 1. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. Responses given 8 or 9 were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide-ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks.

Responses given marks in Band 4 sometimes showed some clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation errors which precluded Examiners from awarding Band 3 marks. As mentioned above, a striking number of Band 4 responses contained many errors in the use of capital letters and there was sometimes a simplicity of language and style. Sentence separation errors also appeared at this level and the frequency of errors became self-penalising.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved

- Use the details in the passage but think about the attitude of the writer to the topic as a whole also.
 - Try to develop ideas from the passage, using inferences that are suggested in it, but without drifting beyond it.
 - Be aware of the genre you are using for your answer. Think carefully about the right style for an article or a letter, for example.
 - Check your writing for basic punctuation errors that will inevitably reduce your mark.

Section 2: Composition

Question 2: Argumentative/Discursive writing

- (a) 'There's no such thing in this world as an easy job.' Give your views. (25)

OR

- (b)** Explain some of the admirable and less admirable qualities of your age group. (25)

Better responses here made use of a wide range of different ideas in a focused and relevant discussion of the topic. Average responses contained some good ideas which were relevant and gave opinions about the topic which were valid. The discussion was not as developed or was less well-structured and points were not sequenced as helpfully for the reader. In the first question, candidates sometimes ran out of material or tended to return to ideas or repeat them, whereas weaker responses to the second question showed some misunderstanding of the question.

In the first question, there was almost universal agreement across the mark range that an 'easy job' did not exist although there was a wide disparity in the quality of arguments deployed to support this view. In better responses, where very high marks were sometimes gained, ideas were grouped and sequenced in paragraphs and linked together to help the reader navigate through the overall argument. Some thoughtful discussions included ideas about the importance an individual's skills and aptitude for a particular job or the difficulty in qualifying for a 'good' job which may, nevertheless, be very stressful. Different interpretations of 'easy' were explored with some subtlety in these responses and there was much evidence of a balanced and considered approach to the topic.

Middle range responses tended to be rather less consistently developed and focused more on examples of different jobs and what might make them easy or difficult. Although there was perhaps a less probing and exploratory approach, the discussions were largely relevant and ideas were valid and sensible. Where examples of jobs familiar to the writer were selected, such as the careers of their parents or relatives, the response was often well-grounded in common sense.

Weaker responses were more reliant on listing with less discussion of the attributes needed for the jobs selected. Occasionally, the writer began with the assertion that some jobs were easy (particularly examination invigilators!) but often concluded that they were not. Footballers were often mentioned as seeming to have easy jobs which were perhaps more difficult in reality and some labouring or dirty jobs were cited as much more difficult than desk jobs. While these were often valid opinions, responses at this level were assertive rather than carefully argued.

The alternative question was a popular choice. A common misunderstanding here was the term 'admirable' which was very frequently understood more as 'advantageous' and answers became rather skewed towards the outlining features of teenage years which were pleasant and those which were disagreeable in some way. While Examiners did not penalise specifically for this misreading, ideas were not always as clear and objective as they might have been. Better responses tended to tackle the question with more understanding and there were some thorough discussions on teenagers' adaptability to modern technology, their loyalty to friends and their general zest for life. In discussing less admirable qualities responses were often explicitly focused on puncturing stereotypical views of young people, which was a perfectly acceptable approach. Tabloid representations of gangs of youths in hoodies, drinking and behaving badly in public were commonly referred to as exaggerated, although in many excellent responses candidates did admit to moodiness, laziness and other vices attributed to their age and immaturity.

In average responses, a misreading of the question was often unhelpful in that the range of ideas and opinions tended to become a long complaint rather than a balanced discussion. At this level, there was some useful focus on what was appealing about being a teenager, such as more freedom, friendships, lack

of responsibility, but its less appealing qualities were often much more developed and sometimes became a rather long list of ways in which adults heap stress and difficulty on teenagers' shoulders and then judge them harshly or misunderstand them. There were pitfalls in this approach as responses became unbalanced or sometimes seemed a little immature.

Weaker responses were typically brief and under-developed. Again, the question was often misunderstood and ideas were rather vaguely expressed, such as 'people my age like to be out and about having fun' or 'teachers and parents treat us like children but we're not'. Although ideas were usually valid, responses were hampered by repetition or weaknesses in structure.

The style and accuracy of responses to these questions varied across the mark range. Better responses showed much precision and control of language and sentence structures and the subtlety of ideas was sometimes matched by an engaging flexibility of expression.

Middle range scripts, given marks in Band 3 or just below, were usually plain in style but conveyed straightforward ideas clearly. Otherwise competent responses sometimes slipped into Band 4 because the writing contained frequent errors including more serious ones such as weak sentence separation and other basic punctuation mistakes. When these were combined with simple and limited vocabulary, the mark was often lower. The style and register was also insecure at this level also, with some lapses into colloquialism and imprecise grammar, such as 'I better' 'I got to' and 'I seen' or 'I done.'

Ways in which the writing of arguments and discussions can be improved

- Make sure you understand what the question is asking for.
- Justify your opinions with apt examples – avoid simple assertions.
- Check for basic errors such as 'comma-splicing' and misuse of capital letters.
- Use clear and precise English and eliminate expressions which are too informal or conversational in style.

Question 3: Descriptive writing

(a) **Describe a noisy group of people passing by, and your thoughts and feelings about them at the time.** (25)

OR

(b) **Describe a place that is very old and has a powerful atmosphere.** (25)

Responses to the first question usually involved a rather intimidating group of people, often teenagers, encountered in the street although there were other approaches. One cheerfully evocative description focused on a group of little children who disturbed the narrator as she lay sunbathing by a pool. The thoughts and feelings of the narrator were very effectively described and the scenario provided for some change and variety as her grumpiness gave way to delight in the children's happy and excited play. There were some powerful descriptions of the fear and humiliation felt by the narrator as an intimidating group of potential muggers or bullies approached them, although quite a few had an unexpected twist at the end which involved some act of kindness from one of the group. In one nicely self-deprecating response, the terrified narrator was pursued by a noisy group of badly dressed youths, only to be handed an item he had dropped further back on his walk. Better responses focused on both description of the group and their impact on the narrator and the short time span implied in the question helped to focus the response on the descriptive potential of the scene.

Average responses tended to give a lengthier preamble to the main description. Sometimes half a page was devoted to how the narrator came to be in the place where the noisy group approached. Despite this rather unnecessary introduction, responses at this level were often quite detailed, with some focus on the dress and demeanour of the individuals in the group. The hierarchy within the group was quite skilfully deduced in some cases from the behaviour and appearance of different characters.

In weaker responses, there was more of a tendency to lapse into narrative than has been evident in the past or the description was limited to a few details with simple statements about the feelings of the narrator. In some cases, there was limited awareness of the features of descriptive writing and simple narratives were based on the scenario in the question.

The second option also produced responses across the range of marks. The best were again focused clearly on evoking the particular atmosphere of an old building, though some excellent responses described a specific room in a house or a place in the outdoors. Some very engaging pieces drew detail and effect from a personal connection with places such as a now dead grandparent's house or garden or an empty and derelict school. Defunct fairgrounds featured surprisingly often and in better responses the feelings of previous happy family outings were effectively evoked. One masterful response set in a roman ruin hauntingly recreated the sounds and sights witnessed centuries earlier in the building.

In the middle range, some responses were also based on actual historical places such as Stone Henge and Machu Picchu but at this level the description was sometimes lacking in atmosphere and relied on physical details, and perhaps assertions of the place's 'powerful atmosphere' rather than the recreation of it. In Band 3 and Band 4 there was also a preponderance of ancient houses in the middle of forests or hitherto unexplored haunted houses at the end of a familiar street. Again, there were some over-long explanations of how the narrator arrived at the building and there were also many rather clichéd details such as cobwebs and creaking doors.

In weaker responses the same stereotypical scenes were selected although here there was more of a tendency to lapse into narrative or the piece as a whole showed limited descriptive focus and detail.

Marks for Style and Accuracy were often lower than those for Content and Structure. Better responses chose precise and varied vocabulary and controlled complex sentences with secure punctuation within and between sentences. In weaker responses, tenses were insecurely used, and incomplete or poorly separated sentences adversely affected candidates' marks. Although there were fewer examples than previously of strings of incomplete, verbless sentences, this was often because there was more narrative than descriptive content in the weaker responses.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

- Avoid too much narrative preamble and remember to provide descriptive detail.
- Try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content.
- It is good practice to write in the present tense, but do not change tense once you have started your writing.
- Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.

Question 4: Narrative writing

(a) **Write a story based on an unusual and exciting secret.** (25)

OR

(b) **Write a story which begins with someone hearing an eerie and unidentifiable noise.** (25)

The first question was considerably less popular than the second although there were some engaging and well-constructed narratives here. Most effective responses sequenced their stories so that the 'unusual and exciting secret' was not unveiled until the end although there was some careful signalling in the best responses. Special powers bestowed upon or realised by the main character or the narrator were fairly common across the mark range, handled quite deftly in some excellent Band 1 responses and rather more prosaically further down.

The second option was the most popular of the composition questions, selected by candidates across the ability range and approached in a wide variety of ways. In general, stories based in the real world rather than fantasy tended to be more successful although at the top of the mark range there were some effective stories based on disappearances into other dimensions or other worlds. Some moving stories recounted the searing pain of the loss of loved ones, sometimes only revealed gradually and retold in flashback. Lost sweethearts who were there one minute and gone the next, to pastures new or other lovers, also featured strongly. Other narratives were built around losing a younger sibling in a crowded place and here, as ever, the climax of the story needed some careful pre-planning to avoid a disappointing denouement in which they were simply found again or returned. Kidnapping stories sometimes suffered from the same weaknesses.

Inevitably, responses in the middle mark range and below focused more on events and although these were clearly sequenced, less attention was paid to preparing and interesting the reader by creating believable characters and settings. Fantasy plots, such as characters disappearing from rooms into other worlds,

usually followed by the narrator, were less well handled and there were some stories which became series of unlikely events which did not sustain the reader's interest.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was lively and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, if persistent, limited even competently told stories to Band 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation. Speech was over-used only in weaker responses but there were many scripts where speech punctuation was insecure, even when the story itself was quite well-structured. Again, basic punctuation errors with capital letters, the spelling of simple words and misused homophones appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes so frequent as to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved

- Remember that the reader must believe in the characters and setting for a story to work.
- Plan the ending before you begin so that the climax does not disappoint.
- Characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader.
- Ambitious, varied vocabulary can improve the mark, but basic punctuation errors can limit its effectiveness.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/32

Directed Writing and Composition

Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for writing, although there were ten marks available for reading in **Question 1**.

In order to achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- use an appropriate form and style, adapted for the intended audience and genre
- structure ideas logically and organise their writing effectively
- create thoughtful and well-structured arguments, produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct sentences accurately and vary sentence types to create effects
- select appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary with precision

General comments

The majority of scripts showed a good grasp of what was expected in both the directed writing and the composition. Responses were substantial and purposeful, on the whole, with few brief or undeveloped answers. There was evidence in many scripts of a clear awareness of how marks were awarded in the different questions and writing genres and fewer instances of candidates attempting to write more than one composition, showing better understanding of rubric than in previous sessions.

Most responses showed a good understanding of the topic in **Question 1** and made sensible use of the reading passage in their letters. Better answers read between the lines and questioned the writer's relationship with her own teenage children as well as developing their own views and opinions, based on the passage. Most middle mark range responses tended to reproduce and summarise the main points, though they also included some attempt at evaluation, leaving very few genuine weaker answers, in relation to reading and understanding, as most candidates found the topic accessible and all had something to contribute to the discussion of peer pressure, friends and education.

In the compositions, better responses showed a clear understanding of the features of argumentative, descriptive or narrative writing and in all three genres there was developed and structured writing. Some weaker descriptive writing tended to slide into narrative, and these responses would have benefited from a clearer reading of both descriptive titles. These titles made it clear that a slowing down of 'what happened, what you saw and heard, and your feelings' was required, as opposed to concentrating on actions only. One of the features of any good descriptive style is the focus on detail within a limited time span and this session featured many excellent responses to this genre.

The best responses in both questions were characterised by the careful selection of precise vocabulary and sentence structures to create specific effects. The reader was often intrigued in the early stages of compositions and the writing was consciously shaped in all three genres, in order to engage and sustain the reader's interest. In weaker responses, an appropriate register and effective style was more difficult to achieve. In **Question 1**, for example, the recipient of the letter was treated as though she was a friend, calling her by her first name, and the language becoming too colloquial and familiar. On the other hand, there were some instances in which the language was overly obsequious, and the title 'ma'am' was in constant use, which made the style very stilted and apologetic, especially if any arguments were attempted. In this question and in the compositions, there was insufficient attention paid to basic punctuation in weaker answers. There were some instances of colloquialisms such as 'gonna' in writing which was otherwise formal in register. Semi-colons were rarely seen other than in extremely good scripts where they were often used correctly. However, the use of 'And', 'But' and 'Because' to start sentences was prevalent in the middle

mark range and often drew attention to poorly constructed sentences in responses that showed clear understanding of good sentence structure elsewhere.

Section 1: Directed Writing

Question 1: Read the article which is about peer influence on teenagers and is written by Rachel Cheng, a parent. Write a letter to Rachel Cheng on behalf of yourself and your friends. In your letter you should: Explain and comment on the writer's views on education and peer pressure. Give your own views on the importance to a young person of having friends.

[25 marks]

25 marks were available for this question, of which 15 were for the quality of the writing and 10 for the understanding and use of the content in the passage.

Most answers showed an understanding of the purpose of the letter and wrote from a teenage perspective, although the unfortunate use of 'me and my friends' did detract quite often, as this was the most obvious stance in responding to topics related to peer pressure, education and friends. However, there were many responses that adopted a parent's persona and, whilst these were not penalised in any way, it was clear that these candidates put themselves at a disadvantage by not writing in the first person about matters that teenagers generally feel strongly about. Most responses found the task of identifying and commenting on the writer's views on education, peer pressure and the importance of friends well within their capabilities. However, even very good answers occasionally omitted one of the topics as they became engrossed in their arguments about the other issues. Many responses, outraged by the writer's opinion that teenagers did not care much about education, launched into thorough, convincing and evaluative rebuttals but realising that they had not dealt with 'the importance of friends' tended to tag a little paragraph about this at the end. For those with friends closest to their hearts, a similar approach was adopted and sometimes education was forgotten altogether. Most adopted a critical stance which is required for marks in the higher bands, even weaker responses had an element of this about them as they attempted to argue with points about friends and parents' responsibility when it came to 'buying technological gadgets'. Other thoughtful and quite philosophical responses discussed the trap of the 'generation gap' that the writer and her readers fell into, citing instances of stereotypical judgements on both sides.

The marks for reading

In general, there were very few responses that failed to achieve Band 3 marks and above. All candidates clearly found the text very accessible as it was about teenagers, friends, peer pressure and education topics all relevant to their age group. Nearly all candidates identified the twin aspects of pressure – inspiration, confidence, academic achievement and good behaviour on the one hand, and gang influence and bad behaviour on the other. Each of these derived from the gregarious nature of teenagers. Influence on career choice was not so frequently mentioned. Many candidates started with a plan, an essential device to help steer a clear and comprehensive course. This also helped to ensure that the many aspects of reading that could be overlooked were covered. It was the assimilation of most of these examples, and the way these were woven into a response, that provided the strongest answers.

Most candidates acknowledged the expensive role for parents, the obsession with clothes, trainers, phones and other technologies though stronger candidates used this as a spring board to bring in the 'social suicide' aspect that the writer mentions and asked her 'would you like to see your children suffer from bullies because they had the wrong trainers/phones/clothes?'. This instigated a discussion about peer pressure and the usual opinion was that the strength of peer pressure outweighed that of families and parents as it down to the all-pervasive power of 'image'. Other good responses drew attention to the fact that teenagers did not just learn about 'image' from their peers and such responses asked the writer to consider how parents and adults also were easy prey to advertisements for the fastest car, the most up-to-date phone and many other trappings of modern living. Band 2 and above went further and challenged the writer's opinion that it was the teenagers' fault as they 'needed' and pestered for the newest technology or clothes by arguing that if parents were doing their 'job' properly then they would have brought up their children to understand the financial restraints of the parents, the necessity of not conforming to 'a herd mentality' and that they, the parents, would have supplied their children with enough self-confidence to be able to withstand peer pressure and bullying. The most mature evaluative summation on most of these aspects was that being a teenager was likened to an emotional, physical, mental and materialistic battle ground that few adults would wish to visit ever again, and that most adults had conveniently forgotten the tragedies of this 'war', though they still felt they had sufficient credentials to criticise their teenagers' battle field.

Where responses reproduced the points made in the passage, often with straightforward rebuttals, examiners could not award marks above Band 3. Although some responses covered the points made in the article systematically, disagreeing with most, there was at this level less scrutiny of ideas in it and limited comment on them. Still in Band 3 were those candidates who reproduced a point and felt they were commenting and developing when in fact they only provided not very relevant or over-long anecdotes or examples that didn't extend or evaluate their ideas. Other reasons for responses not managing to get to the clear evaluative level of Band 2 and above were those candidates who used direct quotation from the article and added a brief explanatory note and moved on to the next quotation.

The topics of education and the importance of friends elicited strong responses. Candidates needed to ensure they countered the writer's views with evaluation that didn't move too far into personal experience or anecdote. The strongest arguments cited positive facts about their own and other pupils, or even their schools', achievements with regard to education and highlighted many of the strengths of being part of an eclectic mix of friends. Highlighting and underlining the relevant points in the passage certainly helps candidates include all aspects that need to be included to ensure all the material is covered, and a plan of action before embarking on an immediate reactive response helps organise and balance rebuttal and evaluation.

The marks for writing

15 marks were available for style and audience, the structure of the answer and technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Style and audience

The majority of responses were appropriately set out in letter form and used the appropriately formal register and style that would be expected in a letter to an adult. Most, across the mark range, wrote an introductory paragraph making clear the purpose of the letter, though better responses showed more awareness of their audience in the way their openings were phrased. For example, some showed an initial empathy with the writer and acknowledged how difficult it must be to be a parent at a time when so many consumer goods and technological gadgets were a necessary requirement for both adults and teenagers. This was a clever way of identifying the writer's arguments whilst at the same time paving the way for a sound evaluation of the materialistic aspect aimed at teenagers. Most candidates treated the writer respectfully in their introductions and conclusions but occasionally became overzealous and antagonistic when they became indignant about education and friendships. In weaker responses, there was often overlong preamble that praised the writer for knowing so much about teenagers and endings were similar with many repetitions of thanks to the writer 'for writing such a wonderful article'.

Structure

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for writing, handled the material confidently and presented their own arguments cogently. At the highest level, an assimilation and overview of the issues involved emerged rather than, or as well as, a discussion of the more discrete points made by Rachel Cheng. A sense that there was a balance of factors to be weighed was conveyed by these successful responses which were often subtly argued but yet clearly structured. Responses given 8 or 9 for writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the article in a response which was adequately structured, often with some concluding comments outlining the candidate's own view. Responses given marks below Band 3 were characterised by brief or no introductions and a simple list of some of the writer's points in sequence, but no attempt was made to engage with any of these nor were they summarised as such, more itemised.

Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in Band 1. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. Responses given 8 or 9 were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide-ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks.

Responses given marks in Band 4 sometimes showed some clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation errors which precluded examiners from awarding Band 3 marks. As mentioned above, a striking number of Band 4 responses contained many errors in the use of capital letters and there was sometimes simplicity of language and style. Sentence separation errors also appeared at this level and the frequency of errors became self-penalising. Lastly the use of And, But and Because to start sentences needed attention across the range as too often these were seen as acceptable sentence openers when too often they drew attention to poorly constructed sentences or indeed non-sentences.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved

- Use the details in the passage but think about the attitude of the writer to the topic as a whole also.
- Try to develop ideas from the passage, using inferences that are suggested in it, but without drifting beyond it.
- Be aware of the genre you are using for your answer. Think carefully about the right style for an article or a letter, for example.
- Check your writing for basic punctuation errors that will inevitably reduce your mark.

Section 2: Composition

Question 2: Argumentative/Discursive writing

(a) ‘Privacy no longer exists in today’s world, but it doesn’t matter anyway.’ Do you agree? [25]

OR

(b) ‘There is nothing new in the world, only old things to be rediscovered.’ Discuss [25]

Better responses here made use of a wide range of different ideas in a focused and relevant discussion of the topic. Average responses contained some good ideas which were relevant and gave opinions about the topic which were valid. The discussion was not as developed or was less well-structured and points were not sequenced as helpfully for the reader. In the second question, candidates often ran out of material or tended to return to ideas or repeat them, whereas weaker responses to the first question showed some misunderstanding of the question.

In the first question, there was almost universal agreement across the mark range that the disappearance of privacy in modern times did matter, and that the preservation of at least some privacy was essential for personal, social and intellectual development and happiness. In better responses, where very high marks were sometimes gained, ideas were grouped and sequenced in paragraphs and linked together to help the reader navigate through the overall argument. Some thoughtful discussions initially began with an attempt to define the word ‘privacy’ in the modern world compared to previous eras in which people had little personal space. Many excellent responses discussed whether Everyman, or indeed every celebrity, was a victim of social media sites or the paparazzi, respectively, or were we humans, in our desperate need for our ‘fifteen minutes of fame’, guilty of attracting others to gaze in at our lives? Discussions such as these also were able to move beyond social networking to interpret surveillance as an invasion of privacy and asked the examiner to consider whether cameras on every street corner or overpass on the motorway were in the public’s interest or was there something much more sinister involved?

Middle range responses tended to be less consistently developed or discursive in their nature and often became ‘stuck’ where they were most comfortable, for many these generally became more about social networking than anything else. These middle range essays may not have expanded their discussion beyond one or two aspects but most did have many pertinent things to say and did have a sense of purpose.

There were very few weaker responses, but those that received marks below Band 3 for Content and Structure and Style and Accuracy were more reliant on listing with less discussion about any particular aspect. Responses at this level were assertive rather than carefully argued or discussed.

The alternative question was not as popular a choice, but those who did choose it often did so without serious thought and consideration about what they had to say on the matter. Whereas in the privacy essay few, if any, candidates ran out of things to say, in this question it was often clear, from the outset, that a) some understanding of the title was required, b) that the word ‘rediscovered’ would be dealt with in the right way and c) that the candidate had some grasp of general knowledge in order to supply examples that they could then discuss. In fact, illustration rather than argument was the only approach examiners came across in the few responses they saw. Better responses used the spur of ‘there is nothing new in the world’ to cite, albeit listing them at times, specific examples of fairly recent technological innovations

Overall, this was the least popular of the compositions and the strongest responses were those that were thoughtful, planned, well organised, balanced and cohesive. Middle range responses started off with some

purposeful ideas but these became convoluted, albeit in an attempt to philosophise, and the distinction between 'new' and 'rediscovered' proved too difficult for them to discuss. The weakest responses were those who either had little to say about the topic or ran out of ideas quite quickly or those that simply listed some inventions, without any sense of connectivity or general argument.

The style and accuracy of responses to these questions varied across the mark range. Better responses showed much precision and control of language and sentence structures and the subtlety of ideas was sometimes matched by and engaging flexibility of expression. Middle range scripts, given marks in Band 3 or just below, were usually plain in style but conveyed straightforward ideas clearly. Otherwise competent responses sometimes slipped into Band 4 because the writing contained frequent errors including more serious ones such as weak sentence structures and sentence separation error and other basic punctuation mistakes. When these were combined with simple and limited vocabulary or, in the case of the second essay, muddled and convoluted expression, the mark was often lower. The style and register was also insecure at this level also, with some imprecise syntax and grammar.

Ways in which the writing of arguments and discussions can be improved

- Make sure you understand what the question is asking for.
- Justify your opinions with apt examples – avoid simple assertions.
- Check for basic errors such as 'comma-splicing' and misuse of capital letters.
- Use clear and precise English and eliminate expressions which are too informal or conversational in style.

Question 3: Descriptive writing

- (a) **Describe a building, and some of the people who enter and leave it during a short period while you are watching the entrance.** [25]
- OR
- (b) **'It was all over in a moment'. Describe what happened at that time, what you saw and heard, and your feelings.** [25]

In the first option, responses adopted a narrative thread but the better ones gave some dimension to the description - beyond a series of points – by weaving the narrator into the scenario. Excellent responses were those describing hospitals. One exceptional piece described the hospital as though it too was a patient with timbers propping up the main entrance like a crutch for someone with a broken leg and tarpaulin draped over like bandages or plasters on wounds. Some of these buildings 'sighed' as the seriously injured were dramatically and speedily wheeled in on gurneys, lights on the ambulances flashing and a flurry of activity but also of organised procedure. Many of the people were described in detail, from the pain etched on their faces to the awkward gait of those who had sprained ankles or twisted knees. However, these pen portraits were not all gloomy and depressing. One boy arrived with a cooking pot stuck on his head as his friends and family laughed and teased him, some visiting the sick turned up with bright balloons and a wonderful ending to one of these descriptions involved the narrator rising off the bench, where he had been watching everyone coming and going, to meet his wife holding their newborn baby.

Average responses tended to be one or two dimensional and didn't 'think outside the box' for ideas conjured up by the word 'building'. In a rush to describe a new building they didn't consider who or what would visit or come and go from such a place and whether these characters would be interesting. Some of these responses had rather unnecessary introductions devoted to how the narrator came to be in this place, but even in this middle range there were often effective details such as a tattoo noticed on the calf of a young secretary or a tie pin that looked like a golf club on an overly bright tie on a serious businessman.

In weaker responses there was more of a tendency to list and outline and a few lapsed into narrative, though this was quite rare this session. In some cases, there was limited awareness of the features of descriptive writing and sometimes very sketchy comments were made about the building and its occupants.

The second option was also popular and produced responses across the mark range. By its nature, there was often an element of narrative in this, by way of explanation, or what had occurred before the particular moment. However, concentration in the better responses was usually on moments of high drama, accidents or sporting achievements. In the middle range, some responses dealt with relationships or friendships coming to an end which often proved to be a bad choice as there was too much back-story and explanation that removed the reader from the 'moment' and became narrative in their nature. Similarly, those witnessing

an event such as an explosion or a fire tended to be ‘detached’ and outside of most of the sensory awareness apart from the visual aspect. In weaker responses very clichéd and stereotypical phrases and sayings were gathered together, such as ‘chills went up and down my spine’, ‘I couldn’t believe what I was seeing’ and ‘surely this couldn’t be real?’, and the only link was a recounting of an event which often felt as though it had happened a long time ago. The same stereotypical scenes or events were selected although here there was more of a tendency to lapse into narrative or the piece as a whole showed limited descriptive focus and detail.

Marks for Style and Accuracy were often lower than those for Content and Structure. Better responses chose precise and varied vocabulary and controlled complex sentences with secure punctuation within and between sentences. In weaker responses, tenses were used insecurely and were incomplete, or poorly separated sentences adversely affected candidates’ marks. Although there were fewer examples than previously of strings of incomplete, verb less sentences, this was often because there was more narrative than descriptive content in the weaker responses.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

- Avoid too much narrative preamble and remember to provide descriptive detail.
- Try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content.
- It is good practice to write in the present tense, but do not change tense once you have started your writing.
- Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.
- Consider general terms such as ‘building’ and ‘people’ and think of a few ideas before starting to write.
- Slow the motion down in time based events; a moment can last as long as it takes to provide sufficient sensory detail and feelings.

Question 4: Narrative writing

(a) **‘If only you’d told me this earlier, it would have made all the difference.’ Write a story begins or ends with this speech.** [25]

OR

(b) **Write the story of what happens when someone opens a box labelled ‘Do Not Open’.** [25]

The first question was, in general, the less popular of the two options. The speech was often applied to romantic situations, and in order to make it relevant, the stories were usually well crafted, the conclusion being an inevitable outcome of the consistent behaviour of the characters in their setting. Another popular use for the speech was in those narratives recounting the exploits of CIA agents. However, too often, both in the romance and spy stories, the language and events evoked emotions of a kind beyond the experience of the writers, or they adopted an unfamiliar persona and there was too much inauthentic dialogue straight out of Hollywood or Bollywood movies. Middle range candidates often opted for either of these scenarios and both types of narrative were often synopses of the plots of TV dramas, demonstrating little awareness of the need to adopt plots suitable for short written formats.

The strongest narratives belonged to those candidates who could skilfully handle flashback and who understood the power of domestic drama: loved ones withholding details of cancer or heart disease, misunderstandings that led to revenge only to discover that the person had done nothing wrong, death-bed scenes of grandparents who had wrongfully kept loved ones out of their will thinking they had told a family secret and many other accessible scenarios that most readers could relate to and engage with. Dialogue in these instances was realistic, often emulating regional accents or the type of sayings old people might use. The weakest responses were extremely muddled and confusing. No course of action, such as a plan, was employed to deal with the span of time covered and often there was too much unselective dialogue that literally made the reader ‘lose the plot’ as the quote remained insignificant until the very end where it was ‘tagged’ on and hastily explained.

The second option was the most popular of the composition questions, selected by candidates across the ability range and approached in a wide variety of ways. In general, stories based in the real world rather than fantasy tended to be more successful although at the top of the mark range there were some effective stories based on disappearances into other dimensions or other worlds. This was the title which attracted writers of bizarre and surreal situations which in themselves reduced the possibility of realistic characters. For too many middle range candidates it seemed imperative that in order to produce a plot, all writers had to disobey

the instruction not to open the box. In the ‘disappearance to other dimensions realm’ the main character usually discovered items ranging from radioactive material to extra-terrestrials that usually caused beams of light and sparks and the end of the story. These types of events often occurred after a very lengthy build up, often it was somebody’s birthday or it was a festival and there was a great deal of discussion about what type of gift might be in the box.

Better responses began with a more philosophical discussion about people’s curious natures or their fickleness so that when they are specifically asked not to do something they just can’t help themselves and go ahead regardless. This type of introduction was an effective opener to what often ended as a moral tale; it settled the reader down and made them expect the unexpected. Often the build up was handled well and when the box did eventually get opened it contained something like a diary containing family secrets that helped to better understand the actions of adults or elders. If the box did contain an object then a serious section of the narrative was given to describing and assessing its purpose, usually parents would arrive home and they would explain what it was, after giving the young characters a sound telling off.

In the weakest responses characterisation, atmosphere and sometimes even control of language were sacrificed for plots dominated by evil family members, gangsters, zombies, vampires, aliens, computer game scenarios and all other violent forms of mayhem. In both narratives, weaker candidates fell into familiar traps such as killing themselves off at the end.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was lively and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. Errors in sentence control and separation, if persistent, limited even competently told stories to Band 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation. Speech was over-used both in middle range and in weaker responses, in the second narrative, but there were many scripts where speech punctuation was insecure, even when the story itself was quite well-structured. Both narratives tended to expose uncertainties, or carelessness, in the use of tenses, particularly if candidates were attempting time-shifts. Again the usage of And, But and Because at the beginning of ‘sentences’ and basic punctuation errors, such as failure to know when to put a full stop as well as the misuse of prepositions, appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes so frequent as to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved

- Remember that the reader must believe in the characters and setting for a story to work.
- Plan the ending before you begin so that the climax does not disappoint.
- Characters’ thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader.
- Ambitious, varied vocabulary can improve the mark, but basic punctuation errors can limit its effectiveness.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/33

Directed Writing and Composition

Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for writing, although there were ten marks available for reading in **Question 1**.

In order to achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- use an appropriate form and style, adapted for the intended audience and genre
- structure ideas logically and organise their writing in effective paragraphs
- create thoughtful and well-structured arguments, produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct sentences accurately and vary sentence types to create effects
- select appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary with precision

General Comments

This paper was frequently well answered. Ideas and arguments were cogently expressed in clearly structured sentences, with some varied and interesting vocabulary. Responses showed an awareness of how marks were awarded and the requirements of the mark scheme. There was some evidence where the composition seemed to have been answered first, leading to an unfinished response to **Question 1**. Some weaker scripts would have been improved by better time-management, but there were few responses where more than one composition was attempted, showing an increased awareness of the correct rubric.

Question 1 was generally well answered. There was clear engagement with the topic, with at times some indignation at the concept of changing the School day, which led to lively argument. A few responses offered other alternatives to those suggested in the passage but care needs to be taken not to drift away into other subject areas. There were fewer responses where whole sections of text were copied out and more evidence of responses being written in the candidates' own words.

Most responses showed a clear attempt to reproduce and summarise the main arguments in the passage. It is important that candidates know how to evaluate and develop ideas rather than simply agreeing or disagreeing. Those responses that assimilated the material and showed some perceptive evaluation could achieve a higher mark.

Many responses for all questions were competently written in paragraphs. This was essential for **Questions 1, 2 and 4** and advisable for **Question 3**. There was an increase in the number of responses that failed to use paragraphs at all, which is not to be encouraged; it frequently indicated a lack of overall planning and structure.

The best responses showed evidence of careful thought and planning with the content of some compositions being very good indeed. Both of the narratives required a structure with a sense of climax and an appropriate ending; without this, they tended to be simply a series of chronological events. The discursive topics also required a series of varied ideas which could be developed, rather than being written as a list. The descriptive titles worked well when specific, realistic details were included consistently but weaker responses tended to move into narrative.

Few mistakes were seen in the best writing. Vocabulary was often ambitious and sentence structures were varied. Some weaker responses needed to avoid repetitive vocabulary and too many sentences began with 'also' or 'as I'. Spelling mistakes of some basic words were seen in even good quality answers. There was

still much confusion over 'there', 'their' and 'they're' as well as 'your' and 'you're'. There were also errors in agreement and with mixed tenses such as 'many people is' or 'we was going'. The major errors in punctuation were the incorrect use of apostrophes in plurals and the lack of use of full stops. Greater care should be taken with the use of commas.

Where scripts were word processed, extra proof reading should be encouraged as some otherwise good responses had a greater number of errors than handwritten scripts, which could have been typing errors.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1: Directed Writing

Question 1: Read carefully the speech by a Headteacher about proposals for a major timetable change printed in the Reading Booklet Insert.

Imagine you are a senior candidate at the School. Write a letter to the Headteacher expressing your views on what you have heard. You may agree or disagree with the Headteacher's proposals.

In your letter you should:

- identify and evaluate the Headteacher's views
- use your own ideas to support your comments on the Headteacher's view.

**Base your letter on what you have read in the passage, but be careful to use your own words.
(25 marks)**

25 marks were available for this question, of which 15 were for the quality of the writing and 10 for the understanding and use of content in the passage.

This article was accessible since the topic, of a change to the shape of the School day, was one that everyone could recognise. There were some rather dramatic changes suggested in the speech, as well as some reasons given for the proposed changes; most responses showed good understanding of the more obvious points. There was some misreading of the concept of a ten-day timetable with reference to the teachers only being in School for one day in ten, as if this change would only affect these senior candidates, not the whole School.

The marks for reading

Good responses covered both bullet points, with identification of the suggested changes to the School day along with comments and candidate's own ideas in support. Although many of the answers disagreed with the concept of one subject per day, which was the main idea of the speech, the best of the answers developed reasons beyond the immediate practical details. Such answers included discussion of how the future careers of both candidates and teachers could be affected or the wider social implications of being with the same group of people all day. Where such responses assimilated, rather than reproduced, information about, for example, the move of the art teacher, there followed a clear argument about the limitations within School for the gifted art candidate who intended to follow that career path. There was good use made of examples of real people who practised regularly in their chosen field in order to succeed - music and sport especially. These ideas were matched to the need for daily practice of a foreign language in order to become fluent. One very good comparison was of School subjects being like a 'food pyramid' where a person required a 'balanced diet' of all types of food, hence such a balance being necessary in School too. This type of thoughtful evaluation showed Band 1 ability in 'reading between the lines.'

Many responses in Band 2 showed some engagement with the practical ideas suggested, usually in paragraph order of the text. They mostly covered the limited attention span of candidates, boredom in doing one subject all day and the lack of balance, the need for physical activity and sport to break up more theoretical subjects, the loss of specialist teachers and the changes to homework. Others suggested aspects that were not covered in the speech but clearly caused personal concern, such as what would happen if a candidate was absent for a whole day and how the effects would be far more damaging with the new system.

Ideas from the fifth paragraph were those that were least mentioned. If there was reference made to the media day, team teaching or visitors coming into School, there was rarely any development of these suggestions.

Marks of 5 and 6 were given for responses which reproduced a number of the details but with little development; many focused on one or two major elements, usually the difficulty of concentrating for so long on one subject, especially if it was not a favourite subject and the problem with two homework assignments.

Weaker responses, given marks below 5 for reading, briefly summarised some of the points from the passage. There was some loose paraphrasing but direct copying of whole sentences was less marked than in previous years. There was also some lack of clarity about how much time teachers could spend with candidates and about the possibility of whole days of testing. This was due to superficial reading, which could be improved by thorough studying of the whole passage.

The marks for writing

15 marks were available for style and audience, the structure of the answer and technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Style and audience

The majority of responses were appropriately set out as a letter using formal English, although some were less so and adopted a more informal style as if writing to a friend rather than to a Headteacher, or as if they too were writing a speech. Expressions such as 'Hiya', 'Are you having a special day?' and 'Good Morning,' were not suitable openings in this context.

Most letters began with a straightforward introduction, such as 'I am writing to you as a senior candidate to express my views regarding your speech today.' A clear indication of overall agreement or disagreement with the ideas was usually made very early on, so responses would follow the opening line with 'So basically I agree/disagree with your views and would like to explain why.' A few responses omitted an introduction and launched straight into a specific point and these tended to be linked to poorly structured letters.

Using rhetorical questions was a stylistic device adopted in many responses and could be an effective tool. Unfortunately, when it was over-used, by asking a question instead of developing a point made in the passage and by doing so repeatedly, such a style tended to become intrusive. Many responses showed a clear sense of audience with consistency in this area resulting in higher band scores. A few responses adopted a persuasive style, particularly towards the end of the letter, when trying to put forward ideas to change the Headteacher's intentions. There were a few responses that ended very suddenly, as if candidates just stopped writing; a suitable ending is important. The use of valedictory words should also be considered, with endings such as 'lots of love' or 'see you soon' not being appropriate in this context.

Structure

Many answers consisted of an introduction, several paragraphs about different points from the passage and a summative conclusion that tended to repeat the main points. Lack of paragraphing was an increasing issue which made reading difficult and was sometimes an indication that ideas needed sequencing. In attempting to provide a balanced response, many letters seemed to be split into two halves, covering positive then negative points about the change to the School day. All answers could be improved by the use of cohesive strategies to link different ideas within the letter.

Accuracy

Consistently fluent and accurate writing that was well sequenced was given a mark in Band 1. Some otherwise quite effective letters were affected by the use of repetitive vocabulary and 'comma – splicing.' Those in the middle range of marks were written in a plain, although mostly accurate style, reliant on the order of the passage. Weaker responses were written without sentence demarcation or with phrases copied from the text indiscriminately, showing a lack of reading comprehension of the words selected. In quite a few reasonably expressed responses, the writing mark was reduced because of the frequency of some basic spelling and punctuation errors (including there/their/they're; you/you're; or and instead of and) along with apostrophes used incorrectly in plurals. Some attempts to use original language led to unclear phrasing such as 'a whole bunch of learnings' and 'non-interested subjects.' Useful words such as 'opinion', 'argument', 'view' and 'sincerely' were often spelled incorrectly. In word processed scripts there were frequent 'typos' which emphasises the need for careful proof-reading.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved

- Make sure that you select ideas and opinions from the reading material and evaluate them in relation to the task.
- Try to develop ideas from the passage, using inferences that are suggested in it as well as obvious details.
- Always use your own words. Never copy whole phrases and sentences.
- Be aware of the genre you are using for your answer. Think carefully about the right style for an article or a letter, for example (who is the writer/ who is the recipient/what is the purpose?)
- Check your writing for basic punctuation errors.
- Use appropriate paragraphs.

Section 2: Composition

Question 2: Argumentative/Discursive writing

(a) **Give your views about boredom and how best to avoid it.** (25)

OR

(b) **Do you believe that there is any point in trying to preserve green spaces and wildlife in your country or another country?** (25)

Better responses here made use of a wide range of different ideas, linking them in a cohesive and coherent way. Each idea was developed to a suitable length and there was an overall shape to the whole piece, culminating in a logical conclusion.

Average responses contained some good ideas but were less consistent and the sequencing of sections often seemed random.

Weaker responses were lacking in material or tended to repeat one or two basic points rather than developing a range.

The first question was generally less well done than the second. Many of the responses blamed an individual for being bored then suggested a list of things to do in order to avoid boredom, such as taking up a hobby, going out with friends or doing sport. A few more thoughtful responses blamed the modern world, with its endless gratification of needs and whims, for sapping the initiative to avoid the onset of boredom in the first place. The weaker answers suffered from lack of relevant content.

Option (b) was a more popular choice with some very good, well informed pieces about the interdependence and economic value of wildlife to humankind. Green spaces were not neglected but sometimes the compositions took an overly scientific slant with an emphasis on imparting knowledge about photosynthesis, ecosystems or endangered plants and species. There were a number of responses that became so fact based that they lost track of the actual question with a lack of structure to the argument and a weak conclusion.

For Style and Accuracy, the highest marks were given for clear, accurate writing and an awareness of audience. Many weaknesses seen in **Question 1** also affected marks here in the middle and lower bands, with lack of effective punctuation, errors in spelling of common words and repetitive vocabulary.

Ways in which candidates can make sure this type of answer is improved

- Make sure you have a variety of ideas at your disposal
- Try to avoid abstract statements – justify your opinions with apt examples
- Develop each idea in a paragraph, sequencing sentences within paragraphs
- Use clear and precise English

Question 3: Descriptive writing

- (a) **Describe someone's home where you have always been welcome, and the people who live there.**

OR

- (b) **You witness, 50 years in the future, the opening of a time capsule containing objects buried today. Explain your thoughts and feelings as the time capsule is opened, and describe some of the items.**

The first question produced some of the best compositions of this series. There were some wonderfully evocative descriptions of homes of various sizes, and some touching anecdotes illustrating the warmth, affection and generosity of the families living there. High scoring responses balanced the description of both the home and the people, with a range of details such as the vibrant colours of pottery in a room or the smells emanating from a dish being cooked in the kitchen, alongside succinct descriptions of the attitudes of the people towards the narrator which explained the warmth of the welcome.

Average responses tended to focus on the physical appearance of any people and descriptions of the home in a room by room manner as if giving a guided tour, but not really evoking atmosphere.

Weaker responses either lapsed into narrative, such as visiting grandparents or going to stay with a School friend, or they adopted a very factual style, giving dimensions and locations without considering the welcome, hence missing any atmosphere at all. Some of these seemed rather like lists of facilities as written by someone like an estate agent, without any personal connection.

The time capsule option was rarely attempted. The few that were written usually began with an opening paragraph giving a little context with focus on the anticipation of the onlookers. Then the contents were usually two or three common objects. The final feeling was often one of anti-climax. There was occasional awareness of writing for an audience as in 'Everyone had iphone 5s then, they were the newest thing. If you'd told me in 2013 that iphones would not exist anymore, I would never have believed you.' A few responses developed the idea that it was the narrator's own objects that had been buried, such as photographs or a baseball cap, and hence the reactions were more likely to be associated with specific memories. One or two showed some misunderstanding of the concept of a time capsule, confusing it with a time machine, so that they actually travelled back in time. Such responses drifted too far into narrative as well.

The marks for Style and Accuracy showed considerable differences. Better responses, especially in the first option, chose precise and varied vocabulary as well as particularly ambitious adjectives with well controlled sentence structures. 'Beneath the wrinkled veneer of her skin is an inner strength and vitality, an aura of self-assurance uncommon in a pensioner', for example. Weaker responses used poorly separated sentences, repetitive vocabulary and mixed tenses within a sentence. There seems to be an increase in candidates writing sentences without finite verbs when opting for a descriptive title, as in 'A place where I can relax. The family around the table.' Even in responses with quite engaging content, there were inaccuracies in punctuation or the use of mixed and changing tenses which hindered the fluency.

Ways in which the writing of description can be improved

- Avoid too much narrative preamble to set the scene, and do not let the description turn into a story in order to end it.
- Try to make the description as real as possible; those based on an actual place or person tend to be more effective. Your aim should be for the reader to be able to see and hear what you write.
- It is good practice to write in the present tense, but do not change tense once you have started your writing.
- Write sentences with proper verbs. There is no special sentence structure for description.

Question 4: Narrative Writing

- (a) **Write a story that involves meeting someone from the past.**

OR

- (b) **You are alone in a room when you accidentally stumble and steady yourself against the wall. The wall opens to reveal a passageway. You decide to explore and are entirely unprepared for what happens.**

There were two main approaches to the first narrative option, of either meeting someone from the immediate past, such as an old school friend, or meeting the ghost of someone from the more distant past such as that of a grandparent. Those who opted for the first type of meeting tended to be far more realistic, incorporating different moods and attitudes and occasionally ending with a moral comment about how personalities could change. Many took this title as an opportunity to turn it into a ghost story, meeting someone who had died; such stories often became a summary of the narrator's life since the death, or an explanation about who someone really was. One very good script based the narrative on meeting a grandfather who had died in a war, but the excellent use of realistic detail took it beyond being a ghost story and it was truly atmospheric. There were a few meetings with sports personalities or figures from history, plus one or two that actually embarked on time travel in order to meet people from the past.

The second option led to a large number of bizarre situations in secret passages that led to dangerous places, ancient houses or different worlds. A number of surreal fantasies did mention Alice in Wonderland and Narnia. There were some ingenious transitions from one world to another and back. A number concentrated on description of the passage way, usually cold, damp and dark, which would lead to a cave or into water and be followed by a series of events. The weakest scripts had not considered an appropriate ending and some of these did resort to having the narrator waking up back in their own room.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given when the writing was lively, varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. Maintaining a consistent style was difficult in some weaker responses, especially when verb tenses jumped about. A number of narratives started in the third person and then swapped to the first person, which should be avoided. Errors in sentence control and separation, if persistent, limited even competently told stories to Band 4, as did frequent errors in punctuation, such as capital letters, apostrophes incorrectly used in every plural or the spelling of basic words. When dialogue is used in narratives, it should be punctuated accurately and not become too considerable.

Ways in which narratives can be improved

- Plan the ending before you begin, so that the story has some shape.
- Remember that stories need to be more than a list of events.
- Include realistic details, descriptions and thoughts and feelings of characters in the story.
- Make sure you use varied and interesting vocabulary and a range of sentence structures.
- Originality is important. Try to think of unusual, but credible approaches to your topic.
- Check your writing for errors, especially missing full stops.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/04
Coursework Portfolio

Key messages

In order to aim for high marks in this component, candidates should:

- reflect in their writing their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them;
- demonstrate variety of style, use of language and genre in the three assignments;
- choose assignments that challenge them to write at the highest standard of which they are capable;
- write in fluent and varied sentences separated by full stops;
- proof-read their work carefully, as marks may be deducted for typing errors.

General comments

There was a great increase in candidate entries for this component, particularly for Syllabus 0522. Many Centres successfully took the coursework option for the first time.

The moderating of this component was often a very pleasurable experience, and Centres are thanked for the hard work they undertook to provide the finished work. Coursework is a commitment and it is extremely valuable if it is viewed educationally, with the aim of making all its participants into better writers.

While the choice of tasks, much of the writing and the assessment by Centres were competent, many opportunities to gain higher marks were lost. The most successful Centres demonstrated the following:

Successful Practice:

- There was an understanding that coursework provided an opportunity for candidates to learn to be better writers over a period of time, by expressing their own ideas and experiences of the world about them.
- After initial guidance by teachers as to the nature of tasks, candidates were left to write as individuals and to think with originality for themselves.
- Teachers monitored their efforts, checking for authenticity and offering general suggestions on early drafts, but remembering that their advice should not constitute corrections.
- Candidates were encouraged to proof-read their work, looking particularly for errors of punctuation. Common errors for correction were sentence separation, the use of commas, correct use (if any) of colons and semi colons, and the sequences of tenses.

Less Successful Practice:

- Centres treated coursework as a way to get good marks, rather than as a course of educational value.
- Tasks were not always well chosen. For example, some tasks did not stretch the best candidates sufficiently, and there were some folders that contained work that had been submitted as controlled conditions for other Examining Boards and was not appropriate for this component.
- There was evidence that some teachers had taught candidates what to put into their responses which sometimes contained identical ideas and even in the same order. This was particularly true of Assignment 3.
- Checks on authenticity had not always been carried out, and drafts frequently had no indication of advice as to revising, editing and (in general) correcting. However, some drafts had been corrected in detail by teachers. This is not allowed.

- Some very badly punctuated work was submitted, and the final versions often lacked any annotation of errors by teachers.

Detailed advice concerning coursework and its educational aims and objectives is available in the Syllabus, in all published reports to Centres and in the Coursework Training Manual.

Task setting

The choices of the assignments were generally appropriate. The best Centres gave a certain amount of choice or freedom once the parameters of each task had been set. This was most common in Assignment 2 where, for example, the description of a place might be set, then allowing freedom of choice concerning the nature and detail. Some Centres offered a choice for Assignment 1 between writing in normal prose, the words of a speech or a letter to a specific person. They then gave a list of possible topics, or left the candidates to choose their own. Where a single topic was set, or a very limited choice, there was often similarity of content, or some candidates were faced with a topic with which they found it difficult to engage.

Assignment 3 was a different sort of exercise, and it was perfectly feasible to set the same article across the Centre's entry, though it was common to provide a choice of three. Here it was important that the different articles should present the same degree of opportunity to identify ideas and opinions and that they should be similar in difficulty. Some candidates were disadvantaged by their choice of article. There was still some misunderstanding of what was required by this assignment.

The mark of a good folder was that all three assignments showed the same qualities of writing but that there should be variety of genre and style. This consistency could be taken into consideration when awarding the final mark.

The following lists of tasks were from one Centre that gave a good deal of freedom in the choice of topics:

Candidate 1: The Bass guitar; my visit to Egypt; my response to an article attacking *Facebook*.
Candidate 2: Designer clothes; the opening of a gothic novel; my response to an attack on sport.
Candidate 3: Gambling; *The Window*; my response to the Prince Harry Las Vegas scandal.

Assessment of coursework

Writing

The assessment of the folders was generally good. The most common reason for leniency in the marking was that the responses had too many punctuation and grammar mistakes. This was especially true where there were sentence separation errors. Writing that consisted of simple language and sentence structures was sometimes over-marked. Where the assessment was severe, it was generally because of the quality of the language, or the consistency of the work over the three assignments.

Because of the special circumstances under which coursework takes place, allowing time for drafting and redrafting and with access to spell checks, it was expected that accuracy would be complete at the top of the range. Accordingly, Moderators kept a record of punctuation and grammatical errors as they read the work. Sentence separation was the main area that required further attention, affecting the quality of the sentence structures, since commas rather than connectives were used to join sentences. A common omission in word-processed work was that of the comma to denote a division within a complex sentence. A third error was that of the apostrophe, often omitted or wrongly used. Fourthly, semi colons were sometimes used in the middle of sentences where there should have been a comma. There was overuse of the semi colon in some responses, and there was confusion between colons and semi colons. Finally, a very common error was the lack of control of tenses, particularly in Assignment 2. Good work was often made less successful by moving from present to past tense several times within a description or narrative.

Apart from the lack of error, there were two features of the very best work. One was an assured use of a wide range of vocabulary, where the choice of the word always defined precise meaning and where appropriate, engaged and entertained the reader. The range was immediately apparent and would be different in say, informative, expressive and argumentative writing. The other feature was the use of fluent, well-constructed sentences that used connectives to show the relationship of one idea or argument to another.

Less good responses used relatively simple vocabulary and the sentence structures were repetitive and did not create any effect for the reader. The least good responses consisted of a limited vocabulary, with sentences that were often single clauses or very simply joined together.

Assessment of reading

The marking of reading was generally accurate, with most of the marks awarded between 5 and 9, broadly equivalent to those awarded in Paper 3, **Question 1**. Where there was leniency, it was because the task had not addressed the mark scheme properly or because the choice of article needed to be more appropriate for the award of the highest marks. Occasionally, although a response engaged with ideas and opinions in the article, the quality of the counter-arguments or development was too simple for a mark of 6 and above and was more appropriate at 5.

Use of the Reading Mark Scheme

The Band descriptions for reading were found in the syllabus *Appendix*. This required that the award of 9 and 10 marks was for 'analysing and evaluating several ideas and details from the article and developing lines of thought'. 'Analyse' suggested a detailed interpretation of what the writer says, and 'evaluate' suggested the identification of inconsistencies and bias. In Band 2 the demand was clearly not so great, and in Band 3 most of the response was taken up with summary with simple views. There was a considerable scale of difficulty between Band 3 and Band 1 that suggested that many marks should have been between 6 and 7. Responses at Band 1 often gave an overview of the article as a whole and assimilated their individual comments into a well-structured answer. There was sometimes a tendency to give 9 or 10 marks to responses that did not do this.

Overall, the assessment of the reading and writing together was realistic. Where candidates were not strong performers, many Centres gave few folders a mark in the top mark band and concentrated candidates in Bands 2 and 3, often bunching them at the borderline. It was here that there was some inconsistency and leniency. There was also a reluctance to mark in Band 4, with the result that there was some crowding at the bottom of Band 3.

Administration by Centres

The work of the Moderators was not merely to scrutinise the quality of the work but also to make a number of clerical checks on the marks submitted by Centres.

The first document that was needed was the **Coursework Assessment Summary Form**, or CASF. This was required for all candidates and not just those in the moderation sample. The Moderator noted all the changes that had been made at Internal Moderation and also used the document to check the range of marks awarded for reading. The document also gave some guidance as to the marking of different teachers in the Centre.

The Moderator then checked the marks on the CASF against those on the copy of the **MS1** (or electronic equivalent). Where there was a discrepancy, this was recorded on a Coursework Amendment Form that was then sent to the Centre. A check was also carried out against the marks on the folders in the sample. There were frequent discrepancies that were discovered during these checks.

Copies of all articles used for Assignment 3 were required by the Moderator who had to read them before addressing the work. There were several cases where these were not supplied.

An early draft of **one** piece of work was also required. This was usually included and in some cases there was a draft for all three pieces of work. The Moderator needed the draft to make two separate checks, although this did not normally affect the marking of the folder.

Finally the regulations stipulated that each folder in the sample should be securely fixed and that it should not be in plastic folders, which made the handling job that the Moderator had to undertake more complicated. It was not always safe to use paperclips, and a few folders were not fixed together at all. The most convenient method was by stapling.

Annotation

Many Centres were meticulous in their recording of errors on the final versions of the assignments and it was clear that the marks awarded reflected this. These annotations and the comments at the ends of assignments gave the Moderator confidence in the work of the Centres.

Good practice was to comment on content and structure, and style and accuracy, and to balance strengths and weaknesses for the benefit of each candidate's progress as a writer.

In some cases, there were few or no indications that errors had been taken into consideration in awarding the marks, or had even been noted and accepted as errors. Some work bore no marks or comments at all.

Drafts

The best of the drafts included teachers' comments and perhaps candidates' comments as a dialogue. This constituted excellent practice. Many drafts were used to give guidance in order to improve work. A common suggestion by teachers was to lengthen an undeveloped response. Some sections of a story were perhaps too long or a climax was not sufficiently sustained. It was appropriate that a teacher should draw attention to such matters and leave it to the candidate to improve a piece of work. This constituted revising. An indication that a piece of work could be improved by changing the wording was an example of editing.

Most drafts however, were restricted to comments about corrections. Teachers were allowed to make general comments such as 'Please read through and add full stops between sentences', or 'check that you have used the present tense throughout this description'. They were definitely not allowed to make specific corrections on drafts, which could then be copied by candidates. It was expected that the responsibility for the correction of drafts lay with the candidates themselves.

Authenticity

Centres will be only too aware that coursework is always vulnerable because candidates may copy material from a source that is not their own. In order to counteract this, it is important to plan the work so that it is monitored and the possibility of copying from elsewhere is diminished. The easiest way to do this is to set tasks that reflect the candidates' personal experiences and thoughts and to create the first draft in class. This can be checked. The next stage, presumably the second draft, can be done at home and can then be checked against the first draft. The final draft can be done in class, (or the second and third stages can be reversed). In any case, monitoring should ensure that teachers feel confident that the work is original.

Assignment 1

In response to this assignment, the best writing always reflected the personal views of the writers. The more conviction with which the work was written, the more effective it was. It was, of course, perfectly appropriate to write in the first person, and this made a good deal of difference to the tone.

The practice of making this assignment an academic essay has become less significant. There were still some essays about abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment and most of these were very similar in nature and lacked any personal conviction or enthusiasm.

While some of the writing was impersonal, some of it had either a definite audience or an assumed one. It was useful to write in the form of a letter, an article or a speech, provided that the same genre was not used for Assignment 3.

Many Centres borrowed a task from another Examining Board and wrote pieces under the umbrella title of *Do not get me started...* Some of the results were very good and the writing was entertaining. Conversely, it was often easy to fall into the trap of writing a 'rant'. The danger was that there was an ineffective structure and that the language became limited in its informality. In the attempt to make points, the arguments were frequently not expressed firmly enough.

Another general title that needed a good deal of care was '*A Day in the Life of...*'. One Centre took an interesting set of professions, such as a forensic biologist, a lawyer and a nuclear submarine officer, did the necessary research and finally stepped into these persons' shoes. The result was excellent and the task successfully stretched the ablest writers. However, the original published articles for this genre are not

always well written and contain a good deal of unimportant detail, such as what the person has for breakfast. As a result, some of these articles were weak in content.

Some Centres were still writing about the programme *Supersize me*, usually as a review. What the candidates wrote was repetitive and not very original, and it is suggested that this topic should be no longer used.

There were also some leaflets. The danger here was a lack of opportunity to demonstrate extended writing. However, some were more extended and original, and the most successful were leaflets to guide candidates who were new to the School.

Most of the words of speeches were good, properly structured and developed, and contained interesting arguments on topics of importance to the writers. These were rarely 'rants', but attempted to persuade the supposed audience, while also informing them.

The following list of examples shows the sort of variety that teachers encouraged for this assignment:

Young people are indulged and pampered
Urban myths
The scary world of surgery
Healthy eating at School
Women and the armed forces in my country
Should you have robots as teachers?
Beauty pageants
A letter addressing gun crime
The Paralympic Games
Media violence

Assignment 2

This was an opportunity for writers to show how they could use a range of descriptive and creative language. The important thing was that the content should sound realistic, so that wildly violent or ghostly stories were unsuitable. The language should be appropriate for conveying ideas and images with accuracy.

Many candidates wrote descriptions of places that were important to them or which had stayed in their memory. These were frequently very good and were judged on how well they conveyed the atmosphere and details of the place. There were many descriptions of visits to other countries, which were again successful because they showed ability to record experiences and images that were different from those at home.

Another main category was the autobiographical fragment. These topics were frequently moving and realistic because they had really happened and were important to the writer. They often involved visits to elderly relatives or experiences with friends, perhaps tackling some new and testing challenge. Some candidates showed an ability to build a relatively small moment in time into a convincing and well-developed piece of writing.

The stories were more effective if they were based on something that the writers could understand within their experience. They were also better if they followed the sort of structure one expects from a narrative. Climaxes needed to be sustained, and an unexpected ending was always welcome to the reader. Many Centres had taken the advice to study a short story or two before setting the genre as an assignment.

The following is a list of successful titles used in folders:

My dramatic day
Stay strong
What shall I do?
A bright beginning
Red Moon
Grandma's bedroom
The sombre wood
The girl who seemed ordinary
The magic door
Diary of a slave

Assignment 3

Many of the articles chosen for this assignment were appropriate. However there were some exceptions as follows:

- Newspaper stories that just recorded events and did not discuss them
- Internet articles written in short, unstructured paragraphs, with much repetition and little argument
- Multiple articles, usually in twos or threes, that gave candidates too much to deal with
- Overlong articles of more than two sides of A4
- Whole literary texts (for example *Romeo and Juliet*)
- Advertisements where there was virtually no reading material

Most articles were controversial, contained at least some identifiable arguments, ideas and opinions, and were about themes that candidates could easily relate to.

Tasks were generally in the form of a responsive article, a letter or a speech. It was important that candidates confined themselves to their views on the arguments, ideas and opinions. The practice of writing critically about the language or the layout of the text had no place in this assignment and did not relate to the mark scheme. Candidates who took this path in their responses were generally over-marked by one or two marks for reading.

The best responses showed an understanding of the text as a whole and their responses were properly structured. Weaker responses consisted of a series of paragraphs in no particular order, providing several disconnected ideas.

Once the article for this assignment had been successfully chosen, it was relatively easy for all response to be marked in the top three bands for reading. The writing was good, sometimes the best on the folder, because candidates had the article to provide them with a structure, and frequently the words came to them more naturally and fluently.

The following list will give some guidance as to the type of topic that is suitable for this assignment:

*An article attacking private Schools
Reality TV
The English do not eat horsemeat
Animal fur
Too young to be a criminal
Boredom does not exist
The dangers of technology
Computers dehumanise children
An attack on Twitter
Eroded childhoods*

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/05

Speaking and Listening

Key messages

- Thorough preparation for the examination is essential. Success in Part 1 is clearly linked to researching the chosen topic, planning for a confident and assured delivery, practising the delivery, but also preparing for a strong contribution in Part 2.
Candidates should not rely too heavily on their scripts or prompt material, as awareness of audience and an attempt to engage the audience is a key skill being tested in Part 1. Reading entirely from a script is not permitted. Centres should discourage this at the planning stage and insist on candidates using a variety of prompt material instead. The syllabus suggests a postcard size prompt card, but other aids could be used, for example, brief PowerPoint slides, flip charts, or smart phone applications.
- Generally, candidates should try to make their Part 1 presentations more lively, by perhaps incorporating more creative presentational styles, but certainly by relying less on reciting factual information. There is scope for further creativity in Part 1 – e.g. taking up a ‘voice’ or presenting a dramatic monologue. This session saw several Centres presenting empathic work using literary texts and this often leads to better quality work.
- In Part 2, Moderators would like to hear stronger evidence that candidates are aware **of their role** in the discussion. The candidate's role should not be that of a passive interviewee, but should be one which is more proactive and seeks to engage with the listener in a collaborative manner.
- It is permissible for teachers to work with their candidates (once the candidate has decided upon a topic), to help enhance the content and to advise upon the approach taken for the delivery. **Differentiation by task setting** is therefore encouraged for this component. A more capable candidate is likely to attempt a more ambitious presentation and to engage with more sophisticated content - and such a candidate should be encouraged to do this.
- Please restrict Part 1 to **4 minutes**, and Part 2 to between **6 and 7 minutes** - as specified in the syllabus. It is difficult to justify the awarding of high marks to Part 1s which are short (under 3 minutes) and it is counter-productive to allow Part 2 to run over 7 minutes.
- Please would all Centres **use digital recording equipment** to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or a USB drive. Please use recognised audio file formats that can be played by common computer software (e.g. mp3, wav, wma). There is no need to use the blue 'cassette inserts' – a list of the candidates in the sample, their numbers, and the mark given to each, either on the CD cover (but not on the CD itself please) or on a separate sheet is fine. Please re-name the individual tracks on the CD to the candidate number and name (instead of track 1, track 2, etc.). Please, avoid using analogue recording and tapes/cassettes.

Messages relating to assessment:

- In Part 1, Moderators advise Examiners to be sure that a candidate has met the criteria for Band 1 fully before awarding 9 or 10 marks. If an individual presentation is of the standard, factually-based, reportage style, even if well done, then a low Band 2 mark is likely to be the highest available, and a Band 3 mark perhaps more appropriate.
- Candidates who present very short Part 1s or those which rely heavily on a script are not likely to achieve higher than Band 4, where "delivery is not secure, resulting in some loss of audience interest" is the most likely and appropriate descriptor.
- Extremely short Part 1s (under one minute) are likely to satisfy only the Band 5 criteria: "Content is mostly undeveloped...and the audience is generally lost".
- Examiners are reminded not to award marks for content per se - it is the *development* of the content which is being assessed; in both Parts 1 and 2 of the Test. For example, "What work experience did for me..." could achieve a Band 1, or indeed, a Band 5, depending on how the content has been planned, is introduced, is organised, and then presented and developed.

General comments

The more interesting and successful individual tasks were from candidates who spoke from notes rather than scripts and about a topic about which they felt passionately and which they had researched thoroughly. Some very successful tasks included some kind of visual presentation to the Examiner, such as sharing a Powerpoint slide or some photographs. Other interesting presentations were done in the form of a 'muse' or monologue – sometimes in the form of a conversation with an invisible character. The most successful standard presentations were given by candidates fired by a passion who also utilised a variety of devices to maintain their listener's interest. In all the best examples there was a real sense of engagement with the topic. Where candidates chose well, prepared thoroughly and were fully committed to the task the results were always good, particularly where the Centre had correctly understood and disseminated guidance given by CIE and the Examiners had been briefed thoroughly with regard to their vital role in ensuring that candidates are able to give their best.

Conversely, where Centres were ill-prepared for the test and Examiners were not fully aware of their role, the candidates were not as successful. In these Centres, the candidates' preparation of their topics was not always conducive to performing successful tasks, and they were clearly ill-prepared for the discussion part of the examination – and these factors were usually more significant than the choice of topic. Less successful tasks were usually read from scripts and this tended to detract from the overall effect - appearing to be rather lifeless and certainly monotonous. Less successful responses were invariably read from a script about a subject they had not researched sufficiently or about which they did not feel particularly strongly.

Centres are reminded that for Part 1, the candidates should be involved in the choice of topics. While Moderators understand that at large Centres, it is easier to manage the tests if common themes are followed, the same theme for all candidates is not recommended. It may well be that in larger Centres it makes sense for each classroom teacher to propose a range of themes so that candidates can work in groups and practise presenting their topics to each other. Peer assessment and formative feedback is certainly encouraged. However, such generic themes must allow for individual expression.

Please note that this is a formal examination and as such an appropriate examination room is required. Candidates should not be examined in the presence of other candidates. A quiet, secure room is crucial for the success of the examination. Some Centres are reminded that the test should be conducted by a single Examiner. While a second person may be present, the test itself must be conducted entirely by one Examiner - i.e. it is not permissible for two people to be asking questions or discussing matters with the candidate. The test should not be repeated for the same candidate.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1 - The Individual Task

The dominant task in Part 1 remains the informative presentation. Candidates select a topic and provide historical and/or contemporary information about it. A small number of these presentations remain purely factual, but many engage with an issue or controversy relating to the topic. Where the chosen topic relates directly to the candidate's personal situation or their country or location, there is usually scope for more engaging content.

Personal experiences and interests are a common focus - for example, recent trips abroad, reading, sport, music. These kinds of presentations vary in their degree of success, with less successful tasks simply describing likes, dislikes and experiences without further exploration, depth or insight.

Candidates sometimes attempt to use techniques such as addressing the listener and using rhetorical devices, but care needs to be taken so that these approaches are effective and not just a gesture.

Centres and candidates are of course free to focus on topics which lend themselves to standard presentations. However, candidates should be encouraged to select topics with a narrower focus; along with a greater range of presentational styles.

Some examples of successful Part 1 tasks from this session:

- a D day veteran talks about his experiences during the war
- performing a monologue in the role of Medusa

- understanding stereotyping in Spanish culture
- being a fan of an Italian football team but living in a small Midlands town
- a sales pitch for an imaginary product or service
- a message to my future self
- parking tickets
- what makes a good street performer
- why it's important to understand the pros *and* cons of everything
- 'Come dine with me'; who I'd invite and why
- my most life-changing moment so far
- culture shock - on arriving in Britain.

Part 2 - Discussions

It was effective practice that, in many cases, Examiners were very much part of the discussions, entering into the spirit of the occasion, and that the conversations were generally productive extensions of the Individual Tasks. This is clearly a strength of this examination.

It was clear in many cases that candidates had planned for further discussion. The best way to do this is to imagine being the Examiner and to draw up a list of prompts or areas of interest that might be appropriate given the scope of the topic.

However, where this had not occurred, the discussions were lacking development. It is not the responsibility of the Examiner to work hard to sustain discussion - the candidate needs to plan for this and this element of Part 2 has indeed been built into the assessment criteria for both listening and speaking. It is, however, the responsibility of the Examiner to move the discussion along and to ensure that a 6 to 7 minute conversation occurs.

The most effective Examiners clearly took notes as the candidates completed their presentations, and then based the discussions very closely on what the candidates had actually spoken about. This usually led to conversations which arose naturally from the individual task. More work is needed, however, for candidates to take a greater part in developing the discussions. Some candidates, and some Examiners, seemed to be unaware that this is expected. In a number of Centres, there seemed to be an understanding that the candidate would deliver his or her talk and then wait to be formally questioned by the Examiner. This clearly led to a more stilted and less effective discussion. In the stronger Part 2 performances the candidates were encouraged to take control of the discussion and there was a genuine feeling that it was a two-way conversation, based on an equal footing between the candidate and the Examiner.

Examiners should therefore avoid adopting a very formal approach in Part 2. The aim is to be supportive of the candidate; to share an interest in his/her topic, and to share views, ideas and to work with the candidate to develop the conversation. It is important that the spontaneity of discussion is maintained - it is a conversation which is sought and not an interview.

In general however, both candidate and Examiner stayed on task, though there were a few instances of Examiners using the allotted time to involve candidates in discussions about other matters - for example, their future plans - when this was not part of the candidate's talk. Such transgressions are likely to result in lower marks as the assessment criteria assume that content in Part 2 relates directly to content in Part 1.

The least successful discussions were those where the Examiner talked too much - sometimes jumping in too quickly and interrupting the candidate. Some Examiners should be careful not to answer their own questions. A few Examiners asked too many closed questions, which elicited weaker responses and which did not encourage development. Open questions are much more effective.

Concluding comments

Centres who have responded well to what might be a new examination for them should be commended. It is appreciated that a different culture is required for what is a new assessment methodology and that this takes time to establish itself. There were many cases where Moderators reported refreshing and lively work, where it was clear that the candidates had enjoyed taking control of their own learning and had responded well to being allowed to be active in the skills of research, oral presentation and subsequent discussion.

It is clear that some Centres need to offer further training to their teachers/examiners to conduct the test according to the syllabus requirements. Where Centres do not comply with the rubrics, the effect is usually felt by the candidates, whose achievement and performance is clearly affected.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/06
Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

Key messages

- Please take care with **administration**. Many errors were found in the addition of marks on the Summary Forms, the addition of marks on the Record Cards and in the transcription of marks to the Mark Sheets. Although Moderators do make checks, it is the responsibility of the Centre to ensure the accuracy of marks. It is important that large Centres in particular should appoint a checker to ensure that marks have been entered correctly on all documents.
- The **Candidate Record Card** is a crucial document for the Moderator. Please remember to send these in with the sample and other documents – only the Record Cards for the candidates in the sample are needed – not for the whole cohort. The Record Cards are the only evidence the Moderator has of the tasks undertaken by the Centre. It is helpful if full details relating to each activity are given. For example, descriptions such as ‘Role-play’ or ‘Presentation on a topic of choice’ are not, on their own, very useful. The Moderator needs to know the specific role-play scenario or the particular topic chosen by the candidate. It is permissible for candidates to fill out these sections themselves, but please check the accuracy and amount of detail given.
- It is important in **the paired activity** that the Moderator is able to distinguish between the two candidates taking part. If it is a girl/boy scenario then this is fine. In other cases, please ask the candidates to identify themselves by announcing their name and number and, in the case of role-play activities, the role that they are playing. Please also consider the suitability of the pairings. It is often unproductive to pair a weak candidate with one who is very able. It is intimidating for the weaker one and does not challenge the more able partner. Ideally candidates of similar abilities should be paired.
- Please remember that this component lends itself to **differentiation by task setting**. It is not necessary to conduct the same activities for every candidate. More able candidates should be guided to engage with more challenging topics and subject matter
- This is a **coursework** component and, as such, carries with it a great deal of flexibility. The three activities can be completed at times which are suitable for the Centre and its candidates. The tasks may be spread out over a two year course and will hopefully be integrated into regular teaching schemes. With this in mind, the number of candidates marked as absent for a particular task is surprising. Centres are encouraged to please try to re-arrange activities where possible, rather than awarding zero to absent candidates.
- Please always keep **the assessment criteria** in mind when task setting. In particular, please remember that Tasks 2 and 3 test listening as well as speaking. Moderators have noted that, in the paired activity, candidates tend to meet more of the higher level assessment criteria in a discursive or role play activity with another candidate. Where the activity does take place with a teacher (and sometimes this is unavoidable) please try to avoid a formal question and answer session.
- Although there is no formal requirement that activities should be of a **minimum length**, please again consider whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met if the activity is very short. Moderators noted some paired activities of just over one minute. It is difficult to see how both candidates can meet higher level criteria, such as ‘responds fully’, ‘develops prompts’ or ‘employs a wide range of language devices’ in that length of time.
- Please would all Centres **use digital recording equipment** to generate audio files, which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or a USB drive. Please use recognised audio file formats that can be played by common computer software (e.g. mp3, wav, wma). It is also very helpful if a separate list of the candidates in the sample – to include name, number and mark - can be provided. It makes moderation very difficult if candidates are recorded on a continuous track, so please use a separate track for each candidate and, ideally, label each with the candidate’s name and number. Please, avoid using analogue recording and tapes/cassettes.

General comments

Centres are reminded that three specific tasks are required: an individual task, a pair-based activity and a group activity. Again, the assessment criteria provide a guide to the skills being tested in each. Please try to facilitate a variety of platforms from which candidates can demonstrate their abilities. There is scope here for Centres to be as creative as they wish, as long as the assessment criteria are addressed. The integration of literature into the activities is encouraged.

Comments on specific tasks

Task 1

This generally took the form on an individual presentation and there was a wide range of topics. Some Centres allowed candidates a completely free rein here, while others opted for a broad framework within which candidates could express a personally held view (for example, the Room 101 scenario or providing an opening line such as 'I couldn't believe what happened when...') Moderators noted that a presentation based on strongly-held opinions usually brings out the best in candidates, many of whom used their persuasive skills to good effect.

Some examples of productive Task 1 activities:

- 'My life outside School'
- I could never be a(job title)
- What I would do with a windfall
- You are doing a walk for charity - who would you support?
- The worst film I've ever seen
- A speech supporting a member of your class for Prime Minister.

Task 2

The pair-based activity needs to have a clearly defined focus and works best where some preparation has been undertaken. Two candidates chatting generally about football rarely works well and often does not address the assessment criteria fully. But it can be a successful topic where candidates have a clear agenda – arguing persuasively for the merits of one footballer over another, or for a change in one of the rules perhaps. Even in a role-play scenario where spontaneity is important, candidates should be encouraged to spend some time thinking about their character.

Some examples of productive Task 2 activities:

- Bollywood vs. Hollywood discussion
- Role playing a hairstylist and a client who is not pleased with his/her new style
- Jeremy Kyle interviews George/Curley/Lennie from 'of Mice and Men'
- Two 'elderly women' discuss the local teenagers
- A friend helps another to solve a problem
- Discussion on alternative endings to a novel or play.

Task 3

Most Centres conduct this activity as a discussion group, but role-plays can also be successful here, for example a planning committee with characters for and against the 'plan', or an interview panel deciding on the best candidate. As long as the group work assessment criteria can be met, these are fine. It is always worth considering the dynamic of each group to ensure that all candidates have the chance to demonstrate their speaking and listening skills to good effect – one weak candidate in a group of much stronger ones is very likely to be too intimidated to perform well. The appointment of a group leader usually facilitates a more successful discussion.

Some examples of productive Task 3 activities:

- Debating the best role model for the School
- The trial of Lennie Small
- Balloon debate – who should have the last place on the first commercial space flight
- Controversial issues – smoking ban, summer riots, increasing the speed limit and many more
- Role-play scenario – characters trapped in a lift
- Plan and perform an extra scene to a play.