

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/11

Reading Passage (Core)

Key Messages

- It is important for candidates to take careful note of questions that contain the instruction to ‘use own words’ and attempt to develop strategies for processing their answers and not rely on wholesale lifting as this does not provide evidence that the passage has been understood.
- Candidates are encouraged to attempt to show awareness of the designated genre for **Question 2** (in this case, a journal entry) and to use some features of it when writing their answers.
- Candidates should plan their response to **Question 2** both carefully and appropriately and focus closely on the specific requirements of the question. Lengthy responses containing unnecessary, extraneous material are likely to contain unforced errors of expression and the time constraints of the examination militate against there being sufficient opportunity for proof-reading such responses.

General Comments

In general, candidates were well prepared for this paper and responded with interest to the subject matter of the reading passage. Overall, the sub-questions that constituted **Question 1** discriminated successfully with those who had focused on close reading of both the passage and the questions scoring high marks. The key discriminator, as in previous series, was whether the candidate had engaged not only with the wording of the question, but also with the connotations of key words within the passage (especially in **Questions 1(b)** and **1(h)**). Centres are encouraged to emphasise to candidates the importance of thinking carefully about a writer’s choice of words and of how to explain their appreciation of specific vocabulary as used in the context of the passage. As has been mentioned in previous reports, credit cannot be given to answers which explain the meaning of a particular word by using the root word as a different part of speech (e.g. ‘realisation’ and ‘something that was realised’).

There were a large number of enthusiastic responses to **Question 2** and candidates would appear to have welcomed the opportunity to write the reflections of a participant in a mysterious and dramatic incident. As mentioned in the Key Messages section of this report, it is important to plan and organise responses to this question carefully before starting to write, as many responses could have been improved with more careful concentration on the precise focus of the question and also with closer attention to providing explanations which reflected the setting and circumstances of the original. There were an encouraging number of candidates who did this very well, showing considerable insight into the motivations of both characters.

The great majority of candidates completed the paper confidently within the time allowed - in general, those who did not do so had become so involved in their responses to **Question 2** that they were attempting to write over-complex narratives. It was encouraging to note that there were noticeably fewer no-response answers than in previous series.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) **Give two features of the landscape that allow the narrator to hide from the people who are chasing him (paragraph one ‘I did not follow the road..’)** (2)

This proved to be an accessible question, with the majority of candidates securing at least one mark. A good number of candidates identified both features – the ferns and the banks. Less successful candidates tended to be those who copied large amounts of the original text without

careful selection of relevant points. Candidates were generally aware that two reasons had to be offered in response to the question, indicating that they understood that a two-mark question requires two discrete points for the answer. This trend appeared throughout the paper.

(b) **Re-read paragraphs two and three ('After that I...watching me.'**)

The writer uses the following phrases to create an impression of the house and its surroundings.

Choose three of the phrases and then explain how each of them helps you to understand what the atmosphere is like. (6)

As with **Question 1(h)**, which also tested language usage, this was a challenging question with only a small number of responses gaining more than 3 of the 6 marks available. The most successful responses kept firmly in mind how the chosen phrases conveyed an idea of what the area was like. Without this focus, less successful responses merely paraphrased or reworded the selected phrases. Some candidates misled themselves by attempting to read into the phrases the use of metaphor which was not a feature of this question. The four phrases, although ostensibly all of a similar theme, provided ample opportunity for candidates to demonstrate appreciation of how the area may have seemed to the narrator. It is important that candidates attempt to deal with the phrases individually and not merely repeat generalised comments for each or some of them, or even use the wording of one phrase to explain the effect of another.

(i) **'...a plantation of wind-blown fir trees...' (line 8)**

The more successful responses commented on the significance of the wind and what it implied about the weather, others identified that it was a harsh or bleak environment.

(ii) **'...the chimneys of a house smoking ...' (lines 8-9)**

There were successful explanations of this phrase identifying that this was a sign of somewhere that is inhabited, somewhere warm (or that it showed that it was cold outside) and that it represented a sign of hope or shelter.

(iv) **'...the lawn was a very rough place, cut by hand instead of a mower..' (line 12)**

Many responses showed understanding of the use of the word 'rough' to explore the idea that it was untidy and/or uncared for. Others commented on the use of traditional or typically rural methods.

(iv) **'...beds of scrubby rhododendron bushes.' (lines 13)**

Many found difficulty in explaining the connotations of this phrase. The more successful tended to focus on the use and implications of the word 'scrubby' and the suggestion that plants did not grow well there.

(c) **Which one word used to describe the old man has a similar meaning to 'helpful' (paragraph five, line 23)?** (1)

The great majority of candidates correctly identified the word as 'kindly'. The candidates who did not gain a mark tended to illustrate the need for careful reading of the question, some of them giving more than one word as an answer, some suggesting 'good-natured' which is in line 24.

(d) **Using your own words, explain why the narrator finds it difficult to say what he wants to the old man (paragraph 6).** (3)

This question proved quite challenging with many candidates getting one or two marks, but relatively few getting all three. The most successful answers were well focused on the need to provide three clear points. The less successful responses tended to be somewhat wordy and repetitive with some loss of focus. That said, the vast majority of candidates showed a good understanding of the situation. It is also worth noting the point made below about **Question 1(g)**.

- (e) **What does the word ‘straggling’ suggest about the way the police were moving across the moor (paragraph eight, line 33)?** (2)

While many candidates correctly responded that this word suggested the police were finding it difficult to move across the moor, very few indeed perceived the sense of the line of policemen being spread out.

- (f) **What reason does the old man give for not wanting the police coming to enter his house (paragraph ten, ‘A fugitive from...’)?** (1)

A large proportion of the candidates correctly identified that he does not want them to interrupt his privacy. Candidates who did not gain the mark tended to speculate as to reasons why that might be rather than to focus the reason given in the passage as noted above.

- (g) **Using your own words, explain why the narrator felt ‘puzzled and rather terrified’ by the old man (paragraph twelve, lines 43 – 44).** (2)

Many candidates obtained either one or two marks for this question. The less successful candidates were those who did not appreciate the (admittedly subtle) difference between this question and **Question 1(d)**. In **Question 1(d)** the focus was on the narrator’s difficulty in expressing himself, but in this question it was the narrator’s perception of the old man’s reactions that was important in obtaining the marks. A successful answer could be constructed by commenting on the old man’s over-readiness in helping and how that suggested that he was prepared for the narrator’s arrival. Such an answer does not overlap with the detail required by **Question 1(d)**.

- (h) **Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words in italics in the following phrases:** (6)

As in previous series, this proved to be a challenging question with the majority of candidates attempting to explain the vocabulary by providing single word synonyms. This is an acceptable ploy, but candidates should be aware that sometimes single word synonyms might not explain the target word fully and that an explanation which entails a description of the phrase might be more effective in conveying the writer’s intended meaning. Again, candidates should be encouraged to look for contextual clues in the passage to help them explain what is meant. Candidates should be wary of merely paraphrasing all or part of the words being explained. It is also important to keep in mind when answering this question that each of the two words italicised should be explained independently.

- (i) **‘keen and knowledgeable’ (line 29)**

Many candidates explained ‘knowledgeable’ successfully, rather fewer found acceptable synonyms or alternatives to ‘keen’ – successful attempts being: ‘alert’ or ‘smart’.

- (ii) **‘patiently scrutinized’ (line 34 - 35)**

These two words were explained very clearly by a large number of candidates.

- (iii) **‘unexpected sanctuary’ (line 42)**

There were relatively few candidates who scored two marks on this part of the question. Many candidates successfully explained the word ‘unexpected’, but there was much greater difficulty with the word ‘sanctuary’. Many candidates took the meaning to be a place of religious significance and were perhaps unaware of its use to denote a safe hiding place.

- (i) **Re-read lines 8 to 41 (‘From there I saw...high up in a wall.’)**

Write a summary of what the narrator observes about both the outside and the inside of the house.

Write a paragraph of about 50-70 words.

(7)

As in previous papers, this question presented candidates with an opportunity to gain up to 7 marks by simply reading and selecting from a part of the passage, carefully. There was, however, a need to maintain a focus on the building and its contents. The more successful responses did just that. The less successful ones demonstrated some loss of focus in places which arose from either blanket copying or misreading of the passage. There was also a good deal of repetition which narrowed the range of some answers, resulting in fewer marks being gained. One common misconception was that there was something called 'stuck cases' which arose from a misreading of the passage. Another common misinterpretation of the task led to candidates including a great deal of information about the garden of the house. Overall this was a question that produced a good number of candidates who gained 5 or more marks demonstrating a clear understanding of the task.

Centres are reminded that the format of the summary question will change from June 2015 onwards when marks will be awarded for both Reading and Writing. One of the main consequences of this change is that written responses that significantly exceed the required number of words and/or which lift indiscriminately from the original passage, will be penalised.

The relevant points relating to this question are:

The house

- (1) had smoking chimneys
- (2) was an ordinary moorland farm
- (3) had a whitewashed wing (or extension)
- (4) a glass veranda
- (5) a room full of books
- (6) museum cases filled with coins and stone implements
- (7) a knee-hole desk
- (8) a window with a view of the moor
- (9) a small dark room/with tiny windows
- (10) a smell of chemicals
- (11) a study with two doors

Question 2

**Imagine that you are the old man and it is the evening following these events.
Write a journal entry for that day.**

In your journal entry you should write about:

- The sudden appearance of the stranger and your impression of him.
- What happened when the police arrived.
- Your reasons for hiding the stranger.

You should base your ideas on what you have read in the passage, but do not copy from it. Address each of the three bullet points.

Begin your journal entry: 'I feel I should write about what happened today...'

Write between 1 and 1½ sides, allowing for the size of your handwriting.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 10 marks for the quality of your writing. (20)

READING

A good number of responses gave a convincing account of the narrator's appearance and behaviour from the old man's point of view. By and large candidates who achieved this did so by using own words and there was relatively minor lifting of text in a very large number of responses. The most successful responses mainly comprised those attempting own words and more often than not these accounts gave a convincing explanation of the old man's preparedness to help the stranger without explanation, a few developing the idea of that the old man is somewhat sinister and might have a more sinister reason for hiding a fugitive.

Most responses seemed to have understood the passage well and were able to use much of its content as the basis of their answers to the set task. Bullet points 1 and 2 were covered competently by the majority of candidates and the less successful tended to focus more on these at the expense of bullet point 3. That said there were few candidates who did not make some attempt to suggest the old man's reasons.

Centres are advised to emphasise that, from June 2015 of the 50 marks available for the paper, 40 (i.e. 80%) relate specifically to Reading. It is therefore essential that candidates' responses for the Directed Writing task are firmly grounded in the text under analysis. As has been observed in previous series, candidates' treatment of bullet point 3 proved a key discriminator and the most successful responses developed this point in some detail.

WRITING

The great majority of candidates' responses were well written and appropriate. Overall, spelling of everyday words and those in the passage was fairly accurate, and the more successful responses employed a range of sentences with some precise vocabulary. The most noticeable area for improvement, however, is with sentence punctuation as many responses used commas for full stops throughout. Such was the frequency of 'comma splicing' that many potentially Band 2 responses were finally placed in Band 3 because of it. There were also some accounts which failed to sustain the use of the past tense, and a few which wrote the account in the third person.

The more successful responses employed a journal format confidently to convey the old man's point of view convincingly and to provide a clear, explanatory narrative. One particularly common error was the use of the word 'desesperate' (sometimes 'desesperated') which one assumes may be a mistranslation. The majority of responses achieved Band 3 or above. In general, paragraphs were used confidently, particularly where the three bullet points were used as a structural guide. The breadth of vocabulary employed was, at times, quite sophisticated although it was not always correctly spelt. Overall, it would seem that the journal format was sufficiently accessible to allow candidates at all levels to write at length and with interest. It should be noted that while it is very important that candidates write as legibly as possible, those who use upper case entirely, are not able to demonstrate the correct use of capitals and this may affect the assessment of their writing skills.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/12
Reading Passage (Core)

Key Messages

- It is important for candidates to take careful note of questions that contain the instruction to ‘use own words’ and attempt to develop strategies for processing their answers, not relying on wholesale lifting, as this does not provide evidence that the passage has been understood.
- Candidates are encouraged to attempt to show awareness of the designated genre for **Question 2** (in this case, a newspaper report) and to use some features of it when writing their answers.
- Candidates should plan their response to **Question 2** both carefully and appropriately and focus closely on the specific requirements of the question. Lengthy responses containing unnecessary, extraneous material are likely to contain unforced errors of expression and the time constraints of the examination militate against there being sufficient opportunity for proof-reading such responses.

General Comments

In general, candidates were well prepared for this paper and responded with interest to the subject matter of the reading passage. Overall, the sub-questions that constituted **Question 1** discriminated successfully, with those who had focused on close reading of both the passage and the questions scoring high marks. The key discriminator, as in previous series, was whether the candidate had engaged not only with the wording of the question, but also with the connotations of key words within the passage (especially in **Questions 1(f)** and **1(g)**). Centres are encouraged to emphasise to candidates the importance of thinking carefully about a writer’s choice of words and of how to explain their appreciation of specific vocabulary as used in the context of the passage. As has been mentioned in previous reports, credit cannot be given to answers which explain the meaning of a particular word by using the root word as a different part of speech (e.g. ‘realisation’ and ‘something that was realised’).

There were a large number of enthusiastic responses to **Question 2** and candidates would appear to have welcomed the opportunity to write a continuation of an episode that was shrouded in mystery. As mentioned in the Key Messages section of this report, it is important to plan and organise responses to this question carefully before starting to write, as many continuations of the story could have been improved with more careful concentration on the precise focus of the question and also with closer attention to providing explanations which reflected the setting and circumstances of the original. A small number of candidates did this very well, effectively building up a sense of fear and suspense only to produce a carefully contrived anti-climax in which the mysterious follower turned out to be a younger sibling of the narrator playing a practical joke; less successful responses were those that finished with a similar conclusion but lacked the atmospheric build-up as well as the sense of a contrived use of bathos.

The great majority of candidates completed the paper confidently within the time allowed - in general, those who did not do so had become so involved in their responses to **Question 2** that they were attempting to write over-complex narratives. It was encouraging to note that there were noticeably fewer no-response answers than in previous series.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) **Give two details from paragraph three ('I was tormented...') that suggest the writer is being followed.** (2)

This proved to be an accessible question, with the majority of candidates securing at least one mark. The most frequent combination of correct responses comprised the 'faint rustling sound' and the 'echo of footsteps' with fewer candidates mentioning the equally correct point that the sound stopped 'whenever the narrator stopped'. Some responses selected a quotation and then explained why this suggested that the narrator was being followed. Although this question did not necessarily call for such a detailed approach, candidates who adopted this strategy gained full marks. Incorrect responses tended to focus on the narrator's feelings (e.g. "he was tormented"). Candidates were generally aware that two reasons had to be offered in response to the question, indicating that they understood that a two-mark question requires two discrete points for the answer. This trend appeared throughout the paper.

- (b) **Give one word used in the passage which suggests that the narrator is feeling distressed (paragraph three, line 11).** (1)

This question was generally answered successfully although a significant few thought the required word was 'imagination' or, more rarely, 'rustled'. A small number of responses did not observe the instruction to give 'one word' and consequently lost the mark for a vocabulary question where the answer was apparently understood because the word 'tormented' was not specifically indicated.

- (c) (i) **By referring to paragraph eight (A twig snapped...), using your own words, explain:**

- (i) **how the narrator reacts to the sound of the twig snapping, and why** (2)

Generally, candidates responded purposefully to this question by selecting and rephrasing appropriate information and most gained at least mark by explaining how the narrator reacted ('turned' or 'looked into the trees'). Fewer referred to the equally correct point that he 'looks to see what is making the sound' as the preferred reason for this reaction, and many also correctly identified the narrator's feeling of fear. The key point in this question was that an explanation of how the narrator reacts required a physical focus and therefore the fact that the trees were described as 'sinister' was not relevant. The 'stopping' and 'turning' was stated in the passage and the 'looking' was implied by the narrator's 'facing' the trees and by the following line that he could 'see nothing or 'too much''. Candidates should be encouraged not only to unravel the question but also to read around the key sentence to establish both explicit and implicit relevant factors.

- (ii) **what he does next** (1)

As with **Question 1 (c)(i)**, when answering this question, it was important for candidates to focus on the narrator's motive(s) for his actions. The possible correct answers were that the narrator turned west/towards the beach/sea/across the headland/continues in the direction that he was going. The requirement across the two parts of this question to identify the specific order in the chain of events proved to be quite challenging with a significant number offering information relating to **Question 1 (c)(i)**; for example, the narrator 'looks into the trees'; 'looks to see what is making the sound'. Relatively few gave precise details about the direction the narrator headed in, with 'turns west' as the preferred response from those who did.

- (d) **Why does the narrator find it difficult to speak at first, and what is his voice like when he does speak (paragraph nine, 'My heart beat...')?** (2)

This question was answered correctly by a large number of candidates with most opting to refer firstly to the physical reason as to why the narrator found it difficult to speak and then describing what his voice sounded like. This question did not require the use of 'own words' and so a selective lift of the relevant words in the passage was sufficient to gain the two marks available; those who attempted to find synonyms for 'dry' and for 'croak' ran the risk of losing the marks available if the synonyms chosen were insufficiently precise. Less successful responses tended to focus on the fact that the narrator was frightened, and nothing else, thereby explaining *why his throat was dry* as opposed to why he found it difficult to speak. However, most candidates were able to offer at least one correct detail in response to the question ('*his throat was too dry*').

- (e) By referring closely to paragraph nine ('My heart beat...'), using your own words explain the narrator's concerns about his journey to the beach. (3)

This proved to be a challenging question with very few gaining all three available marks.

The key to answering the question is to be found in the phrase '*concerns about his journey* to the beach'. As with **Questions 1 (c)(i), (c)(ii), and (d)**, the focus of this question had to be clearly identified, and the focus related to the context of the journey as opposed to the feelings of the narrator *per se*. The sequence of the narrator's concerns begins with his fear that his pursuer was close to him and then goes on to describe the difficult journey ahead. Only a small number of responses successfully identified the length of the journey as one of the concerns although many were able to identify the slope covered in vegetation and the dark trees. It should be noted that quite a number of responses did not differentiate clearly between the 'noiseless shadow' and the 'shadowy trees' by mixing the separate factors together. Another common feature of less successful responses was the failure to identify the exact nature of the narrator's concerns in reaching the beach. Although the forest and the slope were frequently cited, relatively few qualified these references appropriately by highlighting the specific quality of each item (the *shadowy* trees and the *bushy* slope) that made it so problematic for the narrator. Indeed in some responses *bushy* had been crossed out. When preparing candidates for this examination in future, Centres are advised to focus on strategies for identifying the level of qualification required in an answer.

- (f) Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words in italics in the following phrases: (6)

As in previous series, this proved to be a challenging series of questions with the majority of candidates attempting to explain the vocabulary by providing single word synonyms. This is an acceptable ploy but candidates should be aware that sometimes single word synonyms might not explain the target word fully and that an explanation which entails a description of the phrase might be more effective in conveying the writer's intended meaning. Again, candidates should be encouraged to look for contextual clues in the passage to help them explain what is meant. Candidates should be wary of merely paraphrasing all or part of the words being explained. For example, the narrator 'realised it was not pleasant' is not an acceptable explanation of 'unpleasant realisation'. It is also important to keep in mind when answering this question that each of the two words italicised should be explained independently.

(i) '*unpleasant realisation*' (line 20)

This was generally answered well with many acceptable explanations of 'unpleasant' and generally accurate interpretations of 'realisation' such as 'came to know', although many attempts to explain 'realisation' were unsuccessful through the use of related words ('realised', 'realising').

(ii) '*hopelessly perplexed*' (line 22)

Explaining the word 'perplexed' proved particularly challenging for many. Some thought it meant *annoyed* as opposed to *confused*, and others, because of attempting to separate the meanings of the two words, wrote that the narrator had 'given up' or 'had no hope'. Such answers illustrate the pitfalls of not considering the two words in the context of the passage. However, the most successful responses were able succinctly to paraphrase the original phrase, for example as 'completely confused', thus showing a clear understanding of both words.

(iii) '*stealthy stalker*' (line 22)

There were relatively few candidates who scored two marks on this part of the question as many attempted explanations were not qualified fully. This was possibly because the term 'stealthy stalker' was seen as tautological and therefore many candidates simply attempted to explain 'stalker'. In less successful responses, the explanation did not quite identify the meaning of the term; for example, it was described as a 'follower' or someone who 'follows quietly' which was outside the context of the passage and such explanations did not convey the deliberate and cunning attempt to track the narrator by remaining hidden in the shadows. The most successful responses were those that identified that the narrator's pursuer was following in a furtive or cunning way.

(g) Re-read lines 1 to 8 ('I walked eagerly...' to '...one formless blackness.') (6)

The writer uses the following phrases to create a sense of unease for what the narrator is experiencing.

Choose three of the phrases and then explain how each one of them helps you to understand this atmosphere. (6)

As with **Question 1(g)**, which also tested language usage, this was a challenging question with only a very small number of responses gaining more than 4 of the 6 marks available. The most successful responses kept firmly in mind the idea of 'a sense of unease' for the narrator and the 'atmosphere' created. Without this focus, less successful responses merely paraphrased or reworded the selected phrases. The four phrases, although ostensibly all of a similar theme, provided ample opportunity for candidates to demonstrate appreciation of effect in terms of atmosphere and unease. It is important that candidates attempt to deal with the phrases individually and not merely repeat generalised comments for each or some of them, or even use the wording of one phrase to explain the effect of another.

(i) 'The blue sky above grew swiftly darker...' (line 3)

Only the most successful responses commented on the change of atmosphere arising from the change in light exacerbated by the speed of the change and on the implications contained in the word 'darker'. A significant number of candidates stated the change was only gradual or slow which indicated that the word 'swiftly' was either ignored or misunderstood.

(ii) 'only a few small stars pierced the gloom ...' (lines 3-4)

Many responses referred to the absence of starlight but few explained the implications of 'pierced' and 'gloom'.

(iii) '...grew black and mysterious.' (line 5)

Although many responses showed understanding of the connotations of blackness comparatively few considered the implications of 'mystery'.

(iv) 'the tree-tops appeared in ghostly silhouette' (lines 6-7)

Many found difficulty in explaining the connotations of 'ghostly silhouette' without merely paraphrasing that the trees were like ghosts, with little further development about unease and a frightening, unreal atmosphere. The most successful, however, developed on the sense of menace that was conveyed and also on the possible skeletal appearance of the trees.

(h) Re-read from "I was tormented ..." to "... headland." (lines 11-38) (7)

Write a summary of what we learn about the follower and its effect upon the narrator in this section of the passage.

Write a paragraph of about 50-70 words

(7)

As in previous papers, this question presented candidates with an opportunity to gain up to 7 marks by simply reading and selecting from a part of the passage, carefully. There was, however, a need to separate the two aspects of the question; namely, what we learn about the follower and what we learn about the narrator. The more successful responses did just that and were able to identify a balance of points between the two, whereas the less successful ones merely wrote about one or the other. There was some loss of focus in places which arose from either blanket copying or misreading of the passage. There was also a good deal of repetition which narrowed the range of some answers, resulting in fewer marks being gained. One common misconception about the 'follower' was that it lacked the courage to attack the narrator whereas, of course, this judgement is pure speculation on the part of the narrator as he struggles to rationalise the reason for being stalked. There were relatively few instances where full marks were awarded for responses to this question.

Centres are reminded that the format of the summary question will change from June 2015 onwards when marks will be awarded for both Reading and Writing. One of the main consequences of this change is that written responses that significantly exceed the required number of words and/or which lift indiscriminately

from the original passage, will be penalised. (*Centres requiring further information about this question should look at the Specimen Paper for 2015 and the Example Candidate Response Booklet which are available on Teacher Support.*)

The relevant points relating to this question are:

The creature:

- (1) a shapeless lump (N.B. Credit attempts to use own words)
- (2) moves stealthily / quietly /stalks the narrator / keeps to the shadows / stays close
- (3) echoes footsteps / stops when narrator stops
- (4) makes a faint rustling sound when moving / stumbles

Effect upon narrator:

- (5) tormented (by the rustling sound)
- (6) feeling of being followed/watched
- (7) perplexed / loses her/his way
- (8) moves carefully / keeps to the open spaces
- (9) increases speed
- (10) stops and starts / stands rigid / keeps turning round / listens carefully
- (11) thinks (s)he is imagining it / nerves are on edge / blood pounds in ears
- (12) the experience makes the narrator more determined to reach the beach / sea

Question 2

Imagine that you are the narrator. On your return home you write an article for a newspaper about what happened on the remote island.

Write an article for the newspaper about your experience.

In your newspaper article you should describe:

- **what happened that night.**
- **your thoughts and feelings at the time**
- **who or what your follower turned out to be, and what happened next**

You should base your ideas on what you have read in the passage, but do not copy from it. Address each of the three bullet points.

Begin your newspaper article: 'When I arrived on the island...'

Write between 1 and 1½ sides, allowing for the size of your handwriting.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 10 marks for the quality of your writing. (20)

READING

A good number of responses attempted to follow the incremental build-up of suspense in the passage. Some did so by using own words; some did so by using intermittent lifting; and some did so by copying larger, selected parts of the passage. The most successful responses mainly comprised those attempting own words and more often than not these accounts ended appropriately with some description of the follower unless there was a contrived cliff-hanger to increase the mystery or suspense. There was much humour/surprise/bathos in stalker revelation such as: puppy dog(s), a lamb, a 'friend' 'prankster, Big Foot, a film crew cameraman, a Ben Gunn-type castaway, a hidden protector, James Bond type secret agents, and so on. There were even Tales of the Unexpected with spirits walking the earth, and Military Manoeuvres. The least successful accounts tended to lack an ending and were frequently over-reliant on the original and signalled this by ending with 'Who's there?'

Most responses seemed to have understood the passage well and were able to use much of its content as the basis of their answers to the set task. Bullet points 1 and 2 were covered competently by the majority of candidates. Bullet point 3 proved more problematic as there were two sub-tasks involved which were not always fulfilled. Although the creature was described, for example, the resolution of the trip to the island was not always made clear. When preparing candidates for this question, Centres are advised to emphasise that, from June 2015 of the 50 marks available for the paper, 40 (i.e. 80%) relate specifically to Reading. It is therefore essential that candidates' responses for the Directed Writing task are firmly grounded in the text under analysis. As has been observed in previous series, candidates' treatment of Bullet Point 3 proved a key discriminator and the most successful responses developed this point in some detail.

WRITING

Apart from those accounts which merely copied from the passage, candidates' responses were generally well written and appropriate. Overall, spelling of everyday words and those in the passage was fairly accurate, and the more successful responses employed a range of sentences with some precise vocabulary. The most noticeable area for improvement, however, is with sentence punctuation as many responses used commas for full stops throughout. Such was the frequency of 'comma splicing' that many potentially Band 2 responses were finally placed in Band 3 because of it. There were also some accounts which failed to sustain the use of the past tense, and a few which wrote the account in the third person.

The more successful responses, however, employed a narrative format confidently although relatively few fulfilled the requirement of creating a newspaper article. The majority of responses achieved Band 3 or above. In general, paragraphs were used confidently, particularly where the three bullet points were used as a structural guide. The breadth of vocabulary employed was, at times, quite sophisticated although it was not always correctly spelt. Overall, it would seem that the narrative format was sufficiently accessible to allow candidates at all levels to write at length and with interest.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/13
Reading Passage (Core)

Key Messages

- It is important for candidates to take careful note of questions that contain the instruction to 'use own words' and attempt to develop strategies for processing their answers and not rely on wholesale lifting as this does not provide evidence that the passage has been understood.
- Candidates are encouraged to attempt to show awareness of the designated genre for **Question 2** (in this case, a radio interview) and to use some features of it when writing their answers.
- Candidates should plan their response to **Question 2** both carefully and appropriately and focus closely on the specific requirements of the question. Lengthy responses containing unnecessary, extraneous material are likely to contain unforced errors of expression and the time constraints of the examination militate against there being sufficient opportunity for proof-reading such responses.

General Comments

In general, candidates were well prepared for this paper and responded with interest to the subject matter of the reading passage. Overall, the sub-questions that constituted **Question 1** discriminated successfully with those who had focused on close reading of both the passage and the questions scoring high marks. The key discriminator, as in previous series, was whether the candidate had engaged not only with the wording of the question, but also with the connotations of key words within the passage (especially in **Questions 1(h)** and **1(i)**). Centres are encouraged to emphasise to candidates the importance of thinking carefully about a writer's choice of words and of how to explain their appreciation of specific vocabulary as used in the context of the passage. As has been mentioned in previous reports, credit cannot be given to answers which explain the meaning of a particular word by using the root word as a different part of speech (e.g. 'realisation' and 'something that was realised').

There were a large number of enthusiastic responses to **Question 2** and candidates would appear to have welcomed the opportunity to write an interview in which the narrator reflected upon being involved in a dangerous adventure. As mentioned in the Key Messages section of this report, it is important to plan and organise responses to this question carefully before starting to write, as many responses could have been improved with more careful concentration on the precise focus of the question and also with closer attention to providing explanations which reflected the setting and circumstances of the original. A small number of candidates did this very well, effectively building up a sense of fear and suspense and a credible resolution in which the narrator escaped from the terrifying creature, some developing inventive means of evading the creature's strong sense of smell. Less successful responses were those that focused too much on repeating detail from the passage at the expense of a resolution or, in a small number of cases, those who relied too much on an extended 'shoot out' to kill the creature.

The great majority of candidates completed the paper confidently within the time allowed - in general, those who did not do so had become so involved in their responses to **Question 2** that they were attempting to write over-complex narratives. It was encouraging to note that there were noticeably fewer no-response answers than in previous series.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) **Give two reactions the narrator has to the sound of the creature following him (paragraph 1, 'I was plodding...').** (2)

This proved to be an accessible question, with the majority of candidates securing at least one mark. The key to a successful answer was to concentrate on physical reactions (e.g. 'skin grows cold') and not on the narrator's emotions. It was quite acceptable for candidates to repeat relevant phrases from the text to gain the marks. Candidates were generally aware that two reactions had to be offered in response to the question, indicating that they understood that a two-mark question requires two discrete points for the answer. This trend appeared throughout the paper.

- (b) **Using your own words, explain what the narrator means by the sentence: 'I knew that these monsters tearing..and fearsome thought.' (lines 8 to 11).** (2)

This question was generally answered successfully and a large majority of candidates obtained one mark by identifying that the narrator was frightened that the creature would attack a human being. Fewer identified the idea that this arose because the narrator recognised the level of violence with which the creatures would fight one another.

- (c) **Give one word from the first line of paragraph three ('I stood...') that suggests the narrator is frightened.** (1)

Generally, the large majority of candidates obtained the mark available for this question by identifying the word 'paralysed'. Those who did not get the mark tended not to have read the question with sufficient care and chose a word from the wrong paragraph and/or line. This is one of the tasks that illustrates well the importance of reading with attention to detail.

- (d) **Why did the narrator hope that the creature was an iguanodon (line 24)?** (1)

Once again, a question on which the large majority of candidates successfully gained the mark available by identifying that iguanodon's are harmless. As with **Question 1(c)**, candidates who were not successful with this question seemed not to have read the question closely and referred to information from another part of the original text.

- (e) **Give two details about the creature that explain why the narrator finds it so terrifying (paragraph three line 27).** (2)

This question was answered effectively by a large number of candidates who gained two of the three possible marks. In fact most candidates gained at least one mark, with a large number referring to the creature's ugly appearance/its frighteningly cry.

The two other potential points were equally well identified: that it is known to be flesh eating and that it is powerful/can run fast. As with other questions: it is important for candidates to read the question carefully and to recognise that it requires two clear points.

- (f) **Why does the creature put its nose close to the ground (paragraph three, 'I stood...')?** (1)

A straightforward question for which many candidates obtained the mark by correctly explaining that the creature is trying to find the narrator's scent.

- (g) **Using your own words, explain why the narrator decides the only way to survive is to run (paragraph 4).** (2)

A large number of candidates gained at least one mark of the two available for this question. One of those marks was for expressing the idea that his gun would not be effective against a creature of this size. The second was that there was nowhere to hide. Candidates were more or less equally divided between those identifying one or other of these and a fair number of candidates identifying both points. The key in the question was in identifying what led to the decision to run, not his assessment of his own running speed.

- (h) Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words in italics in the following phrases: (6)

- (i) '**staggering and fearsome**' (line 11)

This was generally answered well with many acceptable explanations of 'fearsome' and generally accurate interpretations of 'staggering'. The key in this question was to find sufficiently different synonyms for the two words to demonstrate a clear understanding. For example, it is clearer to explain that 'staggering' was being 'shocked' while something 'fearsome' involved being 'frightened'. For those who only gained one mark, it seemed in a number of cases that the distinction between the two words was very subtle and this is where a broad and flexible vocabulary is of great importance.

- (ii) '**imminent and threatening**' (line 15)

Explaining the word 'imminent' proved particularly challenging for many. Some candidates did not really attempt to explain the word and concentrated on 'threatening' which was generally well understood. This does suggest that it is important to consider the two words in the context of the passage.

- (iii) '**exceedingly alert**' (line 23-24)

There were a pleasing number of candidates who gained the two marks by explaining this phrase. Less successful candidates tended not to explain the word 'alert' as successfully as they did 'exceedingly'. As with **Question 1 (h)(ii)** it is generally recommended that candidates try to understand the phrase in its context as part of the process of arriving at an explanation and that it is important to have given an alternative for each of the words that are italicised.

Overall, **Question 1(h)** was a challenging question, but one that was answered effectively with many candidates obtaining three or more marks overall and showing the correct focus on the required words.

- (i) Re-read from: 'I was plodding...' to '...toad-like face.' (Lines 1 to 27).

The writer uses the following phrases to describe the creature and to show why the narrator is scared of it.

Choose three of the phrases and then explain how each one of them helps you to understand these feelings. (6)

As with **Question 1(h)**, which also tested language usage, this was a challenging question with only a very small number of responses gaining more than 4 of the 6 marks available. The most successful responses kept firmly in mind the idea of the sense of unease and fear felt by the narrator and how this is related to aspects of the creature that are heard as it approaches or observed when it appears. Without this focus, less successful responses merely paraphrased or reworded the selected phrases. The four phrases, although the first pair and the second pair seemed quite similar in theme, provided ample opportunity for candidates to demonstrate appreciation of effect of the features on the narrator. It is important that candidates attempt to deal with the phrases individually and not merely repeat generalised comments for each or some of them, or even use the wording of one phrase to explain the effect of another.

- (i) '**a growl, low, deep, and most menacing**' (line 3 - 4)

A significant number of candidates identified that the effect is one of 'threat'. More successful answers tried to find equivalents for the noise – for example, some candidates said that it was 'angry' or even like a dog when it is annoyed by something.

- (ii) '**..that harsh, throaty croaking ...**' (lines 15 - 16)

Many responses referred to the strangeness of the sound; some went further and recognised that it was 'coarse'.

(iii) **'It was of enormous size and power...' (line 22 - 23)**

Many responses showed understanding that this impression is why the narrator knew it would be hard to fight or escape from this creature. Fewer made the observation that the narrator felt small/inferior in relation to the creature which was an effective way of explaining the effect particularly if they were making a focus on the choice of 'enormous' rather than just 'large'.

(iv) **'...a broad, squat, toad like face...' (line 26 - 27)**

Many candidates commented on the ugliness of the creature; some went on to elaborate on that idea by discussing the perceptions associated with toads as creatures and how this creature was like a much larger version.

(j) **Re-read paragraph three ('I stood...' to '... the path I had taken.')**

Write a summary of the appearance and behaviour of the creature.

Write a paragraph of about 50-70 words.

(7)

As in previous papers, this question presented candidates with an opportunity to gain up to 7 marks by simply reading and selecting from a part of the passage, carefully. There was, however, a need to identify points under both aspects of the question; namely, what we learn about the appearance and what we learn about the behaviour of the creature. The more successful responses did just that and were able to identify a balance of points between the two, whereas the less successful ones merely wrote about one or the other. There was some loss of focus in places which arose from either blanket copying or misreading of the passage. There was also a good deal of repetition which narrowed the range of some answers, resulting in fewer marks being gained. Overall, candidates responded well to this question with very few getting fewer than 4 marks.

Centres are reminded that the format of the summary question will change from June 2015 onwards when marks will be awarded for both Reading and Writing. One of the main consequences of this change is that written responses that significantly exceed the required number of words and/or which lift indiscriminately from the original passage, will be penalised.

The relevant points relating to this question are that the creature:

- (1) hops (like a kangaroo).
- (2) has powerful hind legs.
- (3) stands upright.
- (4) is large and powerful.
- (5) has a broad, squat, toad-like face.
- (6) drops onto all fours when it runs.
- (7) has ferocious/frightening cry.
- (8) uses its nose to follow its victim.
- (9) moves quickly.
- (10) is flesh eating.

Question 2

Imagine that you are the narrator. On your return home you are interviewed on the radio about your experiences in the jungle.

Write the interview between the interviewer and the narrator.

In your interview you should describe:

- **How you first became aware of the creature.**
- **your thoughts and feelings during the chase.**
- **How you escaped from the creature.**

You should base your ideas on what you have read in the passage, but do not copy from it. Address each of the three bullet points.

Begin the interview:

Interviewer: 'So, perhaps you could tell us a little about your reasons for visiting such a dangerous place.'

Write between 1 and 1½ sides, allowing for the size of your handwriting.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 10 marks for the quality of your writing. (20)

READING

A good number of responses attempted to follow the incremental build-up of suspense in the passage. Some did so by using own words; some did so by using intermittent lifting; and some did so by copying larger, selected parts of the passage. The most successful responses were mainly those attempting to use their own words and, more often than not, these accounts ended appropriately with the narrator escaping and frequently meeting up again with fellow explorers. They also made good use of the opening question to set the scene and frequently made a perfectly acceptable interview by turning the three bullet points into three further questions. The least successful accounts tended to be those that did not go further than the events described in the passage, that lacked an ending and were frequently over-reliant on the original.

Most responses seemed to have understood the passage well and were able to use much of its content as the basis of their answers to the set task. Bullet points 1 and 2 were covered competently by the majority of candidates. Centres are advised to emphasise that, from June 2015 of the 50 marks available for the paper, 40 (i.e. 80%) relate specifically to Reading. It is therefore essential that candidates' responses for the Directed Writing task are firmly grounded in the text under analysis. As has been observed in previous series, candidates' treatment of bullet point 3 proved a key discriminator and the most successful responses developed this point in some detail.

WRITING

Apart from those accounts which merely copied from the passage, candidates' responses were generally well written and appropriate. Overall, spelling of everyday words and those in the passage was fairly accurate, and the more successful responses employed a range of sentences with some precise vocabulary. The most noticeable area for improvement, however, is with sentence punctuation as many responses used commas for full stops throughout. Such was the frequency of 'comma splicing' that a number of potentially Band 2 responses were finally placed in Band 3 because of it. There were also some accounts which failed to sustain the use of the past tense. It should also be noted that candidates who write in upper case entirely, are not able to demonstrate the correct use of capitals and this may affect the assessment of their writing skills.

The more successful responses, however, employed the interview format confidently, some going beyond the three basic questions to produce some effective interaction between the interviewer and the narrator. The majority of responses achieved Band 3 or above. In general, paragraphs were used confidently, the breadth of vocabulary employed was, at times, quite sophisticated although it was not always correctly spelt. Overall, it would seem that the radio interview format was sufficiently accessible to allow candidates at all levels to write at length and with interest.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/21
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for **Reading (40 marks)**. In addition, there were up to **10 marks** available for **Writing**: 5 marks in **Question 1** and 5 marks in **Question 3**. Candidates are advised that in order to aim for high marks in this component they should:

- read the passages very carefully – taking note of the information at the top of each passage
- read the questions carefully
- spend time planning responses to address the specific focus of each task
- give attention to all sections of each question
- use their own words and not lift whole phrases or sentences from the passages
- select the material that is appropriate for the response to the question
- only make a point once in a response to a question
- plan the structure and sequence of each response
- adopt a suitable voice and register for the task, different for each question

General Comments

Candidates' responses to this paper indicated familiarity with the rubric and general demands of each task, along with some awareness of the need to use material from the passages to answer the questions. Responses suggested that for the most part, candidates had noted the instructions and guidance offered in the questions. For example, there was evidence of candidates using the bullets in **Question 1** as a framework for their answer, focus on the correct paragraphs for **Question 2** and fewer examples of copying in **Question 3**.

Responses to the tasks suggested that candidates had found both passages equally accessible and had finished within the two hours. Instances where candidates had missed a question were rare across the cohort as a whole. Handwriting was largely of a good standard. Candidates are reminded that clear crossing out of notes and drafts is helpful.

There were few significant misunderstandings of the content of the passages, although at times details had been missed or misinterpreted. For example, in **Question 1**, the 'coach' was thought by some to be another person rather than a vehicle and Elsie wearing boots was taken to be evidence of her being a fashionable lady.

Candidates are reminded that copying is to be avoided in answers to **Questions 1 and 3**. Lifting of key phrases or sections also offers less convincing evidence of understanding than reworking the material in their own words.

When answering **Question 2**, candidates must select appropriate choices of words and phrases and then go on to offer specific and detailed comments in relation to each choice. To gain marks in the higher bands, candidates need to ensure that they are giving precise explanations of the effects of those choices. They need to demonstrate understanding of the writer's purpose and unpick the images they have selected in some detail.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to keep in mind that 20% of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1 and 3**. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing – planning and editing their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style and awkward expression.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Imagine you are Elsie Clinch. Write a letter of complaint to the tour company. In your letter, you should describe the tour bus and the route; give your impressions of the driver and the office staff; recommend some actions the company should take to improve the experience.

Base your letter on what you have read in Passage A. Address all three bullet points. Be careful to use your own words.

(20 marks)

In response to **Question 1**, many candidates were able to write from a viewpoint they attributed to Elsie, showing some recognition of purpose and including straightforward points for all three bullets, rather than simply offering a recount of the story. The best answers took on the character of Elsie and focused on a range of points, offering some development for each of them. In response to the third bullet, the most successful final recommendations made good use of information and details in the passage. For example, some assured they would not be using the company again any time soon, unless buses with seat belts were provided, going on to explain that this was necessary to keep passengers safe even when the road was poor. Some were able to imagine the experience from Elsie's perspective and create a suitable indignant voice to match. Various complaints such as 'banging around from side to side in the minibus as if we were in a washing machine' and forthright observations such as the 'need to choose a smoother road, or tell the authority to repair it' were in keeping with the character. Complaints along the line of, 'I didn't get the time to photograph even a single bird because your man Starsky went rushing on ahead and all the passengers made so much noise there were no birds to photograph anyway' had some character and were rooted in the ideas and sense of the text.

Middle range responses were able to use the passage reasonably well, showing similar features, but might have benefited from more sustained development. They tended to rely more heavily on the order and often the wording of the passage. Here, the first two sections often predominated, with fewer ideas presented for the third bullet point.

Candidates in the less successful responses might have improved by trying to think like Elsie, trying to report events through her eyes as if role playing. For example, some stronger answers used details and interpreted them from her point of view: 'Those three girls were whining about being hungry but they hadn't brought a big sandwich and a flask of tea like mine. Your people should tell the clients what they ought to do.'

Using the listed sections or bullet points as a focus, candidates could select details from the passage to use as a basis for Elsie's thoughts on each point. It was insufficient to 'retell' the events. Each problem with the tour needed explaining or developing. For example, there were many references to the unsuitability of the driver. Better answers used details in the text within their answer. For example, 'That disrespectful driver just ignored me when I had a problem with the seat belts. He's not even a proper driver, he's a law student doing a vacation job. He had stupid plastic flip-flops on and dropped crumbs on the floor. You should get decent drivers who have a dress code and listen to clients. Get people who enjoy their job and are kinder to the passengers.'

The frequency and quality of explanation determines the success of an answer. Suggestions for improvements in the service for the tour operator needed to be more than just a list of proposals. Each point needed a development based on a fact from the passage. For example: 'In my opinion you should make your passengers feel welcome. That dingy, nasty office where we all had to wait with that rude clerk and no room to sit with all our big bags was a disgrace!' and 'Make some proper stops. We couldn't even go to the toilet. There weren't any cafes or petrol stations and some of us were hungry.'

Attempts to take on the persona of Elsie Clinch could attract a higher mark providing the expression was not overly colloquial or inappropriate. Candidates should be encouraged to realise that their work should be lively and interesting for someone to read, and to think how someone like Elsie might write if they felt aggrieved and disappointed. That being said, developing a theatrical performance by Elsie is not the same as using the given bullet points to frame a logical, developed complaint. Drifting too far from the evidence in the text, for example using the task as a platform for a personal viewpoint not suggested by the passage, should be avoided. Methodical use of events from the passage during the planning stages of answers, together with careful attention to the key words and bullets, will help candidates to offer a full response firmly rooted in the text.

The least successful answers retold some of the events unselectively, repeated the given information, or covered very little of the passage. Any recommendations, briefly mentioned at the end, would be one or two ideas without any detail and the signature was frequently not that of Elsie Clinch. Occasionally answers did not make a strong complaint, failing to appreciate Elsie's forceful nature. As this is a test of reading, answers that strayed too far from the text were often less successful. Ideas related to extended description of Elsie and her friend's previous bird-watching tours or the mishap of the original bus were beyond both the focus of the question and the evidence of the passage.

Candidates needed to remember that this was a formal letter of complaint from someone who would consider herself to be respectable. Clarity of expression, appropriateness, and fluency are required in the higher bands along with convincing character and sound structure. There needed to be continuity in the letter of complaint with the final section of recommendations bringing together the problems of the tour and how they might be solved. Candidates need to plan the organisation of their responses as well as the content. Awkward expression and structural problems were the main reasons for a lower Writing Mark.

Candidates are reminded that careful reading of the instructions and the helpful information preceding the passage will help them to focus their responses correctly.

Some responses paraphrased sections of the passage or copied whole phrases, sentences or even paragraphs, which could lower both marks. Certain phrases were particularly attractive, 'battered, rusting minibus,' 'There was not much to see....landscape of stunted shrubs.' 'Using the microphone to be disc jockey...bouncing rhythmically.' It is important that details from the passage are interpreted rather than lifted word for word.

The passage tested understanding of narrative, vocabulary and inferences of Elsie's personality. It follows that the greater the quantity and variety of texts familiar to readers, the more understanding they can bring to bear on the question. Some candidates found difficulty with individual words for example 'tarmac', 'deteriorated', 'obstinate' and 'sturdy'. 'Destination' was also confused with destiny. Some events and situations were misread. For example, some suggested that Elsie's feet were hurt by stones as she was only wearing sandals.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- answer in your own words, adapting material from the passage to suit the response you are writing
- re-read the passage to ensure that you have selected enough relevant detail for each bullet point
- develop and extend your ideas – consider the perspective of the character speaking or writing
- create a suitable voice and tone for the persona in the response

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of (a) Elsie Clinch in paragraph 3, beginning with, 'Elsie Clinch stomped...' and (b) the road in paragraph 8, beginning with, 'Eventually, the plains gave way...'

Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.

(10 marks)

For many candidates, this proved to be the most challenging of the three questions. The response needed to be written in continuous prose, enabling candidates to have sufficient room to express their ideas about the words and phrases. Credit is given in **Question 2** for the ability to select a range of interesting or unusual examples of words and phrases relevant to the focus of the question in each section. Responses that go on to explore and explain meanings of the words are awarded further marks. Responses that also explore the effects of these particular words on the reader can score up to the highest mark of ten.

Precision and close analysis of the words is the key to success in **Question 2**. Candidates should avoid using such generalisations as 'it creates an effect on the reader,' without leading in to explaining exactly what that effect might be and how it is created. Comments about Elsie's behaviour would not be credit-worthy unless resulting from consideration of selected examples of the language used in connection with her. For example: 'Elsie stomped down the steps, shows she is very angry,' needs more careful explanation of what 'stomped' means and how it relates to a bad mood. Better responses mentioned that stomping suggests a heavy walk, indicating some force and even reminiscent of large animals.

Some answers offered a list of phrases or a long quotation, then a vague explanation such as 'This gives the impression that the road was very bad.' For higher marks, candidates needed to examine each word or phrase selected, considering meaning and inference. Similarly, 'The road snaked skyward,' shows that the road was like a snake,' just repeats the words from the text, showing no understanding. Explanations of how and why the impression is given are needed to succeed. Better answers considered how 'Snaked skywards refers to the road slithering and curving as the bus goes up at an extreme angle' and suggested it hinted that the road 'is dangerous and creates fear like a snake does.'

The best answers selected their examples with care, making sure they fitted the question. It is necessary for candidates to produce an answer which is balanced between the two parts and to discriminate between a good choice and a poorer one. Here, part (a) was generally answered more fully than part (b).

In part (a), some understanding of language in Elsie's description was shown by the explanation of 'wildly gesticulating,' and 'as if in some puppet show,' suggesting that she was like a puppet because 'she was over-dramatic with her body movements and going over the top.' More careful analysis might have considered how 'framed by the office window,' created the sense of a picture with Elsie's performance presented as if on screen or stage as well as looked more precisely at the individual words.

Similarly, in part (b), such explanations as 'Clinging makes it seem that it's about to fall' and 'Dizzying sides makes an effect of nausea, height and curves,' could be amplified by explaining how and why. The bus has to cling to the road like a person afraid of falling and holding on tightly, and is up so high that the passengers feel sick and dizzy when they look down into the deep valley.

Mid-range responses gave a mainly suitable selection with a mixed range of explanations, possibly touching on effects at times. Overlong phrases were often included which made the comments less precise. Part choices, where only one word from an image was chosen, also limited the comments that followed.

The least successful answers had either a sparse selection often mixed with unsuitable phrases, many phrases without explanation or very long quotations. This was sometimes caused by lack of focus on the question; in part (b), it is selection of words describing the road, not the bus or the journey that gain credit. Explanations could be slight, sometimes repeating the words of the text, or devices identified without showing how their use is beneficial.

Candidates can offer an overview of each section, bringing together their ideas as a whole but this will only be relevant if a selection of phrases has been explained in detail.

Though not intended as a model answer, the example that follows gives an indication of how candidates were able to respond appropriately to the question:

(a) Elsie Clinch in paragraph 3

'Wildly gesticulating': 'Wildly' implies her actions were comparable to a wild animal that acts before thinking. It could lead someone to think her eyes were full of fiery rage or craziness. 'Gesticulating' leads the reader to imagine a large reaction displaying the character's feelings.

'As if in some puppet show,' 'Puppet show' refers to the character waving her arms around like she was moved by strings. The comparison also hints that she is over-reacting much like those in shows. Puppets are connected to strings so it could symbolise that anger is pulling her strings.

'Deflated', the effect of being demotivated, defeated. Deflated refers to a balloon, the character having once been filled with air or rage, then all that air having escaped or all of her momentum gone. It also sounds similar to 'defeated' allowing readers to make the connection.

'Launched', a subtle verb comparing her to a rocket or plane taking off filled with gas. 'Launch' also insinuates the raw power or force at which she began her 'second attack.' The comparison is additionally explaining the amount of gusto she had. 'Jabbing' refers to spearing. It is a violent word setting the mood of the action.

(b) The road in paragraph 8

'Labouring up' is a personification of a mother giving birth or someone working extremely hard. I can picture the steep incline and the small bus having to work overtime to get the passengers up the mountain.

The 'weeds' on the road were 'vigorous' and 'thrust' their way. This makes nature seem like a predator, alive and vicious.

'Decayed tarmac' creates thoughts of the road wasting away. Matter often decays, leading to it being infested, in this case with weeds. Once something has decayed it is rarely useable or safe thus referring to the state of the road. The word has many negative connotations.

'Protruding rocks' gives the idea that the rocks are sticking out into the road so the bus has to go from side to side to avoid hitting them. They are also sticking out from the road surface making it very dangerous and bumpy.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- avoid general comments such as 'this is a very descriptive phrase'
- choose those 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
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or only give a general comment which applies to all of them
- if you are not sure of effects, try thinking of the 'dictionary definition' for each of your choices and explain how that meaning might fit in the context of the paragraph
- to explain effects, think of all that the word might suggest to a reader – the particular feelings, connotations and associations of the language
- if you think you have spotted a literary devices, do more than just label it. Think how the language is adding to the effect in the context of the text
- learn to recognise images and explain what they convey within the paragraph, and how they reinforce each other, if this is the case
- use your own words to explain your choices rather than repeat the words from the choice itself

Question 3

Summarise (a) the uses and appeal of Greyhound-type buses, as described in Passage B; (b) the considerations Elsie had taken into account when packing and preparing for the tour, as described in Passage A.

Your summary must be in continuous writing (full sentences; not note form). Use your own words as far as possible.

Aim to write no more than one side in total, allowing for the size of your handwriting. Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing.

(20 marks)

Answering this question successfully requires candidates to identify fifteen points that are relevant to the question and to present them succinctly in continuous prose using their own words. This is an exercise in informative writing, which should be clear and to the point. There were twenty-three possible answers in the Mark Scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. The whole answer should only be one page in length (depending on the size of handwriting).

Focused selection is required again in this question. Passage B contained plenty of information not required for the answer and less familiar to the candidate, as it has not been used in previous questions. This means that candidates must read or reread the text carefully and pay attention to the precise requirements for each part of the question. Using underlining to highlight key words in the question and the corresponding ideas in the text is a good way for candidates to focus on what is needed.

Candidates appeared to be mostly well prepared for this question. Answers were usually the correct length and written in continuous prose, notes or bullet points seldom being seen. Points made in partial note form would have been fully credited, although the writing mark would have been lower. If the response had been

wholly in note form, both the Content and Writing marks would have been reduced. Length can present a problem when writing is unnaturally squeezed into the space allowed; it would be better to shorten explanations and try to pinpoint focus instead.

There were few examples of the response written in the wrong form such as a narrative or commentary and pleasingly, there was little overt copying. Repetition of points was not uncommon though, for example in relation to the points concerning transportation of workers and international coverage. Candidates are advised that where examples of the same point and supporting data such as statistics are given in a text, identifying the central idea being illustrated will help them to improve their answer and avoid repetition. Careful reviewing of 'points' at planning stage ahead of writing the prose answer would help to address this.

The best answers were well focused on the required points and reproduced them clearly and concisely in the candidates' own words. Many answers found more than fifteen points.

Middle range responses occasionally lost focus and were repetitive, sometimes making the answer too long and limiting their writing mark.

The least successful answers may have been written at least partially in the wrong form, for example retelling the story of Passage A. In scripts at this level, there was some copying and inclusion of parts of the passages that were nothing to do with the focus of the question. Candidates attempting to paraphrase rather than select relevant material were often unable to identify relevant points.

Better answers considered the specific focus of each part of the question and planned their answer in each section accordingly. Rather than simply listing items Elsie took with her, the strongest answers identified her considerations when packing. For example, those who mentioned the heat of the sun as a consideration were often also able to identify that the difficult terrain would be something to consider and were less likely to offer incomplete ideas. Suggestions such as 'Elsie brought shoes for a walk,' were insufficiently precise. The idea of strong/sturdy and leather was needed here as the difficult terrain was the consideration and the boots had been chosen specifically to take account of that. Likewise, 'breathable clothing,' 'a large-scale map' and 'earplugs' are examples copied from the text and although mentioning them could gain a little credit, they suggest limited focus on the task.

In order to improve their marks, candidates need to ensure they are making a point precisely and answering the question. Those who had identified that Elsie wanted to shut out noise were less likely to mistake her earplugs for earphones as some candidates did.

Though not intended as a model answer, the example that follows gives an indication of how candidates were able to respond appropriately to the question:

Part (a), the uses and appeal of Greyhound-type buses

The Greyhound-type buses have been around since 1914 and since then quickly evolved to servicing most of the world, spreading to Mexico, Canada and Europe and Australia. You can expect to be in a different place every day extremely cheaply. A typical pass lasts 60 days and is based on the number of kilometres travelled. In WWII the Greyhounds carried many soldiers to the east or west coasts. They also carried workers to and from the mines and tourists. Routes to prisons are also popular. The buses are quick and comfortable.

Part (b), the considerations Elsie had taken into account when packing and preparing for the tour

Elsie, a bird photographer, packed everything needed for an adventure. She had strong leather boots in case of uneven ground; all her food and drink was waterproofed inside her rucksack and earplugs were brought along in case of bad noises. She had a guide to make sure the shrubs she touched were safe and a huge map to prevent getting lost. To be safe from diseases and problems caused by insects, she brought repellent as well as a large woven hat to stop sunburn. Finally, a camera and a tripod were taken in order to be able to properly photograph birds.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- read the question carefully and underline the key words
- re-read the passage after reading each part of the question, in order to find the precise information to answer it

- plan your answer carefully by listing relevant points in as few words as possible
- read through your list of points and link any that are similar or the same
- write up your answer in full sentences
- do not write an introduction
- do not use quotes in your answer to **Question 3**
- do not write a narrative, or in the first person
- do not copy whole phrases from the passages
- write no more than one side of average handwriting
- write in an informative style and never add to the content of the passage
- make each point only once.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/22

Reading Passages (Extended)

Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for **Reading (40 marks)**. In addition, there were up to **10 marks** available for **Writing**: 5 marks in **Question 1** and 5 marks in **Question 3**. Candidates are advised that in order to aim for high marks in this component they should:

- read both passages very carefully and pay attention to detail
- read the questions carefully
- give equal attention to each section of a question
- spend time planning responses to address the specific requirements of the tasks set
- use their own words, choosing vocabulary carefully to express ideas precisely
- 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
- adapt writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- ensure that ideas are developed and fully explained in **Question 1** and **Question 2**

General Comments

Candidates' responses to this paper indicated familiarity with the general demands of each task, along with an awareness of the need to use material from the passages to answer the questions. Responses covered a wide range, with far fewer examples of copying, and candidates mostly appeared to have been entered for the appropriate tier.

Responses to all three tasks suggested that candidates had found both passages equally accessible, had planned their use of time helpfully and had finished within the two hours. Instances where candidates had missed all or part of a question were rare across the cohort as a whole. Most candidates had paid attention to the guidance offered with respect to the length of their answers.

There were very few significant misunderstandings of the content of the passages, though there was evidence that some candidates needed to read and interpret the detail of both texts and tasks more carefully. For example, in responding to Passage A **Question 1**, a number of candidates wrote from the point of view of the narrator as if she had been newly promoted to headteacher. Close reading of the text would have made it clear that this could not have been the case - the teacher describes the replacement for the previous headteacher as 'glaring at us'. Careful attention to detail, including revisiting the passage to refine understanding, is essential if candidates are to offer convincing evidence of their reading skills at higher levels.

Copying was rarely an issue in **Question 1**, with relatively few candidates over-reliant on the language of the passage, though occasional lifting of key phrases was fairly common – typically, the advice offered to the new teacher by one of her colleagues was reproduced in its entirety. Replaying chronologically the new teacher's experience was a feature of a number of less successful answers. Others moved so far away from details of the text concerning this particular school that their responses became too general to evidence careful reading of the passage. Candidates are reminded that in order to demonstrate the skills necessary for higher levels, they need to use and interpret the evidence - both explicit and implicit - in the text. Details from the text should inform and support their ideas. The inclusion of imagined detail and speculation based on their own experiences of schooling is likely to be less helpful than careful development of ideas rooted in the text.

Answers to **Question 2** showed some awareness of the need to consider and explain effect. Responses often might have been improved through more careful, considered selection from each paragraph, rather than simply listing all the possibilities as they appeared chronologically. For higher marks, candidates need to make precise and appropriate choices of words and phrases. These choices each need to be explored and explained in some detail to show understanding of how the writer is using language in the particular instance under consideration.

In **Question 3** responses, many candidates managed to include a reasonable number of points over the two parts of the question. There was evidence of an awareness of the need to use their own words. On occasion, vocabulary needed to be more carefully chosen in order to avoid changes of meaning and factual inaccuracy. For example, suggestions in part **(b)** that the new teacher became ‘famous’ were not accurate. Being ‘*popular* with parents’ – being widely liked or appreciated by them – is not the same as being widely known. At times, candidates wrote at length recounting and exemplifying the experience of one or both of the narrators, rather than offering concise and clear points addressing the specifics of the task. For higher Writing marks, candidates should ensure they select and organise points more efficiently during planning stages, for example to avoid repetition of ideas.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to keep in mind that 20% of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1 and 3**. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing – planning and editing their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style and awkward expression.

Most responses attempted an appropriate register, and often had some sense of audience in **Question 1**, though answers less frequently adopted the impersonal, informative style required in **Question 3**. Whilst writing is not assessed in **Question 2**, candidates should ensure that they consider carefully their own choices of vocabulary when attempting to describe effects and meanings of the selections they are discussing. In some instances, candidates might have been able to demonstrate more precise understanding of the language used by the author had they employed a wider range of vocabulary themselves. Likewise, checking and editing all three answers more carefully might help some candidates to ensure they are offering more secure evidence of their skills to examiners.

A clear focus on the specific instruction and wording of a question during the planning of an answer will allow candidates to work to identify relevant detail in the text, cover all aspects of the task and target marks at the higher levels.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

Imagine that you are the new headteacher in Passage A. You address the staff on the first day of term. Write what you say to them. You should describe what you have noticed about the students in this school; explain how the staff has contributed to the poor ethos of the school; present and justify your three point plan for improving the school for the coming year. Base your writing on what you have read in Passage A. Address all three bullet points. Be careful to use your own words.

(20 marks)

There was plenty of positive engagement with the passage for Question 1. Candidates often recognised a number of the failings in this school along with the potential for better. Most were able to offer at least generally relevant responses to the task. Stronger responses to the question interpreted ideas from the passage carefully and consistently – evaluating and modifying the evidence presented by the teacher-narrator to form the basis of the new headteacher’s assessment of the school. The ‘replacement figure in the expensive suit who clearly meant business’ was variously interpreted, with the majority recognising that the headteacher’s arrival signified change. Most assumed the new headteacher was male – possibly due to the reference to the suit – and most took the clue from ‘glaring’ to mean s/he was not impressed with the current performance of the staff and pupils.

Some of the best answers offered an overview from the headteacher's perspective rather than simply transfer the narrator's views and experiences to the speech. It was likely that the headteacher would have been in broad agreement with the new teacher's approach. Her efforts had after all improved exam results. Most versions of the headteacher took this stance. Rather than present material chronologically as it arrived in the passage, the strongest answers combined details of the teacher's own experience with consideration of the attitudes and behaviours she reported in relation to her colleagues. By taking this approach – reading the passage as a whole, then selecting and connecting points during planning – candidates were able to produce a more consistent overview, make full use of details in support and formulate a convincing plan for the new regime. For example, responses that began by stating that the students were well mannered and enthusiastic, then later noted how they were rowdy and messy, appeared contradictory and missed opportunities to develop and offer judgement. Instead of following the pattern of the passage in this way, better answers considered what these snippets of information taken together might suggest – for example that behaviour was an issue. Some used this to suggest that these students could behave when lessons were engaging, had the potential to produce good work, but were bored and/or lacked concentration. Some extended this further with the suggestion that the students were being controlled – repressed even – but not taught well for the most part. Most took the view that both the staff and students could improve their performance.

Strong answers created a suitable style for a spoken address in a fairly formal setting, and a highly convincing, authoritative voice for the new headteacher. Some decided on a fairly measured approach, avoided any sense of ranting, and spoke as if with the voice of experience, aware that they were addressing teachers with whom they would have to work. They spoke tactfully and persuasively, taking account of the professional audience being addressed. Others adopted a more casual style for the new headteacher, often spurring his staff on to join with him as part of the team. Occasionally, this worked well when the response had been deliberately crafted and the style purposefully maintained. Where candidates launched into an outraged tirade – berating staff for poor performance and issuing various threats – they were in danger of being less convincing, unless they had carefully controlled the language they were using.

Better responses were clear that they were writing from the perspective of a new headteacher and used the bullet points offered to help them plan their ideas effectively. Some of the best responses had a strong sense of the plan for improvement they were presenting to staff from the start, offering solutions to problems as they identified them or building to a considered conclusion. The best answers offered strategies for improvement clearly linked to and supported by textual detail. Their plan extended, rather than repeated, ideas from the first two bullets. Many suggested improvements in the management of the school, promising that teachers could expect to be observed and/or supported. A number picked up on more subtle details in support of the need for change, noting that the head of department hadn't even known his new teacher's name.

In mid-range answers, uneven treatment of the bullets might often have been addressed at the planning stage – in part by paying attention to the instruction in the question to write as the new headteacher, not the narrator of the piece. Crucially, rather than replaying material, a number of candidates could have improved answers by considering the implications of the information they were reading and reporting. Some candidates touched on points about the students and the teachers by relaying examples from the text, thus missing opportunities to explain those points fully, develop or support them. For example, to say that teachers contributed to the poor ethos of the school by making students copy from texts was apt, but not as convincing as pointing out that some teachers' manner of teaching was archaic or unimaginative, and offering observation of pupils copying from texts in support of that.

In the first bullet, candidates offering stronger answers were able to infer the head teacher's impressions of the students. Many highlighted the students' approach to homework, dislike of reading and writing, and their poor results in examinations as indicative of the problems the school faced. Better answers developed ideas and expanded explanations, acknowledging that with one or two teachers there had been marked improvements in students' behaviour, attitude and performance. More mechanical answers tended to follow the order of the text, suggesting less competent reading. For example, some asserted that students would not rehearse for drama productions, yet cited the successful school production and noted their love of drama without exploring how those details were related and what judgements the new headteacher might make about students in the light of such information. Some of the best answers began to unpick such apparent contradictions. Some for example, picked up that the successful entertainment the teacher prepared had been written by her and suggested that the previous production might then have been less interesting and appropriate, hence the students' reluctance to rehearse. Many of the best answers were able to deal convincingly with the evidence provided by the magazine episode. There were various credible interpretations offered. Most saw it as an example of the students' creativity, though some took a dim view of its 'making fun' of individuals. Responses that consistently developed ideas from the headteacher's perspective often recognised the magazine's potential and suggested it should return as a forum for students' opinions, but with more careful editing next time round.

The second bullet required candidates to use the clues in the passage to develop suggestions as to how the failings of the teaching staff may have led to the poor ethos of the school. Some candidates focused too heavily on general ideas of education rather than the specifics of this staff. Many were able to pick up on examples of poor attitude and general lack of enthusiasm, such as staff reading a newspaper in class and not setting homework. A few were able to comment on the lack of support and team spirit – noting for example the reaction to positive suggestions in meetings; the absence of staff at the production and even that the deputy headteacher had confiscated rather than purchased a copy of the magazine.

The best responses firmly linked their ideas for the third bullet to details in the passage. Plans often included suggestions for improving teaching style, linked to evidence that students had been copying from textbooks while the teacher read the newspaper. Many proposed a refurbishment and brightening up of the appearance of the school, linked to the dull classrooms, lack of wall displays and uniform. Those who went further with suggestions of brand new sports halls funded by sales of the magazine to parents and/or an increase in school fees were drifting too far from the evidence in the text. Improving behaviour was a popular suggestion, often profitably linked to the need to police the 'rowdy' corridors and provide opportunities for energy to be more creatively diverted. These included re-instating the magazine and following up the students' interest in drama with further school productions supported by all staff.

Candidates were asked to suggest three key improvements, which required some development and detail to justify the necessity for these measures and explain in what ways they would improve the school. Instead, some responses simply offered a long list of measures with no support, explanation or development. Others focused on only one or two suggestions, producing little in response to bullet three and often repeating much that they had already offered in response to the first two bullets. Deciding which details are best used where in an answer is part of the planning process. Candidates need to consider the full range of evidence available and organise their response rather than just following through the text separately for each bullet as they write, repeating the same information three times.

Candidates who misread the ending of the passage and/or the task instructions and chose to write as the enthusiastic young member of staff were often still able to adopt the format of a spoken address correctly and sometimes reflected helpfully on necessary improvements. They often lacked some sense of purpose though and found it hard to go beyond the literal, focussing too heavily on the positive behaviour and progress of students in the narrator's class. A number of responses at this level also confused the gender of the writer, the deputy head, previous headteacher and the head of department.

The least successful answers were often thin, repetitive or short. However, due to the general familiarity of the setting and subject matter, a number of less successful responses relied on their own thoughts, ideas and experiences rather than evidence of close reading of the passage. Answers at this end of the range invented their own material, often writing far too generally about the role and nature of education, teachers and students and paying little regard to the specifics of the establishment in front of them.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- ensure that you adopt the correct voice and persona by reading the question carefully
- read the passage carefully and return to check key details as you plan your answer
- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- adapt material from the passage to make it an appropriate response to the specific task set
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- leave sufficient time to edit your response – for example, to add supporting detail or iron out inconsistencies of style
- extend and develop a number of the ideas relevantly

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of (a) the school magazine and reactions to it in paragraph 4, beginning ‘I also allowed the senior students...’ and (b) the Head of Department and his room in paragraph 8, beginning ‘Because he left me to my own devices...’. Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.

(10 marks)

Rather than offering a series of notes for each choice, more successful responses to **Question 2** often took the form of continuous prose, allowing candidates to explore their choices fully and connect their ideas where appropriate. Marks were given for the relevance of the words and phrases chosen to answer the question, and for the quality of their explanation. Credit is given in **Question 2** for the ability to select a range of interesting or unusual examples of words and phrases relevant to the focus of the question in each section. Responses that went on to explore and explain meanings of the words were awarded further marks. 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 most successful responses to **Question 2** showed precise focus at word level, purposefully selected a number of key examples in each half – including images – and answered both parts of the question equally well, unpicking choices in each to consider exactly how they were working in context. Stronger answers were able, for example, to explain the self-important pomposity of the deputy head, suggested by the comparison to ‘a Roman senator’, explore the political suggestions of ‘denounced as tyrannical’ and took the time to tease out the associations linked to the storm image. Less careful reading lead some candidates to get the context wrong, suggesting the ferocious storm was describing the students enthusiasm for the magazine. Others settled for a general explanation that it was a reflection of ‘anger’. Better answers considered ideas around the wrath of the gods and the inevitability of the clash after lightning in discussing the ensuing outrage of the staff.

In part **(b)** candidates had to work to go beyond the simple fact that ‘everything was brown’, not a significant choice in itself nor sufficient comment on its own, since it was a factual observation taken from the text. Many did notice ‘faded sepia’ as an interesting choice and commented on its links with old fashioned photographs. The best answers went further to consider how faded added to the sense of the idea, suggesting loss of impact and vibrancy in the surroundings and by extension the head of department. Mid-range answers might at times have offered more convincing evidence of understanding had they extended their explanation of ideas, discussing meanings and associations in more careful detail rather than moving straight on from their initial thoughts to offer a further choice. A number approached the task by offering an overly long list of choices in each half with the result that the ensuing explanation was necessarily more general, less effective and missed opportunities to demonstrate the understanding required for higher marks. Answers that offered thirteen and fourteen ‘choices’ overall were rarely able to fully exploit those selections and often listed basic or general effects at best.

Many candidates picked up on ‘mournfully’, with the better answers touching on the sense of defeat and nostalgia for the past rather than simply suggesting that it might mean he was sad. The ‘maze of tortuous passages’ that lead to the room was often selected with some offering classical associations and successfully linking the confusing network of passages with the head of department’s deliberate attempts to conceal himself in his ‘cosy little nest’. ‘Secreted’ and ‘tortuous’ were occasionally misread by candidates. Ignoring the difference in spelling, or even adding an ‘r’ to the choice itself, many made reference to torture. In relation to ‘secreted’, a few candidates offered suggestions of liquids being released. Careful consideration of detail, context and overview might have helped these candidates refine their judgements.

Less successful responses tended to offer rather generic comments that did not fit the context of the passage or were too general to be useful. Describing language as ‘animalistic’ for example may perhaps have been a starting point for an exploration of ‘cosy little nest’ and even ‘camouflage’ but the precise way in which that interpretation added to imagery in the text needed to be drawn out. Less successful responses sometimes adopted a ‘technique spotting’ approach identifying literary techniques, such as personification in ‘screamed’ or use of simile in ‘like a flash of lightning’. This approach often led to rather generic comments about the effects of the techniques rather than the words themselves which limited the response. Other candidates repeated the same explanation after each choice, for example, that the room was very dull.

The following example, taken from a candidate’s response this examination series, is given as an indication of what constitutes an appropriate type of response to the question. It is not intended to be a model answer.

(a) the school magazine and the reactions to it in paragraph 4

A gaudy front page produces the effect of a naughty and outrageous magazine that the children enjoyed creating. Gaudy seems overly colourful and celebratory while being out of the bounds of respectable and somewhat coarse. The front page means that the gaudiness is slapped in your face as soon as you see it and that there would be more to come. The phrase ‘screamed ‘Action!’’ has the effect of violent awakening especially when juxtaposed with ‘sleepy readers’. The magazine demands attention with a voice of its own, as suggested by the personification. The phrase ‘looking like a Roman senator’ in front of her geography class’ creates humour in its strangeness, juxtaposing a Roman senator with something important and out of time with a normal boring geography class. The ridiculous nature is aimed at the Roman senator deputy head who is the butt of the joke. The pose of a senator is proud, imperious and commanding and being completely out of place makes it hilarious. The two extremes of a Roman senator and a school class means that the geography class seems awful, as if they are dictated to by their teacher. ‘Tyrannical’ produces a further dictating, uncaring and brutal effect. It is unfair, the tyrant school rules is ruling over the abused students with totalitarian control. It brings to mind tyrannical regimes such as Hitler’s Nazi Germany, further embodying the out of time feeling and suggestive that the rules are old fashioned and out of date in the modern world. ‘Flash of lightning’ evokes speed and danger. This outrageous magazine is striking with electricity and force. The ferocious thunderstorm follows the lightning with rumbles of foreboding.

(b) the head of department and his room in paragraph 8

‘Secreted away’ makes it seem like he was deliberately hiding and creates the image that his hiding place was small and far away. ‘Cosy little nest’ makes it seem like the head of department is a bird building a nest up for himself. This implies he was only concerned with himself and making himself cosy and comfortable. ‘Maze of tortuous passages’ creates the effect of a labyrinth further evoking a sense of hiding. He doesn’t want to be found. He also seems like some sort of creature such as the minotaur kept in the labyrinth of King Minos which is added to by the animalistic suggestions of living in a nest. ‘Shabby desks’ shows the disrepair of the room. He doesn’t care about the classroom, a ‘faded sepia’ makes it seem old like in old sepia pictures, ‘beige’ is a bland colour further showing his lack of care about appearances, ‘camouflaged in a corner’ makes it seem like he is crouching away trying not to be seen. Looked at me mournfully is a phrase that makes it seem as the head of department doesn’t like his situation but there is nothing he can do. Mournfully is both pitiful and passive. He seems a sad, literally, excuse for a man.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- ensure that all your choices are relevant and identified precisely using quotation marks
- take time to choose the best examples within each paragraph rather than listing possibilities
- when offering a phrase as a choice, discuss how each of the words within it is working
- do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle
- try to explain both how and why a particular word or image might have been used
- 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 generalised, ‘empty’ comments, such as ‘this draws the reader in’
- if you are not sure about effects, offer a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- do not just label choices, discuss them in some detail
- to explain effects, think of the connotations and associations of the word(s) being used
- leave time to re-read and add to your answer

Question 3

Summarise (a) the advantages and disadvantages of attending evening classes, as described in Passage B; (b) why the writer felt pleased with her job, as described in Passage A. Your summary must be in continuous writing (full sentences; not note form).

Use your own words as far as possible. Aim to write no more than one side in total, allowing for the size of your handwriting. Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing

(20 marks)

To answer this question successfully, candidates needed to identify fifteen points that were relevant to the question and present them succinctly, in their own words as far as possible. This task requires writing to be clear, concise and to the point. Candidates who had planned their response beforehand, then checked and edited it at the end, gave themselves the best chance of doing well. Candidates paid attention to the dual focus of part (a), with most aware of the need to offer both advantages and disadvantages of evening classes. There were twenty-three content points available in the mark scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. Many were able to identify a good number of points, though occasionally those offering 15 points or more would have benefited from some editing of their answer to avoid overlong explanation. Those who considered the specific focus of part (b) were able to identify the aspects of the teacher's first year that would have pleased her and avoid simply retelling her experience as a whole.

The majority of candidates' demonstrated an awareness of the appropriate style for a summary, with very few examples of wholesale copying though occasionally some replayed the narrative style of the passages. Generally, part (a) tended to be more accessible than part (b) as candidates found it easier to select the advantages and disadvantages offered by evening classes.

The most successful responses selected and re-ordered the relevant information from the passages, with a clear focus on the actual questions. The best answers had planned both the content and organisation of their answer, writing in fluent sentences, within the prescribed length and using their 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.

In Passage A, the reasons for the writer being pleased with her job did not include negative observations about the school, the students or the teaching staff. Stronger responses recognised this. Passage B also contained a number of examples which better responses condensed into a single point, for example, in relation to improving qualifications or skills. A significant degree of selection was required to exclude unnecessary information in Passage B. For example the name of the city was unnecessary as long as rush hour was mentioned. Ideally, the style adopted needed to be far more informative and objective than in the original passages. The strongest candidates were able to do this successfully. A minority of candidates wrote in the first person in both sections and attempted lively voices. This was inappropriate for the task.

Students often recognised a range of points but did not write concisely and scored lower Writing marks as a result. In an effort to avoid all words from the passage, some candidates changed the essence of the idea, over-reaching and losing clarity as a result.

Less successful responses often did not adopt the correct focus for this question, instead presenting part (a) as a personal narrative story recounting the writer's difficulties when trying to study and work at the same time. Although it was still possible to gain high Reading marks with this approach, a factual style is the best option for the summary question. In less successful responses to part (b), some candidates focused solely on the writer's attempts to improve the school and suggest new ideas at staff meetings, which were not central to the question. In a number of answers, the inclusion of irrelevant or repeated material diminished the focus and depressed the Writing mark.

The following answer, produced by a candidate in this examination series, scores 15 for Reading and if handwritten would easily fit on to one page. Whilst it does not constitute a model answer and might well have been further improved, it offers an example of how a successful response may be presented.

(a) the advantages and disadvantages of attending evening classes

The advantages of evening classes are that it gives chances to improve in the subject you are studying. The improvement in the studied subject can create new job and career paths. The evening class can also help one's current job. Evening classes can make one feel young and lively and a school atmosphere allows one to forget troubles at work. Classes being in the evening allows one to work support their family. The disadvantages are that working beforehand makes it difficult to study, especially with an inexperienced teacher. Classes also force one to travel busy city streets with the fear of being late. Sometimes one has to retake exams if they miss too many classes. Evening classes also mean one arrives home late and cannot spend time with their family. The classes may be crucial to one's job and can stop you being fired.

(b) why the writer felt pleased with her job

The writer is pleased with her job as it makes her feel proud as she has managed to get pupils who normally wouldn't work, to work. She is also pleased as she produced an end of term entertainment which was a success. She also helped students produce a successful magazine. The writer manages to get even better grades than she was expecting which pleased parents, which she could show in her classroom. She also makes suggestions in meetings and has a colleague to laugh with which pleased her

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- read the question carefully and underline the key words
- re-read the passage after reading each part of the question, in order to find the precise information to answer it
- plan your answer carefully by listing relevant points in as few words as possible
- read through your list of points and link any that are similar or the same
- write up your answer in full sentences; refer only to your notes rather than the passages
- write informatively and never comment on the content of the passage
- be careful to give only information that answers the question
- do not write a narrative, or in the first person
- do not copy whole phrases from the passages
- pay attention to the guidance for length
- do not add detail or examples to the content of the passage
- make each point only once.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/23

Reading Passages (Extended)

Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for **Reading (40 marks)**. In addition, there were up to **10 marks** available for **Writing**: 5 marks in **Question 1** and 5 marks in **Question 3**. Candidates are advised that in order to aim for high marks in this component they should:

- read the passages carefully and purposefully more than once
- remember to consider both explicit and implicit meaning within a passage
- take note of all the information offered – including any introduction to a passage
- read questions carefully
- plan the content, structure and sequence of answers ahead of writing the response
- give equal attention to each section of each question
- adapt writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- use the facts, ideas and details in the passage to inform answers
- use their own words as far as possible and not copy whole phrases or sections of the passages
- avoid repetition of points but ensure ideas are complete
- leave sufficient time to read back through answers and edit as required

General Comments

Candidates' responses to this paper generally indicated familiarity with the demands of each task and the need to use material from the passages to answer the questions. Responses covered a wide range and candidates mostly appeared to have been entered for the appropriate tier.

Candidates found both passages equally accessible and were able to finish the paper within the time allowed. For **Question 1** to achieve marks in the top band, candidates were expected to demonstrate thorough use of the passage and for **Question 2**, offering 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, finding a reasonable number of points. Some responses contained examples of lifted phrases and sentences from the passages rather than the use of own words. It is important that candidates use their own words as otherwise it suggests that they do not understand the wording of the original. Responses copying from the passage would not score highly. It is important too that when they do alter wording and rephrase a fact, the meaning should not change. Lengthy responses, for example due to long explanations, inclusion of unnecessary material, indiscriminate copying of the passages, or repetition need to be avoided.

While the emphasis is on quality rather than quantity on this paper, there needs to be enough of a response to a question to meet the top band descriptors and for all parts of that question to be covered. Candidates are reminded that there needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions. Questions are worded to help candidates to direct their attention to key ideas and demonstrate their understanding. Where candidates do not give equal attention to all parts of a question, they may well be missing opportunities to demonstrate their skills at the higher levels. For example, in **Question 1** those candidates who considered both aspects within each bullet – mistakes made before and during the walk in bullet one; how and why attitudes changed in two, and thoughts and feelings about his companion's behaviour and their friendship in three – were able to offer a far wider range of ideas and target higher marks than those who restricted their response to one aspect in each. The importance of effective planning cannot therefore be over-emphasised. There was evidence that many Centres do now expect their candidates to plan ahead of writing their response. Candidates need to be willing to interrogate the text, re-reading both for explicit information and for clues suggesting more subtle or implicit ideas.

Most candidates answered their questions in appropriate English. Whilst writing is not specifically assessed for accuracy in this paper, candidates should be aware that unclear or limited style will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Leaving sufficient time to edit responses is advisable. The majority of responses were within the recommended length guidelines and thus were focused and without the repetition that can come with excessive length.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Imagine that you are Nick Nichols, the friend of the narrator in Passage A, at the end of the day. Write a letter home about your walk through Death Valley. In your letter you should: describe the mistakes you made before and during the walk, explain how and why your attitude to the desert changed at the end of the day, give your thoughts and feelings about your companion's behaviour and your friendship. Base your letter on what you have read in Passage A. Address all three bullet points. Be careful to use your own words.

(20 marks)

Most responses addressed all three bullet points and wrote in the correct genre for the task, adopting an informal and conversational style. Some responses were engaging and interesting, displaying an empathetic understanding of the harsh conditions in Death Valley and developing a convincing character for Nick Nichols. Most candidates changed the perspective of events from the narrator of the passage, gave him a name and wrote as the companion, Nick. Not all of the responses were written from the correct viewpoint which made it difficult, particularly in the third part of the letter, to comment about the behaviour of the friend and to modify the content of the passage. Although the responses written as the narrator included some important details that could be rewarded, there was little modification of the passage and little scope to develop Nick's character and express his views and feelings about the events. In some responses the writer of the letter was changed midway, or written as 'we', which resulted in a less convincing account of the walk.

For the first part of the task, most responses included a good amount of detail and made references to the failing shoes, swollen feet, and the heat of the desert in midsummer that made it difficult to sleep in their tents. Some responses commented on the inappropriate footwear or the decision to tape the shoes and cut holes in them resulting in a slow and painful walk. Not all of the letters commented on mistakes made before the walk: their failure to research conditions in the desert, to buy proper footwear or take a sufficient supply of water. Good responses focused on their lack of knowledge and preparation, and suggested what they should have done before setting off. Less good responses relied heavily on the wording of the passage and re-told events with little comment or development. Most responses displayed a good understanding of conditions in the desert and commented on the oppressive heat and the mood of the travellers. Good responses interwove relevant details, for example, the heat of the ground and the bare landscape, into their own ideas without straying too far from the text or relying on the original wording. Most letters made reference to the 'Game of Living Things'. Some explained that it was a means of relieving the travellers' boredom and others commented that this was another mistake as it caused them to argue. Other responses included this in the final part of the letter in order for Nick to comment on his companion's behaviour. Candidates could decide where they included details about the game but needed to make them relevant. Some wrote a detailed piece of narrative about the event without specific focus on an appropriate bullet point.

For the second part of the letter, many responses commented on the contrast between the harsh conditions of the daytime and the beauty and cooler conditions of nightfall. Not all included relevant details to support these differences. Some commented that the ‘desert is lovely’ without making references to the colours of the sunset and the shadows or the cool breeze which comforted them. There were opportunities to compare these to the oppressive heat of the sun, the unforgiving light and the barren landscape of the day time. Many included the fact that the travellers felt relaxed and better tempered as they now had shade and water and were able to rest and enjoy each other’s company without the earlier bad feelings. Few commented that they were relieved at having made it to the camp or felt a sense of achievement at overcoming the harsh conditions. Some responses were over reliant on the final paragraph of the passage and commented that the desert had focused their wants and needs but now they were comfortable ‘new needs creep into the equation’. These ideas were rarely developed with reference to the rest of the passage and their thoughts during the walk. Most responses were quite reflective, though not all contained sufficient supporting detail.

In the third part of the letter, most responses included relevant comments and judgements about the behaviour of their companion with some evaluation of their friendship. Good responses supported their ideas with specific references to the events of the day, for example, that their friend had continued the walk without complaint, despite his broken shoes and painful feet, and that his resilience and sense of adventure were to be credited. There was, in most letters, a sense of tolerance and a conciliatory tone. Many suggested that their companion had been unreasonable during the game, but the heat had affected both of them and made them bad tempered. Others noted that the companion’s choice of boots had slowed their progress, but that he had shown resourcefulness and struggled on, despite looking ridiculous. There were admissions that both had made mistakes due to their inexperience and naivety. Less good responses reflected on the nature of their friendship without making reference to specific events. Comments that the adventure had been a bonding experience, that their friendship had been tested, that they were friends for life were quite general unless supported by specific references to their ordeals.

Good responses were focused on all three bullet points and created a strong and convincing character for Nick Nichols. They contained a range of ideas that were well developed and closely related to the passage. They avoided repetition and displayed the ability to select material relevant to each part of the task. Most candidates appeared to engage with the passage and many letters displayed a strong sense of empathy with the characters and a good understanding of the harsh conditions of the desert.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity and fluency of the response and how well it used language to convey Nick Nichols’ thoughts and feelings. Higher Writing marks were awarded for a range of effective and interesting vocabulary. Good responses were well structured, displaying some sense of audience and using an appropriate register and language. Weaker responses relied on the wording of the passage and displayed a limited range of appropriate vocabulary and an inconsistency of style.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to the type of response you are writing
- re-read the passage to ensure that you have selected enough relevant detail for each of the bullet points
- develop and extend your ideas – consider the perspective of the character speaking or writing
- create a suitable voice and tone for the persona in the response.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of (a) the appearance and the effect of the desert in paragraph 1, beginning ‘The desert is hateful...’, and (b) the sunset and the travellers’ needs in paragraph 10 beginning ‘The desert is lovely...’ 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 a range of appropriate examples from both paragraphs. Not all responses were balanced; most included fewer relevant choices from the first paragraph. Less good responses only included one or two appropriate 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.

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. Good answers contained a range of appropriate examples with clear explanations of why the writer used specific words and phrases. In part (a) less good responses included examples of quite ordinary language, for example, 'the desert is hateful', 'eroded landscape' and 'dead or dying'. In part (b) some included the phrases 'A white linen tablecloth' and 'A house with a pool'. These choices were not rewarded as they do not allow deeper meanings, associations or effects to be explored, and were often accompanied by simple or literal meanings.

Less good responses contained long quotations followed by general comments that did not refer to individual words. These did not demonstrate the skill of selection and were counted as one choice. In good responses, short quotations were followed by specific references to individual words and precise explanations of their use. For example, in the phrase 'weight of centuries' the heaviness of the sun and its cumulative effect over a long period of time were explained. Comments about the overall effects of language can only be rewarded if they are supported by references to specific words. Without analysis at word level, they are likely to be fairly general observations. In part (a) some responses displayed an understanding that the heat of the desert was almost unbearable and potentially dangerous. Not all responses included phrases to illustrate this. Some included the phrases 'unshaded ground can kill' or 'Don't faint' which were warnings and not descriptions of the intense heat. These were not rewarded, whereas the words 'burning plain', 'bake the brain inside the skull' and 'great convection oven' were appropriate examples to indicate the dangers. In part (b) some responses commented that the sky was colourful without explaining the specific meanings of 'gaudy' and 'pastels'. The word purple in the phrase 'cooling purple caress' was very rarely explained although the effects of 'caress' were often explored.

Some responses were written in a grid format with word-meaning-effect columns and not in continuous prose. The responses were usually undeveloped and mechanical and were often 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 naming of a literary device, even when accurately identified, can only be rewarded when accompanied by an explanation of how it works within the context of the passage. Repetition of the original wording, for example, 'sky explodes means that the colours exploded' does not display a satisfactory level of understanding and cannot be rewarded. Good responses explained the meanings of individual words such as 'mirror', 'merciless' and 'gaudy' within the context of the passage. The best responses identified images and analysed the writer's use of language with precision and clarity.

The following response from a candidate in this series offers just one example of the ways in which candidates approached this question. It is not intended as a model answer, though shows understanding and includes a sufficient number of appropriate choices. Candidates are not expected to include all of the potential examples from the paragraphs.

(a) **The appearance and effect of the desert in paragraph 1:**

The phrase 'like an ageing movie star' means that the desert's appeal and beauty have faded over time. 'Merciless light' indicates that the sunlight beats down relentlessly. It is cruel and harsh and shows up all the imperfections of the desert. 'The great convection oven' suggests hot air rising in convection currents cooking everything, there is no escape from its heat. The phrase 'bake the brain inside the skull' gives a gruesome image of the intense heat of the sun cooking a vital part of the body and causing death. 'The sun weighs' makes the heat of the sun feel heavy and oppressive, like carrying a physical burden which makes people feel tired.

(b) The sunset and the travellers' needs in paragraph 10:

The writer shows the contrast between the daytime and the evening. The words 'gaudy pastels' suggests that the colours are bright and vibrant and catch the attention. The sky resembles a beautiful scene painted by an artist. 'Sky explodes' suggests a sudden appearance of colour as though fireworks had lit up all over the sky. The author creates the feeling that being deprived of necessities makes people appreciate ordinary things such as nightfall. The phrase 'blessing of night' suggests a rare occasion that does not happen often. However, there is nightfall everyday but the use of the phrase suggests that such a normal thing is now regarded as a privilege, and feels like a gift from heaven. The phrase 'jug of liquid life' shows that the travellers desired water more than anything else and it was necessary for their survival. The author uses the phrase 'new needs creep into the equation'. The word 'creep' shows how needs slowly and sneakily enter the mind. The things the travellers wanted were slyly being made into priorities and needs.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- avoid general comments such as 'this is a very descriptive phrase'. Such comments will not earn you any marks
- 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 only 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.
- to explain effects, think of all that the word might suggest to a reader – the feelings, connotations and associations of the language
- remember simply identifying literary techniques or devices is not enough. You need to focus on the meaning and effects of the words themselves
- learn to recognise images and explain what they convey within the paragraph, and how they reinforce each other, if this is the case
- use your own words to explain your choices rather than repeat the words from the choice itself.

Question 3

Summarise (a) the discomforts and frustrations of walking across the Wahibi Desert, as described in Passage B; and (b) the effects of the sun when walking through Death Valley, as described in Passage A. Your summary must be in continuous writing (full sentences; not note form).

Use your own words as far as possible. Aim to write no more than one side in total, allowing for the size of your handwriting. Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing

(20 marks)

To answer this question successfully candidates needed to identify fifteen 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 twenty-three possible answers in the Mark Scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. Most candidates were aware of the appropriate form, style and tone for a summary. Less good responses were not written as factual and informative accounts but in the narrative style of the passages and some referred specifically to Nick Nichols or were written in the first person. Some responses mixed the passages and tried to compare the conditions in the deserts which often resulted in some loss of clarity. Better responses avoided introductory statements and commentary and concentrated on factual summary, more or less equally balanced across the two sections.

Most responses contained a satisfactory number of points, securing high marks for content; some achieved the maximum of fifteen points. In most summaries part (b) contained fewer relevant points. The Writing marks were not always high, most in Bands 3 or 4, mainly due to a lack of concision and the failure to consistently use own words. Few responses were excessively long, though some were quite wordy.

Some of the Writing marks are awarded for focus. Part (a) was mostly focused and included a range of relevant, factual information. Part (b), in most responses, was less focused. Some included references to the sunset and the beauty of the sky which were not relevant and could not be rewarded.

Writing marks are also awarded for concision. Some summaries contained wordy descriptions. In some responses, part (a) contained overlong explanations of the results of the wind with descriptions of weighing down the tarpaulin with sandbags, covering the face with a scarf, and grit in various parts of the face. There was also some repetition when explaining the characteristics of the sand dunes. Part (b) also contained some detailed explanations of the effects of the heat on the travellers' shoes, their subsequent attempts to repair them and the resulting 'sore-footed shuffle'.

Not all of the points were made with sufficient clarity to be rewarded. There was some confusion in the first section between the inability to judge time and distances. In the second section, it was not always made clear that ground temperatures resulted in sore feet and prevented travellers from resting.

Candidates are rewarded for writing in their own words. In less good responses words and phrases were copied from both passages even though there were opportunities to use suitable alternatives. In part (a) some responses relied heavily on the wording of the passage, for example, 'not heavy by military standards', 'groaning under the burden' and 'owing to prevailing winds'. This often resulted in a lack of concision. In part (b) the copying of phrases, for example, 'under a cloudless sky at high noon' often led to a lack of focus. In good responses there was an attempt to use own words and to express points succinctly.

Not all of the summaries were written with fluency. Higher marks are awarded where candidates use varied and fluent sentence structures. Responses 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 passages 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 reorganised and similar points can be combined, 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. 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.

The following answer, produced by a candidate in this examination series is an appropriate length, mainly clear and concise, and includes a good number of relevant points from the passages. It is not intended to be a model answer; it might have been improved further – part (b) contains fewer points. There are also a few unnecessary details.

Part (a) the discomforts and frustrations of walking across the Wahibi Desert

The discomforts and frustrations of walking across the Wahibi Desert include climbing all the steep sided, wide and tall dunes in the dry heat while lugging heavy supplies on one's back which caused excessive sweating. Even in winter the heat of the day was still strong and sapped water supplies. The dunes were seemingly endless and the wind that shaped them blew sand into one's eyes and mouth while eating a small lunch. The walk was also carried out by exhausted walkers with parched throats and aching muscles for many hours, the sight of many sand dunes ahead demotivating them and making their progress seem extra slow.

Part (b) the effects of the sun when walking through Death Valley

The sun when walking through Death Valley can kill very easily as it beats down with unrelenting heat. It heats up the brain and makes walking agony, especially when it melts the glue in your boots, enlarges your feet and fries the soil and pebbles that enter your ruined boots. The air is stifling due to the heat and can make people extra sleepy, leading to unconsciousness, or to tempers running high. The heat can also make living creatures shy away from the sun leading to empty stretches of land. It makes travellers long for a shady place to rest and water to drink, and something to alleviate the boredom of seeing no living things for miles.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- this task is a selective summary, not a précis – be careful to give only information that answers the question
- plan your answer carefully by listing relevant points in as few words as possible
- read through your list of points and link any that are similar or the same
- make points briefly, but in sufficient detail to show what they mean
- do not write an introduction
- do not copy whole phrases from the passages
- write no more than one side of average handwriting
- use your own words as far as possible
- write in an informative style and never comment on or add to the content of the passage
- make each point only once
- do not use quotes in your answer to **Question 3**
- leave time to check and edit your response.

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

Examiners found that most scripts showed a clear understanding of the tasks undertaken and of the different skills required in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. Most responses, at all levels of achievement, were reasonably developed and very few scripts were brief or unfinished. There were also fewer scripts than in some previous series where more than one composition question had been attempted, with one from each genre being the most common rubric infringement. While these scripts represented only a small proportion of the total entry, attempting to answer three questions in the time given for only one inevitably limited the achievement of these individual candidates.

Most responses showed a real engagement with the topic in **Question 1** and with the task to write an article entitled 'Do we need art?' There was very little copying of the wording of the passage by candidates across the mark range. Better answers addressed specific ideas in the passage and were able to show a sensitive understanding of the role of art and the different arguments that had been presented. Weaker candidates tended to rephrase the material in general terms with less reference to the specific points raised in the passage. Summary or simple reaction to the material in the passage was common at this level.

Most responses across the mark range adopted a suitable tone and style for the kind of article required for a school magazine. Better responses showed some effective journalistic style, reflecting a clear understanding of the required register, whereas weaker responses were more limited in the tone adopted, with no clear evidence that the required audience had been addressed. Some responses did not appreciate that the article was to be written by the same candidate who in the passage had been discussing the subject with their art teacher.

Directed Writing responses in general could have been improved by a more careful use of the specific ideas in the reading passage and a willingness to probe beneath the surface to consider the writer's evaluation of the ideas following their conversation with the art teacher.

All three genres were addressed in fairly equal numbers in the compositions, with the discursive task about parents influencing their children's career choices the most popular option and the first descriptive question about acquiring a skill the least popular option. Better responses were characterised by a sound understanding of the demands of the genre selected. Discursive tasks were addressed sensibly, with often thoughtful ideas on the given topics. Descriptions were, in better responses, both detailed and cohesive overall, although weaker scripts relied too heavily on narrated observations of events and incidents rather

than the evocation of atmosphere. In the narrative writing, many stories were engaging and sustained the interest of the reader with well-created characters and settings. Weaker responses were characterised by simple storylines which were largely a series of events and by predictable or ineffective endings. Many composition responses would have benefited from a better understanding of the features of good writing in the different genres and of how to use them under timed conditions.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

Following your conversation with your art teacher, you decide to write an article for your school magazine, entitled ‘Do we need art?’

Write your magazine article.

In your magazine article you should:

- identify and evaluate the arguments presented by both you *and* your teacher
- explain which arguments you now agree with and why.

Base your magazine article on what you have read in the conversation, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the two bullet points.

Begin your magazine article: ‘In a recent conversation about the role of art in society and in School...’.

(25 marks)

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

High marks were awarded where there was a clear understanding of the arguments concerning ‘Do we need art?’ and where there was clear development of a number of the points expressed in the conversation and an integrated and effective evaluation of the candidate’s conclusions. The article for the school magazine was both appropriate in style and technically accurate. Better responses reflected an understanding of the points of view in the conversation and managed some clear development of these points and offered some evaluation of the candidate’s conclusions. In the middle range of marks, reference was made to a range of the points mentioned in the conversation and there was limited development of the material. Weaker responses showed some understanding of the points expressed in the conversation but relied more on a general summary of the main points. Some at this level repeated and summarised the points in the same order as the conversation and with similar wording to the source material.

The marks for Reading

The best responses adopted a consistently sensitive but evaluative stance towards both sides of the conversation between the art teacher and the candidate. These answers showed some skill in reading between the lines of the material, evaluating the points of both speakers and integrating the ideas into a clearly expressed article for the school magazine. There was a wide range of points in the material with some clear opportunities for development. These opportunities included developing the ideas the candidate had about what made ‘good’ or ‘bad’ art; developing the ideas the parents and the school had towards art; and considering the options that art and allegedly more ‘practical’ school subjects offered a school leaver. These and other possibilities were integrated with the points raised in the conversation which provided the stimulus. Most responses concluded that art was a worthwhile option, providing a range of opportunities, although some decided that art was better as a leisure pursuit which provided relaxation from the stresses of school and work. Any explanation of the candidate’s conclusions was considered to be valid, as long as the material was used and had clear development and evaluation. These responses had a clear sense of audience, with the clear register of an article for a school magazine.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 2 where there was understanding of the points raised by both speakers and there was some development of these ideas. A mark of 7 was awarded for many responses where some evaluative comments were made, often about the value of art to an individual and to society, or some

development about what constituted ‘valuable’ or ‘beautiful’ art to the candidate. These or similar points were often enough for Examiners to award a mark of 7, although at this level responses often also relied on more general expression of the points where a more consistently evaluative stance was required for a higher mark.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 3 where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the passage but without the evaluation mentioned above. Responses at this level mentioned some of the specific points of the conversation and tended to rephrase them rather than to develop them or to offer an evaluation of the need for art.

Weaker responses showed some general understanding of the points raised by the art teacher and the candidate. There was an explanation of some of the ideas written in a style other than that of a school magazine. The material was still usually understood but tended to lack an explanatory conclusion by the candidate. Some of these responses did not recognise that the article had to be written by the same candidate who had the conversation with the art teacher.

A mark of 2 or 3 was awarded where there were some valid but general ideas connected to the passage.

Marks for Writing

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

Style and audience

A relatively formal tone was appropriate for this kind of school magazine article and in most responses there was a clear attempt to adopt a suitable style. There was a clear audience for the article which necessitated an appropriate register. Most high-scoring responses showed some subtlety in their style so that the two sets of ideas were effectively balanced and integrated. At the highest level, the style was authoritative because after an analytical evaluation it provided a confident and clearly delivered conclusion. Examiners could award high marks for Writing in such cases even where there were minor technical inaccuracies.

In the middle to lower mark range, the style was often appropriate although the response sometimes lost focus on the audience and the required register. In weaker responses there was a summary of the two opinions with little or no sense that the writing was meant to appear in a school magazine.

Structure

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for Writing, calibrated their arguments carefully for maximum effect. The candidate’s concerns were tempered by the teacher’s views and a considered conclusion was reached. Some reproduced the whole of the candidate’s perspective before moving on the teacher’s point of view, or vice versa. This approach made the final explanation of the candidate’s conclusions less convincing.

Some weaker responses given marks below Band 3 were less coherent in structure and tended to return to the same few ideas at different points. Some concluded without an explanation of the final decision of the candidate writing the article.

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. Examiners looked for precision in the control of a fluent and subtle style and gave the highest marks where it was sustained throughout the response.

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. Although the style was usually appropriate and the level of formal language was sustained, a range of quite basic spelling and punctuation errors was evident. ‘Comma-splicing’ of sentences began to creep into writing at this level, apostrophes misused and, very commonly, the mis-selection of homophones.

While some of these minor errors could be compensated for by secure sense of audience or a varied vocabulary, persistent use of commas where full stops were needed kept many marks for Writing in Band 4.

In many cases, Examiners could not award marks in Band 3 for responses which were otherwise mostly accurate and which showed some clarity and coherence. Incomplete sentences were also frequent and the misuse or omission of capital letters common at this level. The lower case 'i' for the personal pronoun remains an often seen error, as well as options for 'our' including 'ower' and more commonly 'are'.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Consider the writer's point of view and how this affects their arguments.
- Look for underlying ideas or implicit meanings in the passage as well as the more superficial points being made.
- Aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them.
- Be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly. Think carefully about the right style for a speech, an article or a letter, for example.
- Check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as the use of commas where full stops are needed or lapses in clarity or formality, as these will inevitably reduce your mark.

Section 2

Composition

Question 2

Argumentative/Discursive writing

- (a) **Parents and other adults often influence children's career choices. Do you think this is a good thing?** (25 marks)

OR

- (b) **'Our grandchildren will not recognise the world we live in now.' Do you think this statement is true? Give examples to explain your views.** (25 marks)

Both questions were attempted at all levels of achievement and most responses offered relevant ideas with some development and explanation of them. In the first question, most thought that it was acceptable that parents and other adults offered some career advice and gave a number of reasons to support this view. The balance was that the final decision was often thought to belong to the individual beginning their career. There were a number of ways to develop and sustain the argument with examples (including the pressure to continue the family business; the concerns if the child's choice of career clashed fundamentally with that of the adult). Some responses used some of the ideas from **Question 1**, developing the likely parental response to a child wanting to pursue an artistic career. Weaker responses were brief and quickly ran out of ideas.

In the second question, there were some extremely thought-provoking answers which considered the ways in which the future might develop and the ways 'the world we live in' will fundamentally change and become unrecognisable. An interesting option was to suggest that 'our grandchildren' will become so ignorant and self-obsessed that they will not be able to recognise or even be interested in their own history. A number of responses focused so much on topics such as global warming or the extinction of animal species that the specific title was left behind. Average responses offered relevant, straightforward points without sustaining or effectively linking the points in the argument. Weaker responses tended to rely on only a few points and tended to be brief.

There were some engaged responses to the first question in terms of their content and structure. Better responses showed some clarity of purpose in outlining the positive and negative features of the adult advice and integrating these into a considered whole. Parents and adults were generally considered positively, wanting the best for those being given advice. It was also seen that the advice could be biased or become a way for the adult to vicariously gain pleasure through their children's career choice. Responses offered a wide range of ideas often reaching a balanced conclusion. Marks in Band 2 or above for content and structure were given for these thoughtful and often probing responses.

Examiners gave 7 or 8 for responses where there was relevant material and most were properly paragraphed but there were fewer points offered and the argument was not always effectively linked. These were often rather pedestrian in style, with less thoughtful development to engage the reader. These responses sometimes offered a coherent set of points but without a wide range of ideas and drawing to a conclusion without exploring many alternatives.

Weaker responses were usually quite brief with only a little development of ideas or sense of a structured argument.

The alternative question also elicited some effective responses. Examiners found much to reward in better responses where there was some sensitive discussion of how 'our world' might be seen by our grandchildren looking back at our history. Some high-scoring responses highlighted the relatively low opinion they held of the human management of the world in which we currently live. Some responses were much more positive and focused on the probable developments in technology, showing that questions can be tackled in different ways to achieve high marks for content and structure.

Average responses generally had a slightly narrower focus in their comments on 'our world' and how our grandchildren will not recognise it. There were some relevant points but they were less sustained and developed and were simpler in their nature.

Weaker responses were characterised by the simplicity of ideas or a listing of stereotypical features of the current world and the future. Alternatively, responses sometimes relied on a description of an imagined future world.

Style and accuracy marks were awarded across the range in both questions, with the higher marks given for writing which accurate, stylish and authoritative. Attention was paid to sustaining the interest of the reader at this level by a wide and ambitious vocabulary, precisely used. Some rhetoric and sense of audience in the style often lifted a Band 3 response into Band 2. A clear voice which challenged and engaged the reader sometimes compensated for minor errors in accuracy but equally, there were responses which were otherwise clear and competent which slipped into Band 4 because of persistent comma-splicing or faulty sentence construction.

Limited, simple vocabulary also kept some fairly accurate writing in Band 4. Commas used instead of full stops, sentence structures which lacked control, as well as a range of minor errors kept many responses out of Band 3. Where errors were sometimes not as damaging to the style, they were often too basic and too frequent for a mark in Band 3. Punctuation within sentences was weak at this level, as well as the spelling of quite common words, particularly homophones. It was surprising to see the word 'career' misspelt so often ('carrier', 'carrer', 'carer') as it was used in the title.

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

- Make sure you have enough ideas to sustain your response and try to link them together to form a cohesive argument/discussion.
- Avoid simple assertions – explain your ideas to convince the reader of your point of view.
- Check for basic errors, especially misused commas and capital letters, misspelt common words.
- Try to develop ideas into paragraphs and avoid repeating the same point.

Question 3

Descriptive Writing

- (a) You have struggled for some time to acquire a skill. Describe what you are doing at the moment of success, and your thoughts and feelings at this time.

(25 marks)

OR

- (b) Imagine that you are watching a building being destroyed. Describe what you see and hear, and your thoughts and feelings about what used to happen in this place.

(25 marks)

Both descriptive writing questions were successfully attempted across the mark range, although the second descriptive title was much more popular. In the first question, descriptions varied from evocative pieces focused on the perspective of the narrator to rather exaggerated descriptions of the newly acquired skill. Weaker responses tended to be developed as a narrative. The second question was often better done with some highly accomplished descriptions of the building and the narrator's reactions. Weaker responses to this question were also more likely to fall into narrative.

The best responses to the first question were often focused on the thoughts and feelings of the narrator rather than providing a description of the skill. Perhaps looking back to **Question 1**, the skill was often artistic and based on dance or music. The need for 'complex atmospheres' for Band 1 was addressed in different ways but originality and clarity of detail, as well as the use of evocative and subtle imagery in creating atmosphere, were characteristic of responses given marks in Band 1.

Middle and lower range responses tended to be more stereotypical and less closely observed. The description of the skill itself predominated. There was a focus on one part of the question rather than a consideration of having 'struggled for some time' as stated in the title. Thoughts and feelings at the moment of success were often quite effectively described.

Candidates' marks could have been improved at this level by a better understanding of what constitutes 'some attempt to create atmosphere' in order for Examiners to award marks in Band 3.

The second question was much more popular and there were many excellent responses in the descriptive writing responding to this question. The movement from the destruction of the building to the memories held from the past were often engaging and evocative. Theatres and schools were popular choices of building to be destroyed, allowing for very successful and emotive descriptive writing. The atmospheres created were sometimes complex and at the highest level the various descriptions were infused with the feelings of the narrator – reminiscence and emotion for the past or anger and upset over the loss - creating some highly polished responses. Some responses successfully developed the link between the destruction of the building and the deflation of the narrator's emotions.

In the middle range, there was more physical description of details observed, usually well-organised and paragraphed and with some impact and effectiveness in places. There was some reliance on a slightly mechanical use of the senses but with enough clear intention to create atmosphere for Examiners to award a mark in Band 3. In some cases, there was a narrative frame to the response but there was enough evocation of tension and fear to warrant a mark in Band 3.

Band 4 responses were more narrative than descriptive in focus, and Examiners found that the narrative recount overwhelmed any developed descriptive content at this level. The plot explaining why the building had to be destroyed, or a narrative involving sinister agencies planning the destruction took over from the descriptive elements. It would perhaps improve candidates' performance at this level if there was a better understanding of how to begin and end descriptive pieces in order to avoid this narrative trap.

Marks in Band 1 and high Band 2 for style and accuracy were awarded for the most controlled writing in which an ambitious range of descriptive vocabulary was used precisely and effectively. Band 1 responses were characterised by an assured and effective style in which surprising and striking effects were achieved using carefully chosen language and imagery.

In the middle range and below, a more straightforward vocabulary was employed and, where there was sufficient control and accuracy, a mark in Band 3 was awarded. In some cases, the writing was overwhelmed by strings of verbless sentences – one of the pitfalls of descriptive writing for some in this range – so that Examiners were precluded from awarding marks in Band 3. Tenses were also insecure at this level often with past and present tenses mixed within paragraphs and even sentences. The use of commas instead of full stops was very prevalent in Band 4 responses, even where there was some effective descriptive content and a variety of vocabulary. Here, as in the other genres, this weakness in the control of sentences was a very frequent reason for Examiners to award marks in Band 4 rather than Band 3.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

- Try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content.

- Remember the differences between descriptive and narrative writing and look to create atmosphere rather than recount events.
- Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.
- Choose your vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects.

Question 4

Narrative Writing

- (a) ‘I’m afraid there’s nothing else for it. We have to go back.’ Write a story beginning with these words.

(25 marks)

OR

- (b) Write a story about a practical joke which goes wrong.

(25 marks)

Both narrative titles were popular although the first title generally elicited the better responses. There were interesting variations for the location of the opening words, from the more predictable adventure stories, to fearful returns to a difficult emotional environment. Decisions of various kinds, often with potentially drastic consequences, also featured in effective stories. Better narrative responses paid full attention to character and setting and engaged the reader through to a structured conclusion.

Average responses were more common for this question than either outstanding or weak narratives. The given beginning of the story was often followed by ‘It all began...’ or some other way to return to a more straightforward chronological recount. There were many battle-zone stories as well as time travel and many zombie attacks. As usual, where responses showed some skill in creating characters and establishing settings, often building a degree of tension in the main body of the response, it was possible for Examiners to award marks in Band 3. Many stories at this level were not resolved in convincing ways but had enough shape and overall cohesion for 7 or 8.

Weaker responses lacked control over an overwhelming number of events and sometimes did not use the opening line in productive ways. Occasionally, there was no real link between the opening line either syntactically or narratively. Examiners gave marks in Band 4 when the narrative became ‘a series of events’ with limited attention paid to characters and their motivations, thoughts and feelings. Band 5 narratives in response to this question were less common, suggesting that candidates would fare better if they had a better understanding of how to create convincing characters and settings as well as events and incidents in their stories.

The second question was also quite popular, although responses were usually weaker. There were many responses with buckets of water that soaked the wrong person, and there were many gruesome injuries or even death resulting from the inappropriate practical joke. Few responses managed to develop any degree of sophistication or complexity with this title and most responses had straightforward narrative management with predictable plots and settings. In some, where Examiners could award a mark in Band 3, there was some credibility and cohesion in the build-up and delivery of the practical joke. For responses to the alternative question, sequences of events with little focus on character and setting were limited to marks in Band 4.

Marks for style and accuracy varied considerably among those who chose the narrative option. Better responses used a range of sentence structures and well-chosen vocabulary to help create specific effects and to add colour and pace to their narratives. A controlled, competent style secured a mark in Band 3 and even where candidates wrote in a fairly pedestrian style but punctuated sentences accurately, Examiners could award a mark of 7 or 8. Weaknesses in constructing sentences, comma-splicing or frequent basic spelling and punctuation errors resulted in marks for style and accuracy below Band 3. The use of commas where full stops were needed was more common here than in some previous series and depressed marks for responses which were otherwise fairly accurate and clear. Relatively few responses were so error-prone as to obscure meaning. These were given marks lower than Band 4.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved

- Plan how to resolve your story in an interesting way.
- Consider more creative interpretations of titles.
- Characters' thoughts and feelings help to involve your reader in their story.
- Check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes. Be sure that commas are used within sentences and not instead of full stops.

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

Examiners found that most scripts showed a clear understanding of the tasks undertaken and of the different skills required in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. Most responses, at all levels of achievement, were reasonably developed and relatively few scripts were very brief or unfinished. There were a few where more than one composition question had been attempted, with one from each genre being the most common rubric infringement. While these scripts represent only a small proportion of the total entry, attempting to answer three questions in the time given for only one question inevitably limited the achievement of these individual candidates.

Most responses showed a real engagement with the topic in **Question 1** and with the task to give advice. There was very little copying of the wording of the passage across the mark range. Better answers here addressed specific ideas in the passage and were able to show a sensitive understanding of the dilemma facing the writer. Weaker responses tended to offer advice in general terms with less reference to the particular issues raised in the passage. Assertion or simple reaction to the writer of the passage was common at this level.

Most responses across the mark range adopted a suitable tone and style for the kind of letter required and nearly all adhered to the format of a letter. Better responses showed some subtlety in the style, reflecting sensitivity to the recipient of the letter, whereas weaker responses were more limited in the tone adopted, sometimes rather too informal or confrontational.

Directed Writing responses in general could have been improved by a more careful use of the specific ideas in the reading passage and a willingness to probe beneath the surface to consider the writer's point of view. All three genres and all questions were addressed in fairly equal numbers in the compositions, with the descriptive task about a classroom without a teacher the most popular choice and the second narrative question the least. Better responses were characterised by a sound understanding of the demands of the genre selected. Discursive tasks were addressed sensibly, with often thoughtful ideas on the given topics. Descriptions were, in better responses, both detailed and cohesive overall although weaker scripts relied too heavily on narrated observations of events and incidents rather than the evocation of atmosphere. In the narrative writing, many stories were engaging and sustained the interest of the reader with well-created characters and settings. Weaker responses were characterised by simple storylines which were largely a series of events and by predictable or ineffective endings. Many composition responses would have benefited from a better understanding of the features of good writing in the different genres and of how to use them under timed conditions.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Question 1

Read carefully the letter addressed to Elena in the Reading Booklet Insert. Then answer Section 1, Question 1 on this Question Paper.

Imagine that you are Elena and you are going to answer Freya's letter.

Write your letter, which will be published in the magazine.

In your letter you should:

- identify and evaluate Freya's arguments and concerns
- give Freya suitable advice for her situation.

Base your speech on what you have read in the transcript. Be careful to use your own words.

Begin your letter:

**'Dear Freya,
I was sad to read your letter and I understand your feelings. However, I am sure that your situation is not as hopeless as you imagine...'** (25)

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

High marks were awarded where some sympathetic understanding of Freya's frame of mind was shown, and where the letter was both appropriate in style and technically accurate. Better responses here reflected an understanding of Freya's sense of loss, hurt and despair, implicit in her letter, and while more practical solutions were also sometimes offered, this advice was rooted in a sensitive reading of her fear of the future without her son. In the middle range of marks, reference was made to a range of different concerns mentioned by Freya in her letter and the advice given was often straightforward and practical. Weaker responses showed some grasp of Freya's distress but relied more on a general assertion of Jacob's rights to 'fly the nest', with less developed use of other points made in the passage. Some at this level agreed that Jacob was indeed 'selfish and heartless' and reiterated one or two of Freya's reasons for saying this.

The marks for Reading

The best responses adopted a consistently sensitive but evaluative stance towards the claims made by Freya in her letter. These answers showed some skill in reading between the lines of Freya's letter, locating her bitterness and slightly over-dramatic despair in the grief she feels at the loss of her son. Her implied resentment – or jealousy – of her future daughter-in-law was sometimes alluded to as well as her sense of abandonment and fear of a lonely future. At this level, her claim that she would lose all communication with her son was often understood as a reflection of her bitterness rather than a realistic prospect. While solutions to specific problems were sometimes offered, at the highest level a cohesive argument emerged, based on a sensitive overview of the balance between Freya's rights and responsibilities as a parent and Jacob's as an adult son.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 2 where some understanding was shown of Freya's fears and there was some evaluation. A mark of 7 was awarded for many responses where some evaluative comments were made, often considering Jacob's point of view, such as his need for independence and privacy and also the financial insecurity of farming. Other evaluative comments were about the value of Jacob's expensive education for such a future on an isolated farm, that the majority of opportunities for Jacob with his interest in IT would be in the City, Freya's rather exaggerated claims that she would lose all contact with him or that 70km in this day and age is, in fact, no distance at all. At this level, responses tended to identify Freya's specific concerns and argued that they were unfounded or unjustified. For example, many argued that parents' sacrifices could not be repaid by their children and that there was much to be proud of in Jacob's achievements rather than being resentful. These evaluative points were often enough for Examiners to award a mark of 7, although at this level responses often also relied on more general advice where a more consistently evaluative stance supported by a range of detail from the text was required for a higher mark.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 3 where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the passage but without the evaluation mentioned above. Responses at this level addressed some of the specific concerns expressed by Freya but often countered them by assertions that Jacob was not ‘selfish and heartless’ and that she would see her grandchildren despite her fears. She was advised to welcome the added freedom of life without Jacob and to socialise more with other farmers, hire extra workers for the farm and, most frequently, to ask for Jacob’s help in teaching her how to email. There were often generalisations about relationships between parents and children. These comments were sufficiently rooted in the details of the passage for 5 or 6, but lacked a real grasp of Freya’s underlying fears and concerns for Band 2.

Weaker responses showed some general understanding of Freya’s predicament but relied on rather unrealistic solutions for her problems which did not reflect her real fears or addressed points which were not suggested by the letter. Some at this level simply asserted that it was natural for Jacob to leave his family home and that Freya could not and should not try to prevent him. While this was a valid reaction, little or no support was offered for this view from the passage. Naïve solutions to Freya’s problems were suggested such as selling the farm, moving closer to the city or assuring Freya that Jacob would return to the farm eventually, or that he would definitely send money to assist Freya and her husband. There was quite a lot of comment that Freya was the best mum and Jacob the best son in the world or that God would be sure to guide either her or Jacob – yet religious beliefs were not mentioned in the passage. Some made assumptions about what Jacob thought and felt – ‘he loves you really and will stay in touch’ – but tended to ignore the better evidence of Freya’s feelings as reflected in the passage.

General advice tended to overwhelm weaker responses so that the passage itself was covered only thinly. A mark of 2 or 3 was awarded where there was some valid but general advice connected to the passage. A clearer grasp of Freya’s point of view and of the roots of her despair, implied in the passage, would have improved performance in this question.

Marks for Writing

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

Style and audience

A sympathetic, politely persuasive tone was appropriate for the kind of letter required here and in most responses there was a clear attempt to adopt a suitable style. There was a dual audience for the letter – personally addressed to Freya but published in a magazine – which necessitated a formal, respectful register. In a few cases, some prior relationship between Freya and Elena was assumed which showed a less secure awareness of audience and sometimes a rather sneering or hectoring tone was used which struck a jarring note. Most high-scoring responses showed some subtlety in their style so that difficult advice could be made more palatable and Freya’s own inadequacies addressed without offence. At the highest level, the style was authoritative because it provided reassurance and inspired trust, even though the advice given was sometimes uncompromising. Examiners could award high marks for Writing in such cases even where there were many minor technical inaccuracies.

In the middle to lower mark range, the style was often appropriate although there were sometimes lapses in awareness of the intended audience, for example Elena referring to Freya and her husband as ‘you guys’. Over-familiarity between the writer and the recipient sometimes gave the impression that the two women knew each other of old and Freya was berated inappropriately in some responses for her selfishness or sneered at for her weaknesses in a way which did not ring true for the kind of letter required.

Structure

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for Writing, calibrated their arguments carefully for maximum effect. Freya's underlying fears were exposed gradually and her own weaknesses and selfishness revealed subtly. Responses given 8 or 9 for Writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the article and were sensibly structured and paragraphed. Some reproduced Freya's arguments as a whole before countering them in the second half of the response while others dealt with each as they arose in the passage. Occasionally this led to some contradiction overall where Freya was advised to take on more workers as well as sell the farm, or both to let Jacob go and to talk him out of leaving because he was needed on the farm.

Some weaker responses given marks below Band 3 were less coherent in structure and tended to return to the same few ideas at different points. Some leapt straight into their advice with perfunctory introduction to their letters and a few forgot the valediction at the end.

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. Examiners looked for precision in the control of a fluent and subtle style and gave the highest marks where it was sustained throughout the response.

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. Although the style was usually appropriate and the level of formal language was sustained, a range of quite basic spelling and punctuation errors was evident. There were sentence boundary errors at this level, apostrophes misused and, very commonly, the mis-selection of homophones.

While some of these minor errors could be compensated for by secure sense of audience or a varied vocabulary, persistent use of commas where full stops were needed kept many marks for Writing in Band 4. In many cases, Examiners could not award marks in Band 3 for responses which were otherwise mostly accurate and which showed some clarity and coherence.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Consider the writer's point of view and how this affects their arguments.
- Look for underlying ideas or implicit meanings in the passage as well as the more superficial points being made.
- Aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them.
- Be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly. Think carefully about the right style for a speech, an article or a letter, for example.
- Check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as the use of commas where full stops are needed or lapses in clarity or formality, as these will inevitably reduce your mark.

Section 2: Composition

Question 2

Argumentative/Discursive writing

- (a) **Would you enjoy being one of these: a teacher, a police officer or a doctor? Explain why or why not.** (25)

OR

- (b) **'Getting old is something to be dreaded.' Do you agree?** (25)

Both questions were popular choices at all levels of achievement and most candidates offered relevant ideas with some development and explanation of them. A few responses addressed all three career options in their answers to the first question and although Examiners did not penalise those who misread the question in this way, most high-scoring responses gave more considered and thoughtful views on one. Some also attempted an unnecessary comparison of the three professions which was not a productive approach to this question. There was some naivety in the reasons given for or against particular jobs in weaker responses and some were brief and quickly ran out of ideas.

In the second question, there were some extremely thought-provoking answers which addressed the idea of ageing and old people with intelligence and depth. Some better responses discussed the different attitudes towards old people in different cultures or the ways in which old people could be seen socially as both an asset and a burden. Average responses were characterised by relevant, valid ideas which were more straightforward, such as the effects of old age on the body. Weaker responses tended to rely on a few rather stereotypical ideas about the elderly.

There were some engaged responses to the first question in terms of their content and structure. Better responses showed some clarity of purpose in outlining the attractive features of one of the three professions, such as job satisfaction and personal fulfilment and there was often some discussion of possible drawbacks. Some responses made thoughtful use of their particular perspective on the teaching profession to write about both the aspiration to enthuse and guide children in their learning and the potential for misery created by disaffected students or the drudgery of marking. Similarly, the high esteem in which doctors are usually held was seen by many as tempered by the immense responsibility of the job and the inevitable failures involved. Working as a police officer was also seen as a job commanding respect and implying personal authority by most. Some, however, commented on the hostility some communities felt towards the police and the inherent dangers of working amongst criminals. Responses at this level tended to touch on the ideas and ideals which underpin these professions rather than, or as well as, the more practical aspects of doing the job. Marks in Band 2 or above for content and structure were given for these thoughtful, often quite probing responses. Examiners gave 7 or 8 for responses where there was relevant material and most were properly paragraphed but there was more reliance on the day-to-day work involved in these professions. These were often rather pedestrian in style, with less thoughtful development to engage the reader. The enjoyment of fast cars or the availability of 'free' meals were frequently cited as a reason to become a police officer, for example, or a dislike of blood as a reason not to become a doctor. Many responses at this level tended to dilute their discussion by writing about all three careers, although most were sensibly organised and paragraphed. Weaker responses were usually quite brief with some rather naïve notions about what each job entailed or superficial aspects of each profession such as salary.

The alternative question elicited some strong responses. Examiners found much to reward in better responses where there was some sensitive discussion of what it means to be old in modern society or in different cultures across the world. Very few responses were ambivalent about old age: they either hated or relished the prospect. There seemed to be a strong cultural bias. Responses from societies where the elderly are venerated stressed the wisdom and respect that the elderly receive. There was much about the satisfaction of being a matriarchal/patriarchal figure. Responses often argued that old age is inevitable and that it is pointless to fear it: better to face it and seeks its positives: rest, time for oneself, relief from the stress of work, the time spent with grandchildren and so on. Those dreading old age often described its worst aspects for the most unfortunate: weakness – physical or mental, immobility, constant illnesses, the approach of death.

Average responses generally had a slightly narrower focus in their comments on how old age affects the individual. There was often some sensible and organised consideration of the disadvantages and advantages of ageing in these responses. Physical infirmities were sometimes listed rather than their impact considered and the inevitability of frailty and disease were commonly seen as something to be dreaded. On the other hand, freedom from work and family responsibilities was a boon of old age and there were some personal anecdotes about energetic grandparents who spent their twilight years having the time of their lives. Weaker responses were characterised by the simplicity of ideas or a listing of stereotypical features of old age such as the loss of physical prowess or grumpiness. Alternatively, responses relied on a simple description of an elderly family member.

Style and accuracy marks were awarded across the range in both questions, with the higher marks given for writing which was accurate, stylish and authoritative. Attention was paid to sustaining the interest of the reader at this level by a wide and ambitious vocabulary, precisely used. Some rhetoric and sense of audience in the style often lifted a Band 3 response into Band 2. A clear voice which challenged and engaged the reader sometimes compensated for minor errors in accuracy but equally, there were responses which were otherwise clear and competent which slipped into Band 4 because of persistent comma-splicing or faulty sentence construction. There were sometimes problems with the future / conditional tense. For example, constructions such as "I enjoy being a teacher" or "I will enjoy being a teacher" were common, instead of "I would enjoy..." This sometimes led to some muddling of tense throughout.

Limited, simple vocabulary also kept some fairly accurate writing in Band 4. Commas used instead of full stops, sentence structures which lacked control, as well as a range of minor errors kept many responses out of Band 3. Where errors were sometimes not as damaging to the style, they were often too basic and too frequent for a mark in Band 3. Punctuation within sentences was weak at this level, as well as the spelling of quite common words, particularly homophones.

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

- Make sure you have enough ideas to sustain your response and try to link them together to form a cohesive argument/discussion.
- Avoid simple assertions – explain your ideas to convince the reader of your point of view.
- Check for basic errors, especially misused commas and capital letters, misspelt common words.
- Try to develop ideas into paragraphs and avoid repeating the same point.

Question 3

Descriptive Writing

- (a) **Describe a classroom of students with no teacher present. End your description as the classroom door suddenly opens.** (25)
- OR**
- (b) **You climb a tree and cannot be seen. Describe what you see and hear happening below.** (25)

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range. In the first question, descriptions varied from evocative pieces focused on the perspective of the narrator to rather exaggerated lists of activities happening around the classroom. The second question was often more successful with some highly accomplished descriptions of landscape and the narrator's reactions. Weaker responses to this question were, however, more likely to fall into narrative.

The best responses to the first question were often focused on the thoughts and feelings of the narrator rather than providing a description of the chaos in the classroom. The sense of freedom from constraint without the classroom teacher was sometimes evoked with originality at this level, rather than a focus on the mayhem which ensued. The need for 'complex atmospheres' for Band 1 was addressed in different ways but originality and clarity of detail, as well as the use of evocative and subtle imagery in creating atmosphere, were characteristic of responses given marks in Band 1.

Middle and lower range responses tended to be more stereotypical and less closely observed in the scenes described. The description of different groups in the classroom and their activities predominated. Girls nearly always applied their make-up and talked about boys and paper airplanes and other flying missiles were almost universally thrown. These were, however, usually well-organised and there was some attempt made to evoke the frenetic atmosphere in the classroom. Some extended images worked well at this level. The classroom as a jungle or a battle scene was quite common but in some responses the image was carried through the piece with some effectiveness. Students became 'warriors' and thrown pencils or other objects became 'guided missiles', for example, and although the extended metaphor was sometimes a little laboured there was some understanding of how imagery can enhance descriptive writing.

In some descriptions, lists of different groups and their activities sometimes gave way to rather exaggerated narratives of food fights, destruction of classroom equipment and physical aggression between students. Adding more destructive details did not usually add to the description's effectiveness in evoking atmosphere.

Perhaps responses could have been improved at this level by a better understanding of what constitutes ‘some attempt to create atmosphere’ in order for Examiners to award marks in Band 3.

The second question was less popular but excellent responses in the descriptive writing tended to be answers to this question. Strong responses saw the possibilities afforded by the question, to have a perspective of ones’ surroundings that isn’t normally available. These responses were often atmospheric and well described descriptions of landscapes. Sometimes candidates were able to offer a sense of taking in lots of different scenes and activities, developing the idea of having a bird’s eye view. Good writers often made much of the tree itself as the narrator climbed it, with some focus on the tactile quality of the bark and the play of sunlight through the canopy of leaves. There was also care taken to evoke the meaning of the hiding place for the narrator, often as a safe haven or an escape from the anxieties induced by the world below. The atmospheres created were sometimes complex and at the highest level the various landscapes described were infused with the feelings of the narrator – guilt and fear or serenity and calm – creating some highly polished responses.

In the middle range, there was more physical description of details observed, usually well-organised and paragraphed and with some impact and effectiveness in places. There was some reliance on a slightly mechanical use of the senses but with enough clear intention to create atmosphere for Examiners to award a mark in Band 3. In some cases, there was a narrative frame to the response – the tree was climbed in an attempt to escape some pursuer bent on violence, for example – but there was enough evocation of tension and fear to warrant a mark in Band 3.

Band 4 responses were more narrative than descriptive in focus, on the whole, and Examiners found that the narrative recount overwhelmed any developed descriptive content at this level. Narrators climbed the tree usually as an escape from some criminal or animal or they observed or overheard some criminal activity from the tree. The pretext for climbing the tree usually prompted narrative writing in order to resolve the story; it would perhaps improve performance at this level if there was a better understanding of how to begin and end descriptive pieces in order to avoid this narrative trap.

Marks in Band 1 and high Band 2 for style and accuracy were awarded for the most controlled writing in which an ambitious range of descriptive vocabulary was used precisely and effectively. Band 1 responses were characterised by an assured and effective style in which surprising and striking effects were achieved using carefully chosen language and imagery.

In the middle range and below, a more straightforward vocabulary was employed and where there was sufficient control and accuracy a mark in Band 3 was awarded. In some cases, the writing was overwhelmed by a series of verbless sentences – one of the pitfalls of descriptive writing for some in this range – so that Examiners were precluded from awarding marks in Band 3. Tenses were also insecure at this level often with past and present tenses mixed within paragraphs and even sentences. The use of commas instead of full stops was very prevalent in Band 4 responses, even where there was some effective descriptive content and a variety of vocabulary. Here, as in the other genres, this weakness in the control of sentences was a very frequent reason for Examiners to award marks in Band 4 rather than Band 3.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

- Try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content.
- Remember the differences between descriptive and narrative writing and look to create atmosphere rather than recount events.
- Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.
- Choose your vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects.

Question 4

Narrative Writing

- (a) Write a story which begins with the words ‘Nothing could have prepared me for what I had to do next.’ (25)

OR

- (b) You have the power to go back 24 hours to change what happened or what was said. Write a story involving this power, making it clear why you needed to make changes. (25)

The first question was the more popular of the two options. At Band 1 level the opening words were interpreted in some creative ways, often involving some difficult personal crossroads rather than a more dramatic, action-packed narrative scenario. Decisions of various kinds, often with potentially drastic consequences, also featured in effective stories. The opening line was integrated into the narrative, sometimes used as a final sentence and there was no difficulty with these approaches rather than using a more conventional chronology.

Middle band responses were more common for this question than either outstanding or weak narratives. The given beginning of the story was often followed by 'It all began...' or some other way to return to a more straightforward chronological recount. There were many battle-zone stories as well as some frightening diagnoses of illness, unexpected requests for heroic deeds in sport, singing or dancing competitions and many other interpretations of the opening line. As usual, where responses showed some skill in creating characters and establishing settings, often building some tension in the main body of the response, it was possible for Examiners to award marks in Band 3. Many stories at this level were not resolved in convincing ways but had enough shape and overall cohesion for 7 or 8.

Weaker responses lacked control over an overwhelming number of events and sometimes did not use the opening line in productive ways. Occasionally, there was no real link between the opening line either syntactically or narratively. Examiners gave marks in Band 4 when the narrative became 'a series of events' with limited attention paid to characters and their motivations, thoughts and feelings. Band 5 narratives in response to this question were less common, suggesting that candidates would fare better if they had a better understanding of how to create convincing characters and settings as well as events and incidents in their stories.

The second question was quite rarely selected and responses were usually weaker. It was a challenge to deal with the ability to turn back time. The best responses were ones where the narrator concentrated on a single regrettable remark or action, often involving a friend or family member. Stronger responses concentrated on the implications and repercussions. Often a parallel structure was quite successfully employed, with subtle distinctions made between the two days and/or occasions. These better responses balanced the sections of the story, sometimes using devices such as flashbacks to explore the events the narrator needed to alter, rather than adopting a straightforward chronological narrative.

Band 3 or 4 narratives in which the origins of the power to erase the last 24 hours was not really explained and the narrative content was less engaging for the reader. Some middle band narratives were rather ambitious in scope e.g. going back in time to save the world. This left little time to develop detail and explore character. More simple scenarios which focused on the consequences of an individual's actions were often more successful, as they gave an opportunity to explore character and motivation. The 24 hours proved difficult to rewind for some who, for example, narrated months' worth of events and then only rewound time by 24 hours to make changes.

Quite often responses took the approach of narrating events which they wished they had the power to change, rather than actually having the power to do so. When these responses explored character and motivation, some effective responses were produced. However, sometimes this could also lead to a reflective piece with no sense of the reader being prepared for a climax.

Marks for style and accuracy varied considerably among those who chose the narrative option. Better responses used a range of sentence structures and well-chosen vocabulary to help create specific effects and to add colour and pace to their narratives. A controlled, competent style secured a mark in Band 3 and even where candidates wrote in a fairly pedestrian style but punctuated sentences accurately, Examiners could award a mark of 7 or 8. Weaknesses in constructing sentences, comma-splicing or frequent basic spelling and punctuation errors resulted in marks for style and accuracy below Band 3. The use of commas where full stops were needed was more common here than in some previous series and depressed marks for responses which were otherwise fairly accurate and clear. Relatively few responses were so error-prone as to obscure meaning. These were given marks lower than Band 4.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved

- Plan how to resolve your story in an interesting way.
- Consider more creative interpretations of titles.
- Characters' thoughts and feelings help to involve your reader in their story.
- Check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes. Be sure that commas are used within sentences and not instead of full stops.

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 to suit 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 great majority of candidates showed confident awareness of what was expected of them in both the Directed Writing and Composition sections of the paper. Unacceptably brief or undeveloped responses were rare, and it was unusual to find rubric infringements where more than the required number of questions was attempted. When this did occur, the insufficient time allowed to write substantial and considered responses was inevitably reflected in their quality and therefore in the marks awarded.

At all levels of achievement, clear understanding of the reading material and the task in **Question 1** was evident. There was very little direct copying of the wording of the passage, although a few of its phrases were regularly reproduced, perhaps because they were both topically important and difficult to paraphrase successfully. Better answers grasped the complexities of the headteacher's concerns while convincingly inhabiting the senior student's position. Weaker candidates were inclined to lengthy paraphrasing of the material with little meaningful development or evaluation.

Most responses at all levels of achievement adopted a suitable tone and style for the situation specified in the question, and nearly all adhered to the form of a conversation, following on from the given sentence. Several candidates wrote in a play-script format, complete with stage directions, although this did not necessarily detract from the quality of the evaluation therein.

Directed Writing responses in general could have been improved by a more careful use of the specific ideas in the passage, and a greater independence of thought, with candidates being less willing to accept the main premises of the speech without more careful probing. Examiners also noted a considerable degree of paraphrasing: often the mark for Reading was affected by this, because material was being reproduced rather than developed. Inevitably there was a discrepancy in the Writing marks between the two sections when candidates could not reproduce independently the style adapted from the passage. At all levels, however, there was much evidence of the candidates being fully aware of the requirements of this section of the paper.

In **Section 2**, while all genres and questions were addressed, the narrative questions were the most popular choices, closely followed by **Question 2(b)**. The best responses were characterised by clear understanding of the requirements of the chosen genre, and an appreciation of what the examiners would be seeking to reward. These candidates demonstrated a wide-ranging and precisely employed vocabulary and an originality not always apparent in their approach to **Question 1**. Discursive tasks were approached in a mature and sensible manner, and often demonstrated a sophisticated awareness of wider cultural and economic concerns. Both options in the descriptive genre produced evocative observations, rich in detail, but weaker responses relied too heavily on narrated incident and events. In the narrative writing, stories were often engaging and inventive, but many would have benefited from a better understanding of the requirements of the genre: these were often aimless or had incredible or highly predictable endings. In all three genres, there were responses which would have been much improved by greater concision, and more careful sequencing and cohesion.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Question 1

Read carefully the speech given by Andrew Jones, the owner of Extreme Challenge, which is in the Reading Booklet Insert. You have been invited to attend as one of a group of senior students. Then answer Section 1, Question 1 on this Question Paper.

Write the conversation between you and your headteacher, after Andrew Jones has left.

In your conversation, you should discuss:

- the benefits offered by Extreme Challenge
- your headteacher's reservations about the courses.

Base your conversation on the speech but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the bullet points.

Begin your conversation: 'Head: Well, I'm not sure about this scheme....'.

Write between 1 1/2 and 2 sides, allowing for the size of your handwriting.

(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.

High marks were awarded where the benefits of the proposed scheme were subjected to rigorous examination by both parties to the conversation, which was written in an appropriate and accurate style. Better responses showed a sensitive understanding of both the headteacher's concerns and the student's enthusiasm, while rooting development firmly in the text. In the middle range of marks, candidates reproduced the key points with some development and rather predictable demur on the part of the headteacher, quickly resolved by the end of the conversation. Weak responses consisted mainly of paraphrase of some or a few of Andrew Jones' claims, sometimes with only monosyllabic interjections from the headteacher. At this level there was rarely any challenge to the speaker's assertions. The attainment of a small number of candidates was impaired by their approach to the question, in that they did not focus on discussing the benefits offered by Extreme Challenge, and the headteacher's reservations, but rather challenged the honesty and credibility of Andrew Jones by a forensic analysis of the rhetoric in the passage.

Marks for Reading

The best responses were evaluative throughout, with both parties appraising Andrew Jones' proposals as they might apply to the pupils and staff of a particular school. At all levels support for them came mostly from the student, with reservations expressed by the headteacher as was required by the terms of the question, but responses awarded marks in the top band did not assume unqualified acceptance from a senior student of the claims of Extreme Challenge, or indeed immediate opposition from the headteacher. At this level also the premises of the first paragraph in the speech were probed to assess the stance and motivation of the speaker, and to evaluate the importance of the outcomes of these courses to the economy. Here also the question of cost, picked up throughout the range, was considered not only in financial terms but also in the future implications for partaking students: "Yes, but at what cost? They may return exhilarated, confident, ready for anything, or return more reserved and unhappy than before because their limitations have been further exposed--what then?" or "I fear that young students thrilled by high-risk, but highly supervised activities will return without a realistic understanding of their own limits, and expose themselves recklessly to danger in situations where there is no support." There was great maturity evident in some of these responses, where a genuine dialogue between two people, both committed to the welfare of students and school, was created. Sometimes however, an insightful and subtle evaluation was not awarded full marks because its range was too limited.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 2 where candidates covered a reasonable range of the points in the passage with some evaluation. A mark of 7 could be gained by a response which offered some evaluative comments, perhaps about the unlikelihood of a one-week course bringing about such amazing transformations, or the reluctance of Andrew Jones to test his methods on "seriously disruptive" students, even if other significant points were not covered. If there was a more thorough coverage and development of the material, even with relatively limited evaluation, a mark of 8 could be awarded. At this level candidates sometimes raised the possibility of further damage to their introverted peers rather than the effective socialisation promised by the speaker. In Band 2 general approval of the banning of mobile phones as a strategy to support social contact was expressed, but the recognition of the danger to students isolated in dangerous conditions was less often considered. Some quite lengthy, well-developed responses which showed clear understanding of the passage failed to achieve a mark in this band because the headteacher's replies and interjections were only mechanical, and there was no evaluation evident.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 3 when there was reasonable coverage of the reading material in a satisfactorily structured response but evaluation or indeed any real challenge was lacking. These responses usually showed acceptance of the promised benefits of the Extreme Challenge course, sometimes with some further, perhaps anecdotal development, but the headteacher's 'reservations' were in reality drawn from the qualifications expressed by Andrew Jones himself and were thus not evaluative: "... Our school will need to pay for part of the course with the parents...", or "These challenges do not make up for physical activity in everyday life....". Typically, these responses did not constitute a genuine dialogue, but were divisions of the passage between two speakers with appropriate grammatical adjustments. At the lower end of the band, responses displayed very limited input from the headteacher, and ended very abruptly.

Responses which earned a mark in Band 4 displayed a limited grasp either of the thrust of the passage itself, or of the task: these often listed some of the claimed benefits of Extreme Challenge without discussion or development, in limited paraphrase, or used the material thinly and in a disjointed way, making it difficult to assess the speaker's stance.

The very small minority of responses which fell below this band were given a mark of 2, or more rarely 1, when it was possible to discern some connection to the ideas of the passage, but not development necessary to demonstrate a grasp of the speaker's intent. A very few candidates did not attempt **Question 1**.

Marks for Writing

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

Style and audience

That a conversational style and format were required was made clear in the question, and almost all candidates adopted these successfully. A small number wrote in the style of a play script, complete with stage directions e.g. "The headteacher frowns in a disapproving way", or "Another student enters the room..." While occasionally this resulted in some rather irrelevant and distracting development, more often it made no difference to the production or otherwise of evaluation. For a discourse between a headteacher and a student clearly an appropriately formal register was required, but there existed within this a rather surprising range of familiarity. In many cases students were quite obsequious, with both parties using the most formal forms of address; in others there was a friendly informality which still respected the differing roles of the speakers, which may well have reflected the management style in a candidate's own school. Occasionally however a headteacher used a lexicon laden with teenage slang, or a student was impertinent, aggressive or sneering in tone, in an entirely unconvincing way. At all levels of achievement the more usual courtesies were generally observed and the different roles of the speakers were never in doubt. Examiners awarded high marks for a sense of audience where not only style and tone were appropriate, but also real interplay between the speakers created a genuine dialogue about Extreme Challenge, rather than the two intertwined monologues evident at the lower levels. In the two top bands the style was often authoritative and convincing enough to compensate to a considerable degree for minor technical faults.

Structure

At all levels a clear majority of candidates structured their conversations to reflect the order that points were made in the original speech. This approach was valid and understandable, often producing a thorough and methodical appraisal supportive of evaluation. Elsewhere however this approach led to a mechanical and undiscriminating reproduction of the different claims with only cursory development. The best responses led the discussion with carefully prioritised argument independent of the original structure, and often concluded with a firm decision having been taken by the headteacher, reflecting the strength of the foregoing arguments. Responses in Band 3 which reproduced points with some development usually followed the original structure then concluded with the headteacher agreeing to consider the matter amidst mutual pleasantries. On the surface, the conversational format seemed to preclude the necessity to write in paragraphs or at least seemed to decide their disposition for the candidate, but in the event the organisation of the response by weaker candidates was often simplistic and arbitrary, with short paragraphs of similar length alternating on the page, rarely reflective of the movement of argument at that point. Typically, responses in the lowest bands were disjointed, with little discernible structure, and ended perfunctorily.

Accuracy

Responses awarded marks in Band 1 combined a fluent and authoritative style, typified by sophisticated, precisely employed vocabulary and a wide range of sentence structures, with a very high level of technical accuracy. An impressive number of candidates gained high marks for this element. Marks in Band 2 were awarded when the response displayed a consistent awareness of audience, and was largely accurate. Candidates in this band often made an ingenious use of the vocabulary and terminology of the passage which was not simply paraphrase.

Examiners awarded marks of 8 or 9 to responses which were clearly and competently written, with less ambitious vocabulary but usually only minor, if perhaps frequent, errors. Although the great majority of the candidature displayed sound skill in spelling, errors of sentence separation began to be more apparent at this level. Mis-selection of homophones was also noted in a number of responses.

Many responses could not be awarded marks in Band 3 because of persistent comma-splicing and the frequent omission or misuse of capital letters. These faults occurred even where the sense of audience was secure and there was some precision employed in the choice of vocabulary.

A small minority of candidates could not be awarded marks for Writing in Band 4. These responses were marred by serious faults in sentence structure and syntax, and by errors of tense, agreement, and in the use of prepositions. Very occasionally the proliferation of error blurred meaning, so that Reading marks were also affected.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved

- Carefully consider the position and point of view of the writer and how that affects their opinions.
- Be prepared to challenge the views expressed in the passage rather than just reproducing them.
- Aim for breadth of coverage of the material in the passage as well as some depth of evaluation.
- Be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly. Think carefully about the appropriate style and register for a speech, an article or a letter, for example.
- Take time to proof-read your work to avoid basic errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar which will reduce your mark.
- Ensure that you have read the question very carefully so that you can focus fully on the task.

Section 2: Composition

Question 2

Argumentative/Discursive Writing

(a) Who would you consider to be a good role model for you? Explain your reasons. (25 marks)

OR

(b) 'You should be grateful to have a job at all. It doesn't matter whether or not you like the work.' Give your views on this statement. (25 marks)

The second question was by far the more popular choice in this genre, and second only in popularity overall to the narrative questions. Most candidates showed awareness of the requirements of this type of writing, and were able to convey their views clearly, offering developed, relevant ideas on their chosen topic. A surprising number of responses lacked proper sequencing of their points in a genre crucially requiring coherence and cohesion for success. Very few candidates choosing the first question began by examining or defining the concept of the role model, or appeared to notice the use of the conditional in the title. Those who did, produced some highly impressive, thoughtful discussions, enriched by anecdote and explanation, which gained marks for content and structure in the top band, although these were rare. Average and weaker responses typically chose a parent or other relative, or occasionally a celebrity, and wrote about them in a biographical style, sometimes appended by a brief explanation of their importance to the writer. There were responses to the second question at all levels of achievement, often revealing a mature awareness of global economics and their impact on employment in all strata of society; not infrequently writers showed a saddening pessimism about their own career prospects. Weaker responses often simply agreed with the statement, listing the consequences of being jobless.

Few Band 1 responses to **Question 2(a)** were seen. In terms of high marks for content and structure, the best ones considered the title carefully before progressing and thus were able to display discursive skill in a way less accessible to those candidates writing brief biographies. One subtle, thought-provoking response examined the idea of the role model, and how the qualities one admired in such a person might change over time, before admitting that no one person could be his role model, but that he emulated different characteristics in several individuals close to him. The complexity of this candidate's argument was supported by a highly sophisticated vocabulary. Other high-scoring responses featured a public figure of national importance, such as Sir Edmund Hillary or Mahatma Gandhi, linking their influence on their country's development to their suitability as a role model to the individual. Candidates awarded marks in Bands 2 and 3 mainly chose to write about parents or grandparents. Responses earning marks of 9 or 10 gave convincing explanations of their choices, while providing cogent detail about the subject's life and actions which engaged the reader. Candidates earning marks of 7 or 8 often described the everyday care given by their parents to their families, and sometimes, more relevantly, the tribulations encountered in earning enough to support them. While these responses were often touching and sincere, they were often quite brief and repetitive, with a simple explanation added as a brief coda: "She's always there for me and that's why she's my role model." Some responses awarded marks in Band 4 were limited to unstructured assertions about a pop star or sports champion, who typically "followed a dream", or "never gave up".

The very popular **Question 2(b)** elicited widely-varying responses at every level of achievement. While some weak responses simply listed a few "pros and cons" of being employed, or agreed unquestioningly with the statement, there were an impressive number of mature and sophisticated analyses of the international situation, and the effects of recession on developed and developing countries. A considerable number of candidates were awarded content and structure marks in Band 1, producing arguments of a density and substance astonishing in the limited time available. Many thoughtful and reflective responses earning marks in Band 2 discussed the statement as it applied differently to developed and developing countries, often supplying poignant anecdotes about the inability in the latter to find any but menial employment for even the highly educated. Others wrote with great maturity about the disadvantages of disaffected workers for both the individual and the company employing them, e.g. "They have to be grateful for the job, but [it] will result eventually in poor production rates and absenteeism." Both Band 2 and Band 3 responses showed awareness of the personal benefits of employment for the individual even in an unsatisfactory job – having colleagues for mutual support for example, or using the present position as a "stepping stone" to something better. Typically, responses at this level made a number of valid points both supporting and opposing the statement, then concluded with a brief summary giving their own stance. Responses awarded marks in Band 4 were often touching and thought-provoking in their honesty and simplicity. Yet while asserting incontrovertibly that everyone, for example, should be grateful for a job that "put[s] clean water and food on the table", they did not have the range or development for a mark in Band 3. The small minority of responses which fell below this level usually made a few relevant comments but could not sustain any argument or were confused and disjointed.

Overall, candidates should be congratulated on the serious and mature approach taken to this difficult question, when the great majority of them have not yet had personal or lengthy experience of the workplace.

Style and accuracy marks were awarded across the range in both questions, with marks in Band 1 given for writing which was fluent, authoritative and accurate, and which employed an extensive and appropriate vocabulary. Responses earning marks in Band 2 were usually fluent and largely accurate, with minor errors often compensated for by a lively and engaging style. Examiners noted that a small but significant minority of candidates answering **Question 2(b)** adopted a speech format, often maintaining second-person address and using appropriate rhetorical flourishes throughout with some success. Marks in Band 3 were awarded where writing was clear and competent, with a vocabulary sufficiently varied to convey points of view. Comma-splicing was sometimes frequent enough to deny the candidate marks in Band 3 even when there was much else to reward: here, and more noticeably in the lower bands, poor sentence separation vitiated argument to a considerable degree. Marks in Band 4 and, much less often, in Band 5 were given where errors were not only frequent but serious, involving weak sentence structure and uncertain use of prepositions, and poor control of tense and agreement. In Band 5 vocabulary was sometimes insufficient to sustain argument, and spelling of key words, including those given in the question, was erratic.

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

- Remember the requirements of the genre you have chosen. Whatever the title, examiners will look for the creation of coherent and cohesive argument.
- Make sure you have enough ideas to sustain your response to the chosen question.
- Avoid simple assertions: explain your ideas to convince the reader of your point of view.
- Check for basic errors of spelling and punctuation, especially misused commas and capital letters.
- Try to develop ideas into paragraphs and avoid repeating the same point.

Question 3

Descriptive Writing

- (a) You witness an argument in the street between two people. Describe what you see and hear and how you and other people react. (25)

OR

- (b) Describe your feelings and reactions when you realise you have lost a very important item. (25)

The first question proved marginally more popular than the second, although both were addressed across the mark range. Both required the use of the first person, and this was observed almost without exception. Very few candidates failed to adopt the appropriate focus, on what was seen and heard, and witnesses' reactions in **Question 2(a)**, and on the speaker's feelings in **Question 2(b)**. There were many highly evocative and accomplished responses to both questions, although some responses at the lower levels of achievement were dominated by narrative, and lacked descriptive detail.

The best responses to the first question produced writing of a very high order, creating the complex atmospheres required for marks in Band 1. These were often highly evocative, engaging the reader in the growing tension and increasing violence, usually verbal but occasionally physical, of the observed argument. Throughout the mark range, lovers' quarrels dominated the subject matter, and one such response awarded marks at the top of Band 1 for content and structure avoided all but the slightest narrative framework, and brilliantly depicted an argument between a couple trying initially to disguise "this obstinate slip of domestic perfection" from passers-by, who then lose control explosively. This process was evoked most effectively by the subtle use of verbs, with little recourse to adjectives: "The woman seemed to grow with rage"; "as the man gestured to the world, sweeping his hands as though he were the star in a ballet..."; "The people in the square at first pretended not to hear, turning their shoulders in upon themselves, 'hurrying' with little progress...."; "They now stood nose to nose: their eyes were slits." It is noticeable overall that fewer candidates now indulge in the imprecise employment of overly-elaborate, multisyllabic words in this genre.

Responses earning marks in Band 2 and Band 3 sometimes employed more narrative than is usually considered desirable for this genre, but often successfully restricted the 'action' to a very limited time or geographical frame. Responses in Band 2 also ensured that cogent detail was employed in narrative parts. Several responses were wisely concluded with the arrival or approach of the police, where some at the lower end of Band 3 continued to arrest, remove, and even trial and sentence guilty parties. At this level also some candidates seemed to believe that two or three (often ill-chosen) adjectives were required in every clause, or had recourse in a very mechanical way to the use of the senses---I saw---I heard---I felt, etc. Candidates awarded marks in Band 4 often wrote almost exclusively in narrative form, sometimes supplying an elaborate back-story to the argument, or writing several paragraphs detailing their own journey to the street where the argument was witnessed. At this level there was a dependence on incident and event, with little or no attempt to create atmosphere. The very small number of responses which fell below this level were either very brief, consisting of a few confusing comments about ill-defined characters, or unstructured narratives where language difficulties impaired meaning.

The second question was rather less popular but produced many excellent responses. Many candidates choosing **Question 3(a)** began with the discovery of their loss, then used a narrative flashback technique to provide the item's history or explain its significance. Where the evocation of feeling was consistent and effective, these responses could still be awarded high marks; where cogent detail was lacking, or the narrative trailed along to account for the recovery of the item and the subsequent jubilation, there was inevitable penalty. The best responses used narrative only to provide a vehicle for the description of a range of often rapidly changing emotion. One very successful candidate adopted the persona of a father who loses his child at a zoo, and used physical description to great effect in evoking a wide spectrum of feeling: ".....incredibly fast on his short legs, my son gleefully scampered around the enclosures." Then the child is lost sight of, and "In an instant the world changed. My vision tunnelled and darkened. I was cold. My heart thumped a frantic drumbeat in my ear. My mouth dried, my fingers clenched and unclenched. Horror filled my inmost being. My son. MY SON!" Despite the undisputed linearity of this concise response, which was only six paragraphs long, the focus on the father's feelings and reactions never wavered, and was compellingly atmospheric.

Responses across the mark range featured lost items of sentimental rather than monetary value, often belonging to a deceased relative: pieces of jewellery, music boxes, sealed letters left for descendants. While there were many responses of this type awarded marks in Band 2, time was sometimes handled awkwardly,

and focus on the feelings at the point when the loss of the item was discovered was lost. What usually distinguished Band 2 from Band 3 responses was the sustaining of this focus, the range of feelings described, and the ambition or aptness of the vocabulary used to evoke them; responses at the lower end of Band 3 lacked this range, and were often repetitive: "I was devastated/heartbroken/couldn't believe it." At this level candidates sometimes described their own physical features in a way that was counterproductive and occasionally, unintentionally, hilarious: "I searched in my pockets with my snowy white slim fingers while tears fell out of my baby-blue eyes and ran down my petite pink cheeks."

A small but significant proportion of the candidates whose responses tended more towards narrative, decided not to reveal the nature or identity of the lost item, in a manner more suited to that genre than to descriptive writing: a few of these responses were quite effective, but generally this approach did not create a satisfactory whole; expression and tense control became tortuous, and when the candidate withheld that information entirely the end result was less successful.

Responses awarded marks in Band 4 were usually simple narratives of loss and rediscovery with a few relevant details. As with **Question 3(a)**, only a very few responses fell below this level, and were typified by undue brevity and language difficulties which impaired communication.

At most levels of achievement, it would improve candidates' performance in this genre if there were a better understanding of how to begin and end pieces of descriptive writing.

Marks in the top band for style and accuracy were awarded to those candidates whose writing not only employed a wide-ranging and ambitious vocabulary in the creation of images and effects but was also controlled and crafted to produce a harmonious whole virtually free from error. In the middle ranges, vocabulary was plainer or less apt, and images less striking or original. Weaker candidates employed only a limited range of sentence structures, producing many consecutive sentences beginning with 'I' (often in lower case). Responses which fell below Band 4 often displayed errors of tense and agreement, and poor use of prepositions.

For all but the top band responses however, the main barrier to the awarding of high marks for style and accuracy is the lack of main or finite verbs in sentences: some responses, even where there was much to reward for content and structure, lost a significant number of marks because of this serious fault of sentence structure.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

- Remember the key requirements of descriptive writing: you are not writing a story.
- Try to be original, in both the scenarios and images you create.
- Make deliberate choices in your vocabulary to create atmosphere; remember that carefully chosen verbs and nouns are as effective as adjectives.
- Write complete sentences with proper verbs: the same rules of grammar apply to all types of writing.

Question 4

Narrative writing

- (a) Write the story of a day that remains clear in your memory, although you were much younger at the time. (25 marks)

OR

- (b) Write a story entitled 'The Journey'. (25 marks)

Narrative writing was the most popular genre in **Section 2**, with the second question proving a slightly more popular choice. Both options offered candidates great freedom of approach: the autobiographical material suggested for use by **4(a)** was enthusiastically taken up and fictionalised to a greater or lesser degree by many candidates, while 'The Journey' was frequently interpreted metaphorically. Better responses to both questions were well-sequenced and the climax carefully managed.

Responses to the first question were often very well crafted and extremely engaging: memories of having been lost in early childhood provided the basis of some accomplished and moving stories. Accounts of moving house or school, first aeroplane flights or recollections of a parent leaving home provided the material for many candidates across the mark range. The freshness and vividness of those recounts often

compensated to a degree for weaknesses elsewhere. Those earning marks in the top bands for content and structure were able to convey the fears, impressions and reactions of a young child convincingly while ordering and reflecting upon them with more adult sensibility. One response which began, enticingly, "My parents are avid travellers, and my arrival into their world did nothing to curb their passion: they simply packed me along." became a riveting account of a terrifying experience in Disneyland. This may well have been an entirely factual account of her experience, but was told with the narrative skill which many candidates seemed not to have thought was required: frequently, responses to this question consisted of straightforward accounts of a remembered day with little or no attention to character or setting, the building of tension, a climax or resolution. A substantial proportion of responses included no dialogue at all. Many candidates would have fared much better had they remembered the requirements of their chosen genre. Responses in the middle bands which were mainly accounts rather than stories were often enlivened by character or setting details which compensated to some extent for lack of narrative development; equally, some were rewarded for a reflective conclusion, often wry or humorous, which made a satisfactory ending. Weaker responses were often just a series of events in a simple chronology. Elsewhere, stories which, one hopes, were fictional involved remembered involvement in scenes of great and unlikely carnage which failed to convince.

Responses to **2(b)** generally conformed more to the requirements of the narrative form, but were proportionally less likely to be awarded marks at the top of Band 1 for content and structure, especially when the title was interpreted literally. There were many engaging responses, some with complex and sophisticated narratives. One most accomplished response appeared to be a clever reworking of Alice's journey in Wonderland, but then became quite shockingly and utterly convincingly the terrified perceptions of an accident victim in a coma. In the middle bands there were many competent stories which showed some skill in creating credible characters and settings. Action-packed war and crime stories were evident here, with weaker ones being a highly derivative series of more-or-less likely events. A common weakness was the attempted resolution of a story by packing numerous dramatic incidents into a single concluding paragraph in an arbitrary and unconvincing manner. Responses in Band 4 were often brief and lacking cohesion, or were extended without variation in tone, or identifiable characters or settings. Some, most unconvincingly, narrated their story from 'beyond the grave'. A few weak responses mused on the meaning of 'journey' without writing a narrative at all.

Examiners were able to award high marks for style and accuracy to candidates whose writing used varied and effective sentence structures and vocabulary and was free of repeated error. In the top band, syntax and sentence structure were often manipulated for effect, especially in the creation of narrative tension. The middle bands were typified by a plainer or less aptly applied vocabulary and minor, if frequent, errors. Uncertain sentence separation or the lack of internal punctuation often marred the work of otherwise fluent writers, restricting their marks to those in Band 4. Conversely, clear and accurate sentence structure and paragraphing could compensate for less interesting content and vocabulary. At the bottom of this band, and in the small minority of responses which fell below it, failure to control tense and agreement or to use prepositions accurately distracted the reader or even blurred meaning. Candidates at all levels would be well advised to allow a little time for proof-reading their work: the proliferation of minor, avoidable error seems more prevalent in narrative writing as candidates become engaged in completing their stories under pressure of time.

Ways in which the writing of narratives could be improved

- Plan your story so that you do not run out of ideas for the plot, and it can be brought to a satisfactory conclusion.
- Remember, that while you can use your own interpretations of the titles, you are writing a story and need to display narrative skill.
- Make your story believable by creating realistic characters, settings and dialogue.
- Take time to check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes. Be sure that commas are used inside of sentences and not instead of full stops.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/04
Coursework Portfolio

Key messages

In this component, candidates should aim to:

- reflect in their writing their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them;
- choose assignments that challenge them to write at the highest standard of which they are capable;
- write independently of undue guidance from published materials or from teachers;
- demonstrate variety of style, use of language and genre in the three assignments;
- write in fluent and varied sentences separated by full stops and clarified by the appropriate use of commas and other punctuation;
- revise, edit and correct first drafts in their own handwriting;
- proof-read their work carefully, as marks are deducted for typing errors.

General comments

Although the number of Centres entering for this component was significantly lower than in the summer, there were many entries. Some Centres entered complete cohorts, some a small group of candidates, and there were candidates who repeated the examination from the summer session.

This report explains some of the problems that were apparent to Moderators, but there was general praise for the efforts by candidates in presenting their work which was neat and well processed. Although there were some shortcomings, Moderators also praised Centres for taking on the amount of planning and administration that was involved in completing the work for this component.

The assignments were generally in keeping with the requirements of the syllabus and most offered a sufficient challenge to candidates marked in Bands 1 to 3. However, some assignments, for the purpose of this component, did not challenge all candidates appropriately.

While the rank orders of most Centres were sound, the mark range was sometimes narrow, typically from 44 to 34. Marking, particularly of writing, did not always recognise the standard at the bottom of Band 3, and Band 4 was rarely used. Marking was often lenient and it appeared that the four main objectives, content, structure, style and accuracy, were not always applied in equal proportions, even allowing for very limited commutation. The annotation of error was haphazard and often entirely missing, and some very inaccurate scripts were endorsed with a general comment that they were mainly accurate.

Successful Centres demonstrated the following

Good 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, brief 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 correction.
- Written assessments of assignments not only recognised achievement but identified areas where candidates could make improvements.

- Candidates were encouraged to proof-read their work, looking particularly for errors of punctuation. Successful candidates were correct in their use of full stops at the ends of sentences and were sparing in their use of semi-colons, showing understanding of where they were appropriate.

Candidates aiming for marks in Bands 1 and 2 demonstrated their independence as writers, formulating their own versions of tasks and thinking inventively and at a high level of maturity. The best Centres used at best only a small amount of stimulus material for the first assignment, briefly introduced tasks capable of flexible responses, allowed a short time for candidates to discuss possible approaches and then set candidates to work on their own. Some Centres prepared for coursework by teaching skills, such as how to structure an effective speech and the type of language that was appropriate, or how a short story works, studying the presentation of characters, the build-up of tension and the provision of an effective climax. They were careful to ensure that tasks were appropriate in maturity for a sixteen-year-old and that they required a suitable level of thought and the opportunities to demonstrate skills. They understood that coursework was provided for educational reasons so that by practice, each candidate could improve as a writer and thinker.

Many Centres clearly understood the rationale behind coursework and approached it with enthusiasm and energy.

Bad Practice

Unfortunately, a number of Centres regarded coursework as a way of awarding their candidates a mark no lower than Band 3. It sometimes appeared that coursework had been undertaken without a full understanding of the rationale behind it. Some of the points listed below are detailed further in later sections of the report.

- Candidates were frequently not left to work independently of published material or undue guidance by teachers. This resulted in similar responses that showed little or no originality of thought. While the style and accuracy may have been satisfactory, the overall mark was affected by too much adherence to what should only have been a stimulus and not a template for content or structure.
- In Assignment 3, where all candidates had responded to the same text, it sometimes appeared that they had been guided to select certain ideas and opinions. Since the selection was part of the reading mark, this was an inappropriate practice.
- For reading, it was clear in some cases that the mark scheme in the syllabus had either not been used or not fully understood.
- A large number of candidates were unaware of the need to place a full stop at the end of a sentence or to use an appropriate conjunction to join sentences into a fluent pattern of thought. As a result they wrote groups of short sentences with commas (and sometimes nothing) between. In addition, some candidates used virtually no commas at all. There were many examples of the wrong use of semi-colons, sometimes splitting a simple sentence into two halves for no reason. Often there were far too many semi-colons in a piece of work. There was frequently no indication that these errors had been noticed, or if they were, had not been taken into consideration when awarding marks. Given the excellent opportunities for drafting and redrafting and for discussing work in general terms with the teacher, advantages not available in the alternative Component 3, it was expected that candidates would have identified and corrected these errors.

Centres are particularly warned about providing candidates with too much support, especially about the content and structure of assignments and about making specific corrections on early drafts.

Details regarding the educational aims and objectives are set out in the Syllabus, in all published reports to Centres and in the Coursework Training Manual. It is vital that all Centres offering the coursework entry read these documents and understand and follow the advice.

Task setting

Tasks in all cases followed the requirements of the syllabus and were generally appropriate in the degree of challenge offered to the best candidates. However, many of the tasks appeared to come from a common source and were not always suited to the particular interests and abilities of candidates or the specific demands of this component.

There were some exceptions to the suitability of tasks.

In Assignment 1, the tasks ‘Don’t get me started...’, ‘Three things I would like to be rid of in the twenty first century’, and ‘Room 101’ were rarely done well for reasons that are detailed later in this report. These tasks have been set over a number of years and are not ones that are recommended by CIE.

In Assignment 2 the increasing use of monologues gave many candidates problems that they did not encounter when writing stories, descriptions and accounts from their own experience.

In Assignment 3, some candidates were disadvantaged by the choice of texts which contained few ideas and opinions with which they could engage or which argued strongly for an issue that was undeniable. The continued use of the weak ‘Educating Essex’ text disadvantaged candidates, and this should not be used again.

Assessment of coursework

Writing

In most cases, the rank order of candidates within the Centre was satisfactory, but the marking was frequently lenient. In most cases this involved a slight adjustment of the original marks, but in some cases the over-marking was significant. In one case, a Centre used a mark scheme that was not the one set by CIE. There was reluctance among Centres to use Bands 4 and 5 and some Centres’ distribution graphs were too heavily skewed to Bands 2 and 3.

Some Centres did not fully understand the application of the mark scheme. The assessment consists of content, structure, style (including a sense of audience) and accuracy. These are assessed in broadly equal proportions. There is some room for commutation, but this is limited.

In many cases it appeared that due account had not been taken of accuracy and of some stylistic features. For example, one candidate awarded a mark on Band 1 made a total of 89 errors, and it was quite common to find candidates in Band 1 who had made over 50 errors. One single story, given a mark at the top of Band 3, contained 57 mistakes, and another folder, high in Band 3 totalled 103. It is clear from the mark scheme that work where error was so evident could not be in Band 1, or anywhere near it.

The chief reasons for reducing Centres’ writing marks were as follows:

- 1: **Punctuation errors, particularly of full stops, commas, semi-colons, semi colons and apostrophes.** There was frequently a misunderstanding of where to use semi-colons and they were often made to divide what ought to have been longer sentences into short ones. The functions of colons and semi-colons were sometimes confused. Colons were often inappropriately used to introduce lists of words rather than phrases and sentences. Some pieces of work had far too many semi-colons: they should be used sparingly. There was an odd error of confusing dashes with hyphens, and dashes were also used too often where a well-constructed sentence was preferable.
- 2: **Straightforward, sometimes limited range of language.** This is a strong discriminator when marking writing. Candidates in Bands 1 and 2 should use a wide range of vocabulary with some assurance. Candidates who use a limited range of mostly simple words are often placed in Band 4.
- 3: **Insecure structuring of sentences and lack of fluency.** This is another strong discriminator. Candidates often wrote either simple sentences or sentences which were at best only two clauses joined together. Good candidates managed complex sentences with assurance. Some candidates wrote very long, convoluted sentences that confused the reader. One such sentence lasted over 150 words and another 125.
- 4: **Simplistic responses to undemanding tasks**, particularly in Assignments 1 and 3.
- 5: **Failure to proof read.** Some errors were so simple that they did not indicate the candidate’s lack of knowledge. There was no excuse for their not being correct.
- 6: **Poor use of the spell check leading to the use of wrong words and wrong spellings.** This included candidates who discussed ‘notational service’, and referred to ‘a gust of wing’, ‘venerable children’ and ‘prophetic legs’. ‘Definitely’ became ‘defiantly’, ‘assess’ became ‘asses’ and there was a ‘5 start hotel’.

Assessment of reading

This assessment was generally satisfactory, but again there was a tendency to be lenient, and some Centres gave marks in Band 1 without there being sufficient quality in the responses to warrant it. Some Centres presented a good range of marks typically from 9 to 4.

There were, however, some excellent answers. These showed that candidates had grasped the text and the attitudes of its writer as a whole, and their responses consisted of a cohesive set of ideas, integrating much of the detail of the passage. There was a secure understanding of the text and responses elucidated what the writer was saying. They were clearly worth a mark in Band 1.

Many answers were worth Band 2. These made a selection of ideas and opinions, often in a random order, and evaluated each one in turn. They separated fact from opinion and identified bias and inconsistencies, developing arguments for and against what was written. This constituted evaluation and it did not need to be consistent for a mark of 7.

Candidates in Band 3 made a satisfactory selection of ideas and opinions, but either did little more than to summarise them or provided some very straightforward comments, such as expressing agreement or disagreement with the writer (typical of a mark of 5). Sometimes the comments were so weak or the work so incomplete that a mark in Band 4 was appropriate.

Centres should use the published mark scheme, which is found in the syllabus under 6: *Appendix*.

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 (otherwise known as WMS). This form was the record of the actual marks agreed on after Internal Moderation and 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 gave the Moderator 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 the CIE marks system. 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.

Most Centres supplied a copy of this essential form, but some did not. It was not sufficient to record moderated marks on the folders alone. Sometimes the only form that was submitted was for the candidates in the sample. A frequent comment by Moderators was that there was no evidence of Internal Moderation.

Copies of all articles used for Assignment 3 were required by the Moderator who had to read them before addressing the work. These were almost always 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.

Many Centres did not include the top and bottom folder from their mark range in addition to the sample that was requested.

Finally the regulations stipulated that each folder in the sample should be securely fixed and that it should not be in plastic folders, which only added to the complicated handling job that the Moderator had to undertake. For example, where a large number of folders were submitted, the Moderator had to make an initial sub-sample across the mark range and then a subsequent choice of folders to examine certain points in the range. 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.

Summary of the contents of the folder

- 1: The folders required from each Centre by CIE.
- 2: In addition, the top and bottom folder in the Centre's mark range.
- 3: The CASFs(WMS) for all the candidates in the Centre.
- 4: The Moderator's copy of the MS1 or electronically submitted mark list.
- 5: An early draft (see below) of one of the assignments.
- 6: A copy of the article used for Assignment 3, preferably with the candidate's annotations.

Annotation

It was only by reading the comments by teachers that Moderators were able to understand how the marks had been awarded. They looked for a summative comment on the cover of each folder, comments at the bottom of each individual assignment, and the annotation of errors on final drafts.

Some Centres were meticulous in their annotation. However, many final drafts carried no comment or annotation whatsoever and in one case, the Centre had not even made comments on the front covers.

It was important that errors should be annotated on final drafts, yet it was common practice not to do this or only to make some token annotations. This resulted in comments such as 'mainly competent use of spelling, punctuation and grammar' when a quick check showed that this was patently untrue. The reason why such annotation is essential has already been given in this report.

Much comment was made in the margin and consisted of identifying when a particular objective had been achieved at a certain level. While this system was helpful, it was misleading, since the final assessment of any piece of work consisted of those objectives that had been achieved in the assignment as a whole and not at one particular moment. Hence, the rationale for placing work in a mark band came at the end of the assignment and was not placed at various points in the margin.

Many assessments were too positive and made no indication to candidates where improvements in their work might be made. This meant that some assessments gave the impression that the work was better than in fact it was,

Drafts

Some Centres were meticulous in commenting on drafts at the end of the assignment.

The point of a draft is that candidates should be prepared to make amendments by

- Revising and making improvements to whole sections, for example changing an ending or altering the length of a particular section;
- Editing, by changing words and phrases to improve the effectiveness of their communication;
- Correcting punctuation, grammar, proof-reading errors and so on.

These changes should be made in the candidate's handwriting and in a different colour from that of the teacher's notes.

Best practice was that the teacher's notes were set out at the end of the work, not in the margin or in the body of the text. There were still examples of teachers who circled individual errors in the text or who corrected them. This is specifically not allowed because it is the candidate's responsibility to make alterations and corrections to a draft, not the teacher's.

It was disappointing that some first drafts were merely copies of the final draft, thus missing the educational point of drafting.

Internal moderation

Where there was more than one set it was essential that Internal Moderation should take place in order to provide a reliable rank order. On the whole, this was done well, although some Centres made very few changes to candidates' marks. This may have been because the marking was standardised throughout the course.

Where there was some disagreement it was usually due to problems in the assessment, for example by not assessing the quality of candidates' responses for reading correctly or by not paying due regard to the important discriminators for writing.

It was very helpful to Moderators that some Centres included a brief account of how Internal Moderation had been carried out.

Authenticity

Centres should be aware that Moderators are take care to spot pieces of work that may not be the candidate's own. 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. If the work is suspicious, it is wise to check by using an internet search engine. Where cases of copying are discovered, the offending work must be removed before the folder is assessed.

While there was no doubt that the work was largely that of the candidates, there were unfortunately a number of examples of copying that were easily detected by Moderators.

All suspected cases were forwarded to the Regulations Team at Cambridge for investigation and further action where appropriate.

Assignment 1

The best tasks were those that set the words of a speech or presentation on a particular topic. Even if some of the content was not original, it was nearly always adapted to the genre and to the audience, and was accompanied by a good deal of the candidate's own thoughts and arguments. The fact that it was meant to be spoken, albeit formally, gave the candidate freedom to explore the topic from a personal standpoint. The work was frequently more entertaining, sounded more convincing and was more passionate than traditional essays. Nearly all of the presentations were well structured and candidates did not fall into the trap of becoming too informal. However, a common distraction was the frequency of rhetorical questions. Used sparingly, these were effective, but used too often, they interrupted the flow.

While writing that argued a case tended to attract the higher marks, there was also a place, particularly for the average candidate, for writing informative accounts of school, sporting and family events and particularly of spare time activities that were unusual or that had been taken to a high level. One candidate wrote engagingly about his participation in a band that had some success. Writing an account of work experience was a valid option. Family histories were also successful, although candidates had to be careful not to stray into the territory of Assignment 2 and write narratives. Visits abroad and to museums and art galleries were done well and there were some excellent accounts of towns and cities round the world written by people who no longer lived there.

Essays were often uninteresting to read because they were too formal and there was rarely any sense of audience or of involvement by the candidate. There was also the concern as to where the content came from and Moderators were more likely to be suspicious about the origin of these pieces. Because the ethos of this coursework is built round the thoughts, feelings and experiences of candidates, this type of writing was somehow out of place.

Centres also needed to check film reviews and restaurant reviews for originality. One review had been cobbled together from two websites. The Moderator's suspicions were aroused because the quality of writing for the review was markedly different from that of the other two pieces.

Rants such as 'Don't get me started' very rarely gave candidates any advantages and were often the weakest pieces in the folders. Unfortunately, many Centres set them. There were examples of attacks on challenging topics that were cohesive and sustained and which used appropriate language, but these were few and far between. The problems were as follow:

- 1: Content: This was often unchallenging. Candidates who wrote about TV commercials, coughing without putting your hand over your mouth, Year 7, and bus drivers were not likely to reach Bands 1

- or 2. Sometimes their arguments against these topics were only to express disgust or annoyance, so that their arguments were weak.
- 2: Structure: the topics were so unchallenging that candidates had difficulty in sustaining their arguments which were typically repetitive or weak.
- 3: Style: Many of these responses confused formal and informal language, sometimes to a serious degree. Expressions included 'how the hell?', 'gob', 'drive me bananas', 'bugs you', 'or summin', and 'shoot me now'.

It was too easy for candidates to fall into these very obvious traps, and while some of the diatribes were amusing, they did not properly match the demands of the mark scheme. It is recommended that no more rants should be set.

There were several tasks involving leaflets, but these were not always successful because they did not give opportunities for sustained, cohesive writing and because the content was often too straightforwardly informative.

It was not good practice to set the same topic to a large number of candidates.

The good news was that there was a real variety of topics, many of which were clearly of personal concern to the candidates. Many candidates wrote about social media, video games and issues concerning animals. These were done well, but the less usual topics included:

*War today, graveyard tomorrow
An argument against going to university
The media and body images
An application to be head boy
Celebrities
Women's soccer
Irish dancing
Syria
'My Mum'*

Assignment 2

This assignment was the opportunity for candidates to think imaginatively rather than to create arguments, and to demonstrate their command of vocabulary. The best candidates used language appropriately and with assurance, so that meaning was never in doubt and the reader was supplied with realistic images that engaged attention.

Some candidates tried too hard, and their use of decorative language obscured meaning. There were examples of images that did not connect well with the object that they described and it was clear that there was a lack of understanding of the function of imagery. Many candidates used a disappointing range of vocabulary, and the writing was sometimes flat or even simple.

The range of tasks consisted of narratives, descriptions, monologues and writing from personal experience. One Centre successfully set the theme of homelessness and another asked candidates to imagine they were at the top of a high building so see whether they could fly. Despite the potential dangers of putting such ideas into their heads, the writing was gripping.

Many of the narratives were sadly, violent, giving a negative view of life. Where the violence and the blood became gratuitous, this spoiled the effect of the story because the events were no longer convincing. Many Centres opted for a gothic story, although there was not much evidence that candidates knew much about the genre. Too often it reverted to the common denominator of entering a stereotypical house with a big wooden door and occasionally the protagonists were surrounded by a horde of zombies.

On the other hand, there were some good aspects of story writing, particularly where the ending was well thought out. There were examples of time lapses, alternate narrators, and drip-feeding, all devices that created interest.

There were many descriptions. Most of these were well written, but some of them were lists of images that were loosely connected rather than creating a cohesive picture overall. It is important for a description to

have some shape. This can be achieved by describing what happens over a limited period of time or by describing a scene from different angles or through different eyes. Static descriptions proved difficult to sustain.

Some of the monologues were well written, but they tended to become outpourings of emotions that had limited variety, and there was less content in them than in narratives. Like the descriptions they were best when they were not static such as happened when the narrator was reacting to a single event.

Comparatively few candidates wrote about their own experiences. For some who have had eventful lives, this is a source of some excellent writing and there is a case for ensuring that every folder has one example of writing from experience. It is of course possible to write partly from experience, but to change events to make a good story.

Some titles included:

Narrative

Hate behind a white veil
Skylines and turnstiles
The lighthouse
Breaking point
Sound in the dark
The boy who never sleeps
Lost in the forest
Mist at sea

Descriptive

Tsunami
A day in the life of a pub
A perfect fall day
The end of the School day
A theme park

Own experience

My first flying experience

Assignment 3

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

- 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.

Most articles were controversial, contained at least some identifiable arguments, ideas and opinions, and were about themes that candidates could easily relate to. However, several reports on individual Centres mentioned that the chosen article only had a small number of ideas and opinions and that this was not beneficial to the candidates. This included a particularly graphic account of the death penalty applied to a criminal in the United States, which described the event and did not debate the issue.

Some texts argued a case with which no normal person could disagree. Where the stages in the argument were logical it proved very difficult for candidates to respond. They were open to develop ideas, but in good texts this development had often been done already and there was little else that could be said.

A number of articles, such as the article on 'Educating Essex' had been in circulation for several sessions and some were common to several Centres. It is recommended that Centres find some fresh articles of their own.

This assignment generally followed the guidelines in the syllabus and was often well written. Most candidates made a satisfactory selection of ideas and opinions and many of them gave evidence of at least some evaluation and development.

Texts used for this assignment included:

Voting for 16-year-olds
Sunbeds
Hosting the world cup
Free range childhood
Parents know best
Gun crime chaos
Mid-pregnancy abortion (chosen for US candidates)
Child soldiers
Compulsory sport in Schools
A teenager in favour of School uniform

Final comments

This report has underlined some of the issues that urgently needed addressing. However, a good deal of the work was well planned and carried out with an understanding of the educational advantages of the component. Where there were discrepancies, it proved that coursework was not something that could be lightly undertaken and that there was a good deal of commitment and hard work that was necessary to achieve the results that Centres obviously wanted.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/05

Speaking and Listening

Key messages

The main messages:

- **Compliance.** Read carefully and thoroughly the instructions in the syllabus relating to how this component should be carried out. For example, in the syllabus, the required timings of both parts of the test are clearly stipulated. There is also detailed guidance and support in the *Speaking and Listening Handbook* which should be consulted. We recommend that Centres using more than one Examiner utilise this as an aid to train and standardise the examining team.
- **Using scripts.** Please ensure that candidates do not use scripts or rely on extended notes. Reading entirely from a script is not permitted and it is contrary to the ethos of this test. 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, images, graphs or a prop. Candidates will not be able to score high marks if they simply read from a script; awareness of audience and an attempt to use a range of devices to engage the audience are key skills being tested in Part 1.
- **Speaking not reading.** The test is an assessment of speaking skills in Part 1. Over-reliance on scripted material and the use of extended notes promotes reading and writing skills over speaking skills. In cases where Moderators detect that full scripts have been used, or extended notes have been read out, it is likely that the Centre's work will be regarded as maladministration and passed on to the CIE Regulations Team to investigate further. In some cases, this may result in candidates' marks for the component not being accepted.
- **Safeguarding.** There were some instances where candidates spoke about topics which are inappropriate in the context of a public examination. It is the Centre's responsibility to ensure that such topics do not feature in this examination. Cambridge does not issue a list of inappropriate topics; but Examiners need to be aware of their responsibility to advise candidates on the suitability of their chosen topic.
- **Out of window tests.** The syllabus is very clear of when this speaking and listening examination can and should take place. The 'test window' is usually two months. For this session, this was September 1st to October 31st. Any tests conducted outside of this time will have been investigated by the CIE Regulations Team for non-compliance.
- **Absent candidates.** When a candidate is absent, an A must be recorded on the mark sheet (MS1) and not a zero. The latter implies that the test was indeed conducted and no marks were awarded. In such cases, we would expect an explanatory note and the candidate's recording.

Other messages:

- Moderators suggest that some candidates need to prepare more thoroughly for the examination. 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.
- 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. Presenting empathic work using literary texts often leads to quality work.

- In Part 2, Moderators would like to hear stronger evidence that candidates are aware of their expected 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. Moderators recommend more teaching of general speaking and listening skills in the context of a topic-based presentation and subsequent discussion. Over-rehearsal with candidates is not encouraged, but broad-based coverage of useful methodologies is encouraged.
- 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. This session again saw problems at some Centres with timings, and problems here often lead to problems elsewhere. The timings for the two parts of the test are distinct - i.e. short Part 1s cannot be compensated for with longer Part 2s (or vice versa).
- 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). 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 appreciated. Please re-name the individual tracks on the CD to the candidate number and name only (instead of track 1, track 2, etc.).

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.
- More mundane and pedestrian presentations should be placed in Band 3.
- Candidates who present very short Part 1s or those which rely too much on notes 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".
- Very long Part 1s do not satisfy Band 1 requirements, as they lack the required control, structure and poignancy. An over-long Part 1 is one that runs for beyond 5 minutes.
- 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.
- We recommend that Centres with more than 30 candidates conduct internal moderation - i.e. a systematic revision of a sample of candidates, covering a good spread of marks. This is often successful when completed as a team effort, and should achieve consistency among assessors and highlight any outlying marks for specific candidates.

An important message relating to protocol:

- The test should be conducted only once. It is a terminal examination and as such, candidates must not be given a second attempt. If a test has been conducted twice, the Centre should inform Cambridge directly of the rationale and reasons for this.

A message relating to preparation by the Teachers/examiners

- It would be a good idea for Examiners to obtain a list of the topics that candidates are planning to talk about in advance of the examination, perhaps the day before. This would allow the Examiner to 'think ahead' and consider areas which might be productive in Part 2. However, these must not be shared with the candidates prior to the examination. The aim in Part 2 is for both parties to be involved in an organic discussion - if scripted or practised material is found to be present in this part of the examination, this is likely to result in maladministration of the test.

General comments

The more interesting and successful individual tasks were from candidates who spoke from brief notes rather than scripts, and about a topic they felt passionately about and which they had researched thoroughly. Some 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 usually good.

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 speaking tasks, and they were often 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 notes and this tended to detract from the overall effect – appearing to be rather lifeless and certainly monotonous. Some less able candidates relied heavily on a script and talked in a monotone about a subject they had not researched sufficiently or which they did not feel particularly strongly about. There was certainly too much reliance on Wikipedia in cases where topics had been chosen with less care. Every candidate is encouraged to choose a topic of personal interest and to talk as freely as possible about this. Some candidates will perform better by taking this approach rather than relying too much on notes.

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 generic 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, the use of generic themes must allow for individual expression. Be aware, however, that the responsibility for the preparation of content lies with the candidate.

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.

Materials required by the Moderator

As a reminder to Centres, Cambridge requires three different items in the package sent to the Moderator: (1) the recorded sample on as few CDs/DVDs as possible (or preferably, on a single USB drive) and using separate re-named tracks for each candidate, (2) the Summary Forms for the entire entry, and (3) a copy of the Mark Sheet that has already been sent to Cambridge confirming the final marks. In addition, any letters relating to the work undertaken by the candidates or regarding issues experienced by the Centre should also be placed in the package for the attention of the external Moderator.

- (1) Please note that without the recordings, Cambridge is unable to moderate the work from a Centre and this will affect the results issued to candidates.
- (2) The Summary Form is the form that records the separate marks awarded to the two parts of the test, in addition to the total mark. The Examiner who conducts the examination is responsible for filling out the summary form. He or she should sign the form and date it – in effect; this is the form which is the working record of the examining undertaken, and is therefore of most use to the external Moderator. Please identify the candidates in the sample by using asterisks on the Summary Form. It would also be very useful if the candidate numbers can be recorded on the summary forms as they appear on the mark sheets.
- (3) The Moderator needs a copy of the mark sheet in order to verify the accuracy of the transcription of the marks from the summary forms.

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, Moderators encourage topics with a specific focus; along with a greater range of presentational styles.

Some examples of productive Part 1 tasks from this session:

- poverty in the UK
- the rise of the Dystopian novel
- the pros and cons of social media for teenagers
- are women's rights really equal in today's world?
- the use of humour as a political tool
- talking to my younger self (as a monologue)
- do we all have tragic flaws?
- do we really need censorship?
- what money means to a teenager
- conspiracy theories, including one of my own
- seven reasons why I hate football
- what is a fair rate of pay for a job?

Part 2 - Discussions

Moderators are happy 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 probable questions, or areas of interest that might be appropriate for further discussion given the scope of the topic.

However, where this had not occurred, Moderators felt the discussions were lacking. It is not the sole 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. Ideally, this would be a scaffolded discussion, and more challenging ideas and content would be introduced as the discussion develops.

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 ‘interview’ 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.

In general however, candidates and Examiners 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.

Some Examiners had a tendency to ask too many closed questions, which unsurprisingly elicited short and weaker responses which do not encourage development. Open questions are much more effective.

Concluding comments

It is clear that some Centres need to offer further training to their Teachers/examiners to conduct these task-oriented tests as the syllabus and other Cambridge supporting documentation (e.g. the *Handbook for Speaking and Listening*) stipulate. Where Centres do not comply with the rubrics, the result is often disastrous and the effect is usually felt by the candidates whose achievement and performance is clearly affected. This is unacceptable and such Centres should seek direct guidance from Cambridge when they receive feedback on the work undertaken for the session.

However, Cambridge wishes to commend Centres who have responded well to what might be a new examination for them - Cambridge does appreciate 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.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/0522 06

Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

Key Messages

Centres should decide whether to choose Component 05 or Component 06 at the beginning of the planning stage. The components are distinct in their approaches to the Speaking and Listening section of the syllabus. Uncertainty and confusion as to which pathway to follow can lead to Centres entering for the wrong component. This always causes problems for the Centre and the Moderator.

Component 6 is much more flexible in that three separate tasks are required that can be assessed at any time during the course. This flexibility allows a broader range of topics and skills to be assessed but requires Centres to fully embrace the concept that the Speaking and Listening tasks are an integral part of the overall course.

Centres are recommended to use both the current syllabus and 'Speaking and Listening Training Handbook' to ensure the requirements for the administration of the component are met in full. All the relevant information is contained within these documents.

Please be aware that four different items need to be included in the sample package sent to the Moderator. These are: a recorded sample on CD, DVD or USB drive; the Summary Forms for the whole cohort entered; a copy of the marks (the MS1) already sent to Cambridge and the Individual Candidate Record Cards for the candidates included in the sample. Centres are urged to ensure all four of these items are included in the package sent to Cambridge as the omission of any of them may cause a delay in the moderation process.

The Individual Candidate Record Cards should include specific information about the choices made for each task and not just generic statements.

In some cases clerical and mathematical errors continue to undermine the moderation process although it must be noted that there were far fewer instances this session.

Please check the quality of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge and ensure that the CD, DVD or USB is securely packaged to avoid damage in transit. A jiffy bag is recommended.

A sample representing the full range of the Centre's marks is expected with both the highest and lowest performing candidates included.

We encourage the use of digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or USB drive in a recognised common audio file format that can be played by standard computer software.

For paired activities it is essential that the Moderator is able to distinguish between the candidates in the activity so that successful moderation can take place. The simplest way of achieving this is for the candidates to introduce themselves and their roles in the activity at the beginning of the recording.

Any candidate who is absent should be recorded as such on the relevant documentation and only those who attempted the activity but who failed to contribute should be given a mark of 0.

Unlike Component 5, there is no specified time duration for Component 6 tasks but it is difficult to see how both candidates in the Paired-Task activity can meet higher level criteria such as 'responds fully', 'develops prompts' or 'employs a wide range of language devices' in a performance lasting less than two minutes. Given that both speaking and listening are assessed, it is important that the activities last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. Planned, rehearsed and developed performances will normally justify higher marks in the same way written examination practise encourages more successful outcomes.

General Comments

Through the syllabus, Cambridge provides specific forms for use with Component 6; namely the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form. Please note that the Component 5 Summary Form is different and it is not interchangeable with the Component 6 equivalent.

For Component 6, Centres are encouraged to be creative in the choice of tasks as long as the assessment criteria are used as a guide to the skills being assessed.

Comments on Specific Tasks

Well planned and prepared responses to tasks were generally more successful but, in particular, **Tasks 1** and **2** do not benefit from over-scripted and seemingly 'artificial' performances where spontaneity is missing. Candidates aspiring to the higher band criteria need to be able to react positively to changes in the direction of the discussion in **Task 2**.

In response to **Task 1**, it is very difficult to achieve band 1 if the performance is heavily scripted.

Task 1

Responses generally took the form of an individual presentation. This component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when topics are chosen. This component allows the candidate and teacher to work together through rehearsal and development of the task to ensure the topic choice is suitable.

Some examples of productive **Task 1** activities include:

- My holiday in...
- A personal experience that is relevant, thought-provoking and developed beyond narrative
- Teenagers and technology
- Social media – good or bad?
- A review of a film, book, concert or sporting event where the candidate is thoroughly engaged and able to develop the presentation beyond a literal re-telling of the events.

Task 2

There should be only two participants in **Task 2**. Where there is an extra candidate, a teacher or a candidate who has been assessed may make up the pair. It is unacceptable and an infringement of the rubric for this task to be performed by three candidates. In effect, any **Task 2** activity comprising of more than two candidates becomes a **Task 3** Group Activity. As three distinct tasks are expected in response to Component 6, this becomes non-compliance and will be treated accordingly.

The Pair-Based Activity is more successful when two candidates of similar ability work as a pair. With regard to role-plays, it should be borne in mind that this is an assessment of language skills rather than drama skills so the language requirements should always drive the assessment criteria.

Responses to **Task 2** that are teacher-led, either with a teacher interviewing a candidate or with two candidates being led by a teacher, are less successful than a developed discussion between two candidates. It is recommended that this approach is only considered where it is deemed the candidates are too weak to initiate the discussion without external assistance.

A popular **Task 2** vehicle is the ‘interview’ where one candidate acts as the interviewer and the other is the interviewee. This can work well but there is an inherent weakness in the activity if the interviewer does little more than ask a set of pre-prepared questions. This restricts the level of performance, particularly for the Listening element. One way to counteract this problem is for candidates to swap roles halfway through so each has the opportunity to demonstrate a wider range of relevant skills.

Some examples of productive **Task 2** activities include:

- Does the media put too much pressure on teenagers?
- Are video games too violent?
- Topical social issues such as sexism in sport
- Feminism/Gender inequality
- The influence of reality television on the teenage audience
- Planning a holiday
- Role play situations that are developed beyond superficial arguments
- The benefits and pitfalls of social media?
- A moral dilemma such as what to do with a wallet that has been found
- Are politics irrelevant to teenagers?

Task 3

Task 3 may take various forms but it is most important that each candidate in the group is allowed sufficient scope within the activity to demonstrate their strengths without being dominated by others. A group made up of candidates of similar ability levels is often more successful. In more diverse groupings the weaker candidates are disadvantaged and do not have the opportunity to contribute to the best of their ability. The role of a group leader should be considered as a more successful outcome usually results from having one of the candidates directing the focus of the discussion.

Some examples of productive **Task 3** activities include:

- Characters from a literary text participating in a televised debate
- Performing an extra scene from a play that has been written by the candidates
- Any discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- What to include in a time capsule/school newspaper, etc.
- Championing a character from a film or book where each candidate chooses their favourite.

General Conclusions

- It is gratifying to report that the general level of assessment by Centres is in line with the expected standard.
- There are many Centres where internal moderation has been successful.
- Successful Centres continue to implement the component efficiently and imaginatively. Samples are generally well-prepared and aid the moderation process considerably. Thank you.
- Where problems have arisen, Centres have not followed the instructions regarding sampling and documentation. It is an expectation that Centres provide the requisite documentation and that it is accurate.
- All the documentation asked for in samples is used to check and cross-check as part of the rigour that underpins the moderation process. In the end this is of benefit to Centres and their candidates. It is important to remember that every Centre is moderated in every session and that this process is conducted rigorously to protect the reputation of the component and to maintain the standard so that Centres may have continued confidence in the product they have chosen.