

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/11  
Reading Passage (Core)

## Key Messages

1. Questions such as 1 (g) require candidates to provide definitions of six italicised words in total with one mark being awarded for each correct definition. It is important that candidates attempt to define all italicised words and focus their responses closely on those words.
2. It is important that candidates attempt to use their own words whenever a question requires them to do so in order to make clear their understanding.
3. Questions such as 1 (h) require explanation of *how* a writer's choice of words helps to produce a particular response from the reader and, therefore, a complete answer to such questions involves more than simply defining the meaning of the quoted phrase. Centres are advised to focus on developing effective strategies for tackling the specific requirements of key words within the question, particularly *how*, in order to explore nuances of meaning resulting from the words used by the writer.
4. Candidates should ensure that their responses to **Question 2** are closely linked to the context and content of the Reading Passage. They are also advised to spend some time proof-reading their responses and, in particular, focus on checking that they have separated sentences correctly by using full stops.

## General Comments

Candidates responded well to this paper and the overall impression is that the Reading Passage was both challenging but accessible in terms of understanding, but also a very good stimulus for the newspaper report in **Question 2**, which produced a large number of thoughtful and well-focused responses. Nearly all candidates responded conscientiously and diligently to all questions and made creditable attempts to confront the more demanding sub-questions of **Question 1**; although such responses did not always gain the full marks available for these questions, there were many occasions where partial marks were gained as an emerging sense of understanding was apparent from candidates endeavouring to express a complex point.

There was very little indication that responses suffered from timing problems and most answers were of adequate length for all questions; overall presentation and handwriting were generally of a good standard. Nearly all responses gave clear evidence that the examination was being taken seriously and that all candidates were trying their very best to do well.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

- (a) Most candidates answered this correctly by choosing either the phrase *Down the years* or *I cannot remember*. There were a few responses consisting of whole sentences rather than just the three word phrase specified in the question - it was not possible to reward such responses unless the correct word was clearly identified, such as by underlining.

- (b) Most candidates gained at least one mark by explaining that this was his conclusion from his memories or that it was a general view of what happened. To obtain the full mark it was essential to give an explanation that covered *both* key words: 'overall' and 'recollections'.
- (c) The question asked for candidates to identify three details about the exterior of the house in which the character Christopher lived. This could be achieved by choosing three short phrases or even, for some points, by choosing a single word. There were seven possible points to choose from: it had a driveway; a gate (or gateway); there was a road outside; there were two oak trees; there were gardens (with garden walls); hedges and a door or doorstep. This question was effectively addressed with many candidates getting the full three marks and very few failing to get one mark.
- (d) This was another question that required candidates to use their own words to explain why Christopher did not take much notice of the two cars on his return home. Many candidates gained two marks by explaining that his mind was focused on other things – some specifying that he was concentrating on getting a glass of water and/or finding out the correct time.
- (e) This question was answered successfully by the vast majority of candidates who identified correctly that Christopher was able to see his mother talking to the three men because there was a door open in the hallway through which he could see what was happening.
- (f) This question was one of the least well answered on the paper. The key points required were to show an understanding of Christopher's perception of the relative sizes of himself and his mother. The reason that he felt 'very young again' was that his mother seemed very large and he felt very small against her which made him remember a much earlier experience. Quite a number of candidates identified at least one point from the phrase: *looming and large* - used to describe the mother; the second point (the relative size) being more an inference from that description.
- (g) As mentioned in the Key Messages section of this report, this question proved demanding and it is essential that candidates focus their responses on defining the italicised words in the phrases quoted.
- (i) This was the most effectively answered part of this question. Many candidates understood (and explained clearly) that *coherent order* was a sequence that made sense (or a chronological order). Some found more difficulty in finding synonyms for *various details*; different facts (or events or even memories) was an acceptable explanation here.
- (ii) This proved to be a demanding question with only a small number of candidates gaining the full two marks. Many explained what was meant by 'triumphantly', there being a wide range of acceptable synonyms used. The term 'perched' caused much greater difficulty as it required candidates to understand the sense of precariousness about Christopher's achievement; relatively few expressed that sense – although comments that suggested that he had just managed to reach a very high part of the tree could gain that second mark.
- (iii) This question was answered well by those candidates who were careful not to repeat the wording of the original phrase: a *lowered* voice is one that is quieter and a *composed* voice is one that is calm. Again the advice in the Key Messages section is crucial to success with this task.
- (h) This question also proved to be demanding with only a small number of responses going beyond explaining a content detail for each phrase to examine the effect of the language used, and how it contributed to Christopher's view of his parents. This resulted in very few two mark answers. Some candidates did little else than paraphrase the original wording which gained one mark if the answer revealed that the phrase had been clearly understood. A few candidates ignored the instruction to select three of the four phrases quoted in the question and simply chose their own phrases to explain; such responses could not be rewarded and nor could those that offered roughly the same explanation for each of the different phrases or which used one given phrase to attempt to explain another.
- **“smiled, kissed her lightly on the cheek”**

A large number of candidates clearly understood the impression that his parents were affectionate to one another (or that the father loved his wife); fewer saw the suggestion of the father being delicate or gentle.

- **“came striding out to where I was waiting”**

A number of candidates identified the sense of the father appearing to be a vigorous, active man and some the implication that Christopher clearly admired his father. Many candidates obtained one mark by explaining that this showed the father was keen to say goodbye to his son and/or not forget him.

- **“her presence, which seemed looming and large”**

Many candidates were able to comment on Christopher’s awe at his mother’s presence. Some went further and commented on how this made her a powerful figure for him. It is worth noting that where candidates chose this phrase and the next there was a temptation to give very similar, and sometimes overlapping, explanations.

- **“silenced me with a stare that frightened me”**

Many candidates explained this phrase effectively, many commenting on the power of his mother’s facial expression, or that he understood her to be in earnest and some explaining this in terms of its effect of stopping him from talking or protesting. As noted above; the less successful answers were those in which candidates, having chosen the previous phrase, gave answers that focused again on her the power of the mother’s presence.

- (i) Most candidates managed to score between 4 -7 marks for this summary question, and indeed there was a significant number who got full marks. Less successful responses were the result mainly of candidates who did not stop summarising the events at line 25 (as specified in the question) and continued with, or even concentrated on events after Christopher entered the house. Candidates in general seemed to be well prepared for this question and it would appear that many Centres have concentrated successfully on summary techniques as part of their preparation for the examination.

There were eleven points (stated below) from the passage about the Christopher’s actions which could have been identified up to a total mark for the question of 7:

- 1 Loitered in the driveway.
- 2 Said goodbye to his father.
- 3 Played with toy soldiers.
- 4 Ate lunch (with Mei Li).
- 5 Walked down the road.
- 6 Climbed a tree.
- 7 Sat in the tree/looked at the neighbouring gardens/houses.
- 8 Climbed down the tree.
- 9 Felt thirsty/went to get a glass of water.
- 10 Went home/went through the gate.
- 11 Saw two cars in the drive.

## Question 2

This question elicited some very successful responses; candidates selected salient points from the extract and were able to develop newspaper reports about the mysterious disappearance, its effects upon the family and the possible explanations. The majority of candidates adopted an appropriate style and register for a newspaper; only a relatively small number confusing the register with that of a radio or TV news report.

Overall, the marks for Reading and Written Expression were of similar quality, with the average mark for Reading being marginally higher than that for Written Expression. The best responses showed a mature and perceptive understanding of the characters and situation described in the passage and convincingly conveyed both the family and the police's uncertainty over how the situation had occurred. The most successful responses dealt with the second bullet point by integrating it into the speculation over how a possible kidnapping (or other serious crime) might have taken place in a wealthy or middle class locality. These responses also entered successfully into the possible reasons for the father's disappearance, over the relationship between husband and wife and the possibility of there being work related problems that the family had not been aware of; all of these being related to small details or to inferences from the passage. In some case these ideas were incorporated effectively into police statements to the press. Less successful responses tended to retell (often in great and some unnecessary detail) the events that day, particularly what Christopher did while waiting for his father which were not directly relevant to the business of his disappearance. However, most candidates displayed a good general understanding of the family and the predicament which they faced, and especially of the effect of these events on a young child.

The written accuracy was considered, overall, to have been an improvement on responses in previous series. Spelling of basic words still represents a challenge for a number of candidates and there is still a lot of uncertain sentence punctuation, but in general, candidates attempted both to select vocabulary that was precise and wide-ranging and also to use varied sentence structures for effect.

Most candidates, as noted above, responded enthusiastically to this question and it would appear to have allowed them the opportunity to write to the best of their ability. There were only a small number of very short responses; in fact, many were sustained successfully over three or four sides of the answer booklet. The most successful of these addressed each of the bullet points in some detail; the less successful addressed one or two of the points with either no reference to the others or at best, a cursory one. However, a majority of the candidates covered the four bullet points to some extent and many used them effectively to structure their writing. It should be emphasised that the most successful answers dealt with the bullet points in turn, using them as a paragraph framework for their answer.

Most responses scored within bands 2 or 3 for both elements of the question, with at least as many responses achieving band 1 marks as those gaining marks in bands 5 and 6. Many candidates gained a higher percentage of their marks on **Question 2** than on **Question 1** - a detail that reinforces the point made in the Key Messages section that it would help those taking this examination in future to ensure that they follow precisely the requirements of the wording of the sub-questions in the first section of the paper. In conclusion, this proved to be a successful paper which allowed the majority of candidates to produce work of a satisfactory to good quality.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/12  
Reading Passage (Core)

## Key Messages

1. Although all questions must be read carefully it is important that in questions such as 1(g) candidates remember to focus on the italicised words and define all of them.
2. It is important that when candidates are asked to 'explain using their own words' they do so, in order to demonstrate that they have understood the passage.
3. In questions such as 1 (h) candidates must do more than demonstrate that they understand the literal meaning of the text. To get full marks they must explain how the writer's language produces a response from the reader. Centres need to concentrate on developing effective strategies for looking at ways to explore nuances of meaning in the text.
4. It is important that candidates' responses to **Question 2** are linked closely to the text which in this case the majority of candidates achieved. Candidates must take time to proof-read their responses, especially the use of full-stops.

## General Comments

The passage about a man's memories of an important incident in his childhood was accessible to most candidates but provided challenges as well. It was thought provoking and acted as an excellent stimulus for the journal entry in **Question 2**. The majority of candidates answered or attempted to answer all of **Questions 1** and **2**. Some of the questions were answered in part which showed partial, if not full, understanding of the passage. Most made an attempt to answer the question.

The majority of candidates answered the questions in the allotted time. Candidates appeared to be trying to answer questions to the best of their ability. Overall, presentation and handwriting were good.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### **Question 1**

- (a) In general, most candidates answered this question correctly but a few gave 'permitted' as the answer.
- (b) Most candidates recognised that the 'employer' owned the paintings, but a few slipped up and put 'employee'. A few put a completely different answer but most gained the mark for this question.
- (c) Candidates were asked to explain in their own words. Selective lifting was accepted but no marks were given for lifting the whole section of the passage containing the relevant details.

Most candidates achieved at least one mark for 'naming the vessels', some also gained a mark for 'enjoyed the game'. A few achieved the third mark for 'would not stop until all of the ships were named'. Some wrote that the 'paintings' were named so did not achieve the mark.

Candidates must look carefully at the marks beside each question to make sure that they have given enough information to gain full marks for a question.

- (d) This four mark question proved to be challenging for the candidates, with few candidates achieving full marks. There was some misreading of this question. Most gained points for this question but some wrote that mother 'never had mood swings' so showed that they did not understand the double negative in, 'it was not unheard of' so thought that mother was good at not switching her moods abruptly. Few candidates mentioned that Christopher was frightened of his mother. Many achieved two marks for this but a few got three or four.
- (e) Most candidates gained a mark for this question. Responses that focused on 'how' the father was positioned rather than 'where' and those that repeated the words of the question that he was 'in his study' were not rewarded but those who translated 'bureau' into 'desk' were.
- (f) Some candidates found this question challenging. The key points required were to show an understanding of 'hindsight' and the phrase 'shape that memory'. 'Hindsight' caused great difficulty, although some managed to infer the meaning from the text. Some understood that Christopher tried to make sense of the incident from an adult point of view using experiences he had gained over the years. Many achieved one mark but few got two which shows that, although the candidates found this challenging, they were able to answer at least part of the question. It may help to remind candidates that all parts of the question need to be answered in order to get full marks and to be aware of the number of marks allocated to each question.
- (g) As mentioned in the Key Messages section of this report this question proved demanding. Candidates must follow the instructions to 'explain the words in italics'. Many candidates gained one mark but fewer gained two for each section.
- (i) Many got the first point here for 'abiding' but fewer the second. For 'abiding' they could have put 'long lasting' or 'well remembered'. For 'slumped', 'slouched, collapsed, hunched or lying down helplessly' would be acceptable. They needed to demonstrate that they understood that the father was in despair or was depressed.
- (ii) This also proved to be a demanding question with only a small number of candidates achieving even one mark. Very few explained 'contorted' 'sufficiently although 'scrunched' and 'distorted' were rewarded. Although many understood that the father's frustration had some element of anger only a few developed this point further to show that they understood that his anger was the result of the powerlessness he felt in that he could not control the situation.
- (iii) Most candidates could explain 'pull himself together' but few attempted 'reprimand'.
- (h) Many candidates demonstrated a literal understanding of the phrases but few could translate this into an explanation about how this helps the reader to understand the father's behaviour.
- (i) **'As though he had hurled them there in a temper fit'**
- Many gained one mark for this for 'throwing/chucking' but few explained that 'hurled' or 'temper fit' showed extreme emotion and loss of control.
- (ii) **'said in a voice that rather shocked me',**
- Many gained 1 mark for recognising that this tone of voice was unusual for his father but few developed this to explain that his father was at the point of giving up.
- (iii) **'my father did collect himself a little at this point'**
- Most candidates explained the first point but not the second. Quite a few candidates explained that his father tried to control himself but few explained that he failed to do so.
- (iv) **'his face creased with despair'**
- Again, many achieved one mark but few two. 'Crease' proved to be a difficult word for candidates to explain, as did despair. A few did manage to explain despair and but very few could find alternative words for creased.
- (i) On the whole this question was answered well showing that Centres are concentrating successfully on summary techniques as part of their examination preparation. Many achieved 7 marks and

many 5 or above. A few had low scores, but not many. Those who achieved the high marks showed a secure understanding of what was required focussing on Christopher's mother. Less successful answers tended to include irrelevant material or focused on one detail, such as the painting game and did not include other important points.

There were 10 points (stated below) from the passage which could have been identified up to a total mark for the question of 7:

1. Stood in corridor/outside study/on attic floor.
2. Had been/may have been playing the painting game/naming the vessels.
3. Suddenly stopped/became still.
4. Listened at study door/conscious of /heard father's sobbing/something from the study.
5. (Quickly) pushed open (study) door/went in to study.
6. Stared/looked at papers on the floor.
7. Reprimanded/made a comment to father under her breath/whispered, speaks under her breath.
8. Spoke to him (in a quiet, angry voice)/became cross with him.
9. Walked out of study/closed door.
10. Led Christopher away.

## Question 2

This question was answered very well, on the whole. Most candidates showed a good grasp of what was required to write in the style of a journal entry. Most had the appropriate tone and wrote from Mrs Banks' perspective. A few wrote from the son's or husband's point of view but these were very few.

Overall, the marks for Reading and Written Expression were very similar with the average mark for Written Expression marginally higher than for Reading.

Many candidates had a good grasp of Mrs Banks' perspective. They could see that she was in a difficult position and outlined the various points with a secure understanding of the text. Many followed all of the bullet points set out in the question and a few went beyond that to infer possible future situations or solutions to problems encountered by Mrs Banks, based on the text but also using their imaginations. The best answers built appropriately on the questions left open by the passage, for example 'What did the mother say to the father?', 'What did the mother think might be done?' A few went a bit too off track making up things about Mr and Mrs Banks that were not implied in the passage.

There were a few cases where the text was paraphrased and none of the bullet points developed but these were very few. Some included irrelevant information, such as the mother's activities earlier in the day. There was a range of feelings expressed towards the father from great sympathy to anger at his weakness.

Many of the responses were clearly, and for the most part, correctly written, if not fluent. Very few contained 'blurred meaning'. The standard of writing, overall, was high in the context of a Core Paper. There were few cases of indiscriminate lifting but generally the standard was good. Spelling of basic words still represents a challenge for many and there is still a lot of uncertain sentence punctuation but on the whole candidates attempted to select appropriate vocabulary and to use varied sentence structures for effect. Most candidates attempted to write in an appropriate tone for the journal written by an Englishwoman in the 1930s but some were let down by contractions such as 'alot, and 'gonna' instead of 'going to'.

Candidates appeared to enjoy the journal format and most responded enthusiastically to this question; it would appear that it allowed them to write to the best of their ability. The most successful candidates used the bullet points in some detail, as a paragraph framework for their answer. A number of responses were able to get a sense of appropriate register. For the most part candidates kept to a length that was within

their control and detailed enough to address the bullet points. Some candidates forgot paragraphs but many handled paragraphs well.

Most responses scored within bands 2 or 3 for both parts of the question, with at least as many responses achieving band 1 marks as those gaining marks in bands 5 and 6. It is important to note that many candidates gained a higher percentage of their marks on **Question 2** than on **Question 1** – a detail that reinforces the point made in the Key Messages section that it would help those taking part in future examinations to ensure that they follow precisely the requirements of the wording of the sub-sections in the first section of the paper. In conclusion, this proved to be a successful paper which allowed the majority of candidates to produce work of a satisfactory to good quality.



# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/13  
Reading Passage (Core)

## Key Messages

1. Questions such as 1 (g) require candidates to provide definitions of six italicised words in total with one mark being awarded for each correct definition. It is important that candidates attempt to define all italicised words and focus their responses closely on those words.
2. It is important that candidates attempt to use their own words whenever a question requires them to do so in order to make clear their understanding.
3. Questions such as 1 (h) require explanation of *how* a writer's choice of words helps to produce a particular response from the reader and, therefore, a complete answer to such questions involves more than simply defining the meaning of the quoted phrase. Centres are advised to focus on developing effective strategies for tackling the specific requirements of key words within the question, particularly *how*, in order to explore nuances of meaning resulting from the words used by the writer.
4. Candidates should ensure that their responses to **Question 2** are closely linked to the context and content of the Reading Passage. They are also advised to spend some time proof-reading their responses and, in particular, focus on checking that they have separated sentences correctly by using full stops.

## General Comments

Candidates responded well to this paper and the overall impression is that the Reading Passage was both challenging but accessible in terms of understanding, but also a very good stimulus for the police detective's report in **Question 2**, which produced a large number of thoughtful and well-focused responses. Nearly all candidates responded conscientiously and diligently to all questions and made creditable attempts to confront the more demanding sub-questions of **Question 1**; although such responses did not always gain the full marks available for these questions, there were many occasions where partial marks were gained as an emerging sense of understanding was apparent from candidates endeavouring to express a complex point.

There was very little indication that responses suffered from timing problems and most answers were of adequate length for all questions; overall presentation and handwriting were generally of a good standard. Nearly all responses gave clear evidence that the examination was being taken seriously and that all candidates were trying their very best to do well.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

- (a) Most candidates answered this correctly by identifying that Christopher went into the garden to wait for his mother.
- (b) Many candidates gained one mark on this question by explaining that Christopher expected his mother to sing when she came into the garden. Fewer candidates seemed to understand the word 'commandeer' and its meaning his mother would take over using the swing from Christopher. This second expectation was required for the full two marks

- (c) The majority of candidates correctly identified that Uncle Philip and Christopher's mother were holding their meeting in the dining room.
- (d) This four-mark question, asking for an explanation of the reactions of Christopher and his parents to the Uncle's suggestion of going to the races, proved to be very challenging. Most candidates obtained one or two; significantly fewer, three marks and very few gaining the full four. To gain the full four marks, candidates needed to give a clear explanation (in their own words) of at least two of the points bulleted below. In practice, many candidates only covered one out of the possible points, thus making it impossible to obtain more than two points. The possible points were:
- The mother declared it was a good idea but the father did not join in.
  - The father left them to get on with their discussions, implying that he trusted them.
  - Christopher pretended to be excited about the trip. He thought he had a choice about whether or not to go, but in reality he did not have a choice as he was told he must go.
  - The father laughing with Uncle Philip shows that he was at ease (not preoccupied with something).
  - The fact that the mother looked annoyed may possibly suggest that she felt the men do not take the business as seriously as she does.
- (e) A large number candidates obtained the one mark available on this question by selecting either of these phrases: 'My father was always modest in his manners.' or 'found boastfulness in others embarrassing.'
- (f) This question was answered successfully by the vast majority of candidates who quoted two out of the following five possible phrases from the passage:
- On the day I am recalling.
  - I can remember to this day.
  - I was then only nine years old.
  - Only other memories to have remained distinct.
  - Remained in my memory over the years.
- (g) As mentioned in the Key Messages section of this report, this question proved demanding and it is essential that candidates focus their responses on defining the italicised words in the phrases quoted.
- (i) Comparatively few candidates gained two marks for this question. Many found an explanation for the mother's voice sounding 'wonderful', but with far fewer explaining the term 'carrying' - although some candidates did find synonyms such as 'resounding' or 'resonant' which showed a very effective vocabulary.
- (ii) This proved to be a demanding question although a good number of candidates gained at least one mark. Although many understood the second part and used phrases such as 'with some accuracy', more candidates had difficulty in explaining 'read the situation' without repeating words from that phrase.
- (iii) Again, the second word in italics was generally well understood and explained, while fewer candidates gave a convincing explanation of the word 'conspicuous' – a number of candidates understood what was happening in the passage at this point and may have been distracted into explaining the context for this phrase rather than concentrating on the actual words
- (h) This question also proved to be demanding with only a small number of responses going beyond explaining a content detail for each phrase to examine the effect of the language used, and how it contributed to Christopher's impressions of his parents. This resulted in very few two mark answers. Some candidates did little else than paraphrase the original wording which gained one mark if the answer revealed that the phrase had been clearly understood. A few candidates ignored the instruction to select three of the four phrases quoted in the question and simply chose their own phrases to explain; such responses could not be rewarded and nor could those that offered roughly the same explanation for each of the different phrases or which used one given phrase to attempt to explain another.
- **"smiled, then drifted past me"**

The majority of candidates managed to obtain one mark by suggesting that this showed a good or warm nature, fewer noticed the sense of his being relaxed or even slightly detached from events.

- **“A little excitement might do us all some good.”**

Most candidates correctly identified that this arose out of the mother’s dissatisfaction with her life; some candidates took this as the starting point for a very effective attempt to write about potential tensions between the father and mother (hence the use of ‘all’).

- **“found boastfulness in others embarrassing”**

Again, many candidates were able to give some comment on Mr Banks’ lack of pretence and gained one mark, while those who were aware of fact that showing off was something unusual for him frequently developed this to gain a second mark.

- **“Yes, darling. You’ve told me already.”**

The most successful answers identified the ironic/insincere use of ‘darling’ and the sense of tension between the parents (although in some cases it was found that this overlapped to some degree with the first phrase above) and others were able to comment on the fact that the father was repeating a boastful comment.

- (i) Most candidates managed to score between 4 -7 marks for this summary question although some responses focused on one aspect rather than both (there were only six possible points for each, thus it was necessary to consider both to some degree in order to obtain the full seven marks). In this question it is very important to be clear about which paragraphs are included in the summary as some candidates continued beyond the end of the section specified and therefore included irrelevant material. Candidates in general seemed to be well prepared for this question and it would appear that many Centres have concentrated successfully on summary techniques as part of their preparation for the examination.

There were twelve possible points (stated below) from the passage about what Christopher saw and did in the first five paragraphs which could have been identified up to a total mark for the question of 7:

Saw:

- 1 The dining room doors open.
- 2 His mother and Uncle Philip in discussion.
- 3 Strewn papers.
- 4 Uncle Philip getting up from the table.
- 5 His father smile and drift into the room.
- 6 His mother emerge looking annoyed.

Did:

- 7 Went into the garden.
- 8 Played on the swing.
- 9 Went back into the house.
- 10 Went into the library.
- 11 Spoke to his father.
- 12 Had lunch (with father; mother; Uncle Philip).

## Question 2

This question elicited some very successful responses; candidates selected salient points from the extract and were able to develop convincing explanations for what might have happened to the father and the possible clues to be gained from Christopher and his mother's recollections of events. In general, candidates were very comfortable when writing a report by a police detective and adopted an appropriate register and format. There were a few responses where candidates, possibly engaged by the original narrative, attempted to go forward to the police solving the mystery and lost focus on the task, but the vast majority of candidates addressed the question appropriately.

Overall, the marks for Reading and Written Expression were of similar quality with the average mark for Reading being marginally higher than that for Written Expression. The best responses showed a mature and perceptive understanding of the characters and situation described in the passage and many showed insight into the parents' relationship and made logical conclusions about the possibility of a conspiracy or a secret between the mother and Uncle Philip. Another feature of the most successful responses was where candidates picked up the suggestions about the father's boasting being a sign of something unusual in his behaviour that day. These responses often made good use of the detective's impressions of the family – some candidates using a verbatim question and answer record of an interview which was entirely acceptable insofar as it did not exclude the candidate covering the four bullets fully.

The less successful reports comprised mere retelling (often in great and some unnecessary detail) of events that day – concentrating too heavily on the first bullet point to the exclusion of the others. However, most candidates displayed a good general understanding of the family and the predicament which they faced, and some candidates showed great sensitivity to the possible effects of events on such a young boy.

The written accuracy was considered, overall, to have been an improvement on responses in previous series. Spelling of basic words still represents a challenge for many and there is still a lot of uncertain sentence punctuation, but in general, candidates attempted both to select vocabulary that was precise and wide-ranging and also to use varied sentence structures for effect.

However, as mentioned above, most candidates responded enthusiastically to this question and it would appear to have allowed them the opportunity to write to the best of their ability. There were only a small number of very short responses; in fact, many were sustained successfully over three or four sides of the answer booklet. The most successful of these addressed each of the bullet points in some detail; the less successful addressed one or two of the points with either no reference to the others or at, best, only a cursory one. It should be emphasised that the most successful answers dealt with the bullet points in turn, using them as a paragraph framework for their answer.

Most responses scored within bands 2 or 3 for both elements of the question, with at least as many responses achieving band 1 marks as those gaining marks in bands 5 and 6. Many candidates gained a higher percentage of their marks on **Question 2** than on **Question 1** - a detail that reinforces the point made in the Key Messages section, that it would help those taking this examination in future to ensure that they follow precisely the requirements of the wording of the sub-questions in the first section of the paper. In conclusion, this proved to be a successful paper which allowed the majority of candidates to produce work of a satisfactory to good quality.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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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 carefully and purposefully more than once
- remember to consider both explicit and implicit meaning within a passage
- take note of any extra information offered e.g. in an introduction to a passage
- read questions carefully, paying attention to the specific guidance offered
- 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 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 mostly showed reasonable understanding of what was required in each question and evidence of having engaged with both passages. Almost all candidates offered responses that at least attempted to address the task as set. There were very few instances where candidates had missed all or part of a question.

The majority of candidates offered responses of a suitable overall length and took care with presentation suggesting they had approached the tasks with some diligence. It was not always the case that within responses all sections of a question had been given equal attention. In many instances one part of a question was stronger than another – some answers were rounded off too early. Candidates are reminded that length in itself is only one feature of any answer – the best responses look to cover a range of points with some precision and offer a complete overview.

For higher marks at Extended level, the reading paper requires candidates to demonstrate a competent understanding of both passages and be prepared to explore not just the immediately explicit points of texts but to be willing to tease out more implicit ideas. Many responses would have benefited from closer attention to detail and a commitment to revisit key points in the passages in order to secure understanding. It was not unusual to find a candidate who had initially misread or not understood an idea when attempting Question one, who on returning to the text for **Question 2** and **3** had clearly then modified their understanding, but not returned to their original task to correct their error.

Pleasingly, most candidates endeavoured to use their own words and there were those who did so with precision on occasion. There was evidence that a wider working vocabulary was required for others as limitations affected both Reading and Writing marks at times. Some misunderstandings of key ideas within the passages were the result of incomplete understanding of specific vocabulary rather than any complexity in the text itself.

Where candidates had planned responses these more often successfully targeted each section of the question. Those who had also edited their answers, perhaps adding detail or changing wording, often did so

to good effect. There were strong answers offered by candidates to each of the questions, though in many cases focus was not maintained across the script as a whole.

Most responses were written in an appropriate register, many with some sense of audience. However, Writing marks were affected by awkward expression as well as problems with basic grammar. Whilst writing is not specifically assessed for accuracy in this paper, proof reading to avoid errors affecting the clarity of the response is advisable. Errors in the use of possessive pronouns were evident in a number of scripts. Candidates should endeavour to offer fluent and controlled responses.

Copying from the passages was rarely an issue. Some responses were over-reliant on the wording of the text and lifting of phrases was not unusual. The most successful responses had avoided this and offered carefully structured answers that modified and used the passages, rather than repeating or paraphrasing them.

Candidates must try to develop the ideas in the passage in response to **Question 1** in order to achieve higher marks and look to offer a more thorough response, dealing with details and points selected from the whole passage. Many candidates restricted their attention to the sections narrating the night time walk itself, missing opportunities to pick up on ideas in the second half of the text as a result. For **Question 2**, candidates needed to make more careful choices of words and phrases, selecting images and examples which they feel are powerful or interesting in some way. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to offer specific and detailed comments about these choices, demonstrating that they have understood something of the writer's purpose. Responses that try to explain the selected language in the same words as the choice will not score well. In **Question 3**, candidates should not be adding to ideas in the text or looking to analyse. Careful selection of points in both halves is necessary to access higher marks. Candidates who had spent time planning and organising their response were often most able to score more convincingly for content than those who tried to follow each passage through chronologically.

### Comments on Specific Questions

#### Question 1

**You are the grandfather. Some years later you write a letter to Natalia, for a special birthday, to remind her of your shared experience. Write the letter. You should include: the atmosphere of the city that night; your reasons for taking your granddaughter out that night; your thoughts and feelings now that you look back on 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. Begin your letter, 'Dear Natalia, I wonder if you remember...' Write between 1½ and 2 sides, 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)**

Almost all of the responses to this question indicated that candidates were familiar with the need to draw ideas for content from the passage.

Most answers had understood something of the general feel of the experience and were able to remind Natalia of the atmosphere of the night. A remarkable number of candidates made no reference to the elephant in response to any of the bullets. Others mentioned it only in passing as a casual detail. Comparatively few made use of the information offered later in the passage explaining how the elephant had come to be in the city and the role of the soldiers and zoo keeper in saving it. Many answers would have benefited from the inclusion of further detail and further exploration of the nature of the gift.

Stronger responses to this question often began with thoughts and feelings from the Grandfather's perspective looking back and established the significance of the experience as a shared bond. Some drifted too far from the passage in creating narrative backdrops for their letters. Whilst a few speculative details of the context for writing were occasionally useful in adding to the sense of voice, those answers that spent too much time creating an unsupported narrative, e.g. that the grandfather was now dying or that Natalia's behaviour had somehow necessitated a reminder, were in danger of losing sight of the passage and missing the chance to show what they had understood from their reading.

The response to the atmosphere of the city for the first bullet showed that candidates were generally able to pick out the more obvious elements of setting - the darkness, silence and emptiness. Many were able to go further, suggesting a magical or surreal quality or even the unusual calm in the context of the war. Too often though details were lifted and repeated mechanically rather than being integrated into the response. At the top end, candidates found inventive ways to incorporate details and responded to the suggestions of neglect or hardship rather than listing them.

A noticeable feature of mid-range responses was a tendency to carry over the sense of atmosphere into the second and third bullets rather than consider the specific focus each required, resulting in missed opportunities, particularly in relation to the significance of the elephant and precise nature of the gift. Weaker responses suggested largely superficial reasons for going out that night, offering assertions that it would be “one of those moments” without exploring how and why. This often resulted in repetition of ideas related to bullet one rather than suggestion of the grandfather’s reasons for sneaking out with Natalia that night. More successful answers moved on to consider the excitement of the grandfather, offering the suggestion he wanted to surprise Natalia as a treat to contrast with wartime life and was enjoying the sense of sharing the moment with her. The best responses connected subtleties in the text that suggested meeting the elephant was no coincidence and began to explore ideas related to that – seeing the elephant was exciting, but seeing it in secret before anyone else found out was particularly special.

Most candidates were able to offer potentially relevant ideas in the third bullet. The least successful approach was to simply repeat reminders of details of the walk – often again facts related to the atmosphere, without a sense of evaluation or development. Typically candidates mentioned Natalia’s concern at her mother’s possible reaction. Many did not go on to suggest how the grandfather might have interpreted that. The most convincing responses were able to shift perspective and offer reactions from the grandfather looking back on the whole episode, remembering that he would at the point of writing know the facts about the elephant’s plight as reported in the newspaper. A good number of candidates picked up on the idea that he hoped it might remain their secret or at least be shared wisely. Not all were able to go further than the text, repeating the advice to “think carefully about where you tell it and to whom”. Many candidates would have profited from re-reading this last section of text to clarify and refine their ideas. Skim reading lead some candidates to misinterpret “This is yours”, suggesting Natalia was handed the elephant as a pet. Likewise, the zoo keeper was variously misrepresented as responsible for the elephant being near death, cruel for using the elephant to advertise the zoo, or a failure as a businessman, in missing his role in saving the animal in the face of his own wartime suffering. There was much to be gained from an intuitive reading of this last paragraph. Some candidates did mention the elephant as a manifestation of hope in a general sense, while others less successfully merely mentioned the zoo or circus material in a loose narrative way. Notions of inspiration, admiration and humanity manifesting in love or care for a suffering animal were often not taken up, though occasionally candidates drew useful comparisons between the elephant and the grandfather.

The ability to manipulate information and ideas from the text is crucial to success at the higher levels. In this case, the question required candidates to shift perspective from that of Natalia who narrates the passage to that of the grandfather some years later. The change in perspective and time frame of the question was mostly well managed. Some candidates chose to deal with each bullet in turn, offering a sense of during, before and after the experience. Others attempted to weave in ideas, which had the potential to be more convincing but needed some careful thought and planning beforehand to ensure all bullets were covered and a good range of ideas offered. The question offered plenty of scope for creating voice and a sense of audience, though occasionally candidates allowed their writing to become maudlin and over sentimental at the expense of using material in the passage.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity of the response and how carefully language was used to indicate shades of meaning. Candidates often showed some ambition in their vocabulary. A smaller number were sufficiently precise in their use of language to be able to achieve some subtlety in terms of the grandfather’s recollections of the experience and relationship with Natalia. Even those struggling to offer a range of ideas often still retained some sense of voice, though this was at times marred by awkward expression. The better written responses matched some sense of personality and deliberate style with fluent, mostly controlled writing.

#### **Advice to candidates on Question 1:**

- read the question carefully, then re-read the passage with the question in mind
- identify potentially appropriate ideas from the passage
- be prepared to re-read sections of text to work out details about which you are unsure
- plan your answer to address all parts of the question and offer a range of ideas

- check you have given equal attention to each of the three bullet points and avoided repetition
- decide on a suitable voice, tone and style for your response
- identify supporting detail and plan to use it throughout the response, not just at the beginning
- extend and develop at least some ideas with these details in mind - think yourself into the situation of the character writing
- avoid simply repeating the words of the passage
- leave sufficient time to read your answer back and make any necessary changes

## Question 2

**Re-read the descriptions of: (a) the approach of the elephant in paragraph 8, beginning with ‘Half a block...’, (b) the elephant in paragraph 10, beginning with ‘Its ears were folded back...’.**

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

**(10 marks)**

Candidates are required to select examples of appropriate language from both paragraphs. Comments on stylistic effect are only credited where explicitly linked to choices. Having been directed to the paragraphs and given the focus of each description, candidates need to offer choices that are precise and complete in order to demonstrate secure understanding. Incomplete or over-long choices are less likely to be useful. For example, a number of candidates offered “ears folded back against the domed” as a choice, diluting the strength of the choice by suggesting both incomplete understanding of meaning and often leading to discussion of only one of the two choices it contained. A surprising number of candidates offered “enormous” without mentioning shadow – or offered the whole choice but explained only one word.

Long lists of choices also tend to be less helpful to candidates and are less convincing when they contain inappropriate choices. It is better to take time to select the most powerful examples and offer a more considered range in each half of the question. Each choice can then be discussed in turn specifically and at some length. Offering a number of choices followed by a comment to cover them all is not sufficiently precise to evidence any more than partial understanding. Candidates should be demonstrating that they can see how each of their separate choices is contributing to the reader’s view of the whole.

The response is best written in continuous prose to allow candidates room to explore and explain their ideas fully. Credit is given for the ability to select evocative, interesting or unusual examples of words and phrases relevant to the focus of the question. Responses that discuss the specific meanings of these choices are credited. Those which go on to consider layers of meaning or connotations in relation to the choices are beginning to show an understanding of their effects in the context of the passage. The strongest answers offer clear evidence that candidates have understood how the language is working through precise selection of a range of relevant choices in each half and close consideration of effect. The ability to recognise images within each paragraph and explain their effect on the reader is a feature of better answers. Naming a literary device, even accurately, is less important than offering an explanation of how it works within the context of the passage. Candidates are not being tested on their knowledge of technical terms, though do need a sufficiently wide range of vocabulary to be able to recognise and explain subtleties of language beyond explicit literal meaning.

General assertions that an example “creates an effect on the reader” or “helps you imagine it” are insufficient evidence of understanding. Similarly, those candidates who opened with at times lengthy introductions summing up the narrative or congratulating the writer on an accurate description of an elephant were not fully exploiting their opportunity to address the task.

Most candidates were able to identify potentially interesting examples from both of the paragraphs. Many found it difficult to go further than slight or partial explanations. Weakness in understanding and difficulty explaining vocabulary was apparent. Misunderstandings included references to “groan” as the specific and immediately recognisable noise of an elephant (as trumpeting might have been) and discussion of rock (noun) rather than rocked (verb). Few were able to respond to the subtle differences of movement implied by swaying, rocked forward and rolling. Some recognised references to the sea and boats but did not think further and explain how that might be related to the movement of this elephant.

Candidates found some profit in teasing out the writer’s method, the deliberate obliqueness of the first paragraph, the detailed picture of the elephant in the second. The idea of mystery and suspense were popular and sometimes sustained, as the shadowy and monstrous impression of the ‘thing’ caught



candidates' imagination. Many understood the meaning of organic and its hint that this was something alive but rarely paired it with lumpy or considered the effect of the full comparison. Some limited their discussion in the second half to a consideration of how the description related to elephants in general rather than considering this particular specimen.

A tendency to impose a single idea throughout the interpretation limited a number of answers such that nuances within and between choices were ignored. Most common here were ideas of being 'big', 'heavy' and 'slow', though not usually all of them together. Candidates were often stating and restating the obvious about elephants in relation to choices offered – especially in **Section B** – rather than carefully unpacking the whole phrase. Weaker answers, "It dragged its curled trunk like a fist," typically drew observations that it was an accurate picture of an elephant since elephants have large heavy trunks that curl at the bottom.

Better responses were able to go some way towards discussing the separate elements of dragged, fist and even curled. It was rare for candidates to put all of those elements together, connecting their ideas to explain the image as a whole.

"Domed" and "arched" were often cited as examples. A few better scripts engaged with the sense of the animal's architecture and demeanour. A number of scripts were able to suggest something of the animal's condition: weakness, age, fatigue - mainly linked to the fact that its skin was described as dry. There were few candidates who attempted to explain its latent power, submissiveness, or vulnerability.

Two phrases were cited by candidates, 'making almost no noise' and 'taking up the whole street'. The literal quality of these phrases did not allow scope for comment on effect at word level and consequently these would not have been credited as linguistically interesting examples. However the latter, in particular, had credence for those offering size as a basis for their comments and discussion in relation to them occasionally added usefully to the overall picture.

**The following response from a candidate in this examination series offers just one example of the ways in which candidates approached this question. It is not intended as a model answer. However, the answer is appropriate and offers evidence of understanding. Explanations of effect might well have been further refined.**

### Question 2 example

*"Enormous shadow" creates a feeling of mystery as the girl is unsure of what she is looking at.*

*"Enormous" also creates a sense of scale as we can visualize how big the creature was in comparison to the girl. There is a semantic field of the sea and its movement with "swaying", "rolling motion" (of waves) and the simile "like a tide" which compares the elephant's movement to that of waves. "Rocked forward" also links to the idea of the elephant compared to a boat rocking forwards and backwards with the tide. "Soft dragging sound" juxtaposes two contrary ideas of the heaviness of the large elephant dragging his weight with lightness or softness. The use of commas to separate the second sentence also allows the reader to slowly change the image they are visualizing and creates a transition from something mechanical "a tram" into something "organic" and "lumpy" by placing these words in the same sentence. "Sucked in air" confirms the reader's expectations that the "thing" is alive and the "deep groan" suggests suffering and fragility even though it is a large creature. Shadow also refers to a feeling of something gloomy, dark and unknown which can excite both fear and curiosity in the reader and the girl.*

*The adjectives "domed" and "arched" introduce an idea of architecture and the elephant as being a precious monument or building or even a work of art. "Bouldered head" creates visual imagery for the reader to visualise the head of the animal as a large grey stone, also creating a sense of the heaviness of the elephant's head that he has to carry. "Dry folds of skin" promote a sense of the animal being ancient as they can be interpreted as wrinkles, which also means mature and wise. "Seemed to take up the whole street" also creates a sense of the scale of the elephant as a colossal, huge creature that awakens a certain awe in the reader. "Shifted its weight" and "dragged its curled trunk" with the simile "like a fist along the ground" suggest that the elephant and its weight are imposing and he is conquering the street as he passes – a sense of power and strength.*

### Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- read both parts of the question to identify the focus for each and re-read the chosen paragraphs carefully
- identify examples of words and phrases used by the writer that seem interesting or powerful

- select a range of choices from these examples to comment on: try to choose the best, not just the first one you see
- do not choose whole sentences but be careful not to only offer one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase
- re-read the question to ensure that all your choices are relevant
- 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
- remember to put speech marks round your choices as it helps to identify them
- avoid general comments such as ‘the writer makes you feel that you are really there’, ‘this creates a strong visual image’, or ‘this draws the reader in and makes them want to read on’. Comments like these will not earn any marks and take up your time
- when you are not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- if your choice is a phrase, do not forget to look at all the interesting words within it as well as explain it as a whole
- remember you do not get any marks for identifying literary techniques or devices unless you focus on the meaning and effects of the words themselves
- to explain effects, think of all that word might suggest to a reader- the feelings, connotations and associations of the language
- include images from each paragraph, and try to explain them in detail
- use your own words to explain your choices rather than repeat the words from the choice itself

### Question 3

#### Summarise:

- (a) **the importance of mammoths *and* the reactions to this discovery, as described in Passage B**
- (b) **the perceptions *and* actions of Natalia, 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.

There were twenty-three possible answers in the Mark Scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. Though all points were offered by some candidates at some point, answers did not often demonstrate the coverage required to achieve higher marks. Each part of the question suggested two areas from which points might be drawn and candidates needed to revisit each passage when planning, to ensure they had targeted those. In part (a) candidates frequently did offer both general points about mammoths and specific points in relation to the discovery of Lyuba. Weaker answers included unnecessary information relating to other discoveries too. Part (b) answers tended to offer either Natalia’s perceptions or her actions, limiting the scope for scoring content points.

Some offered part (b) in narrative form, including much unnecessary detail as a result and repetition of points was evident in a number of answers. Some answers indicated that despite using it themselves, candidates had clearly not fully understood some key vocabulary. For example, incomplete grasp of the word ‘extinct’ meant that some candidates took Khudi’s find to be a living specimen. A few candidates picked up on the idea of mammoths being related to elephants and subsequently tried to forge a link between the two parts of the summary, which was not required at all. Comparatively few answers went over length, but stopping when a page is completed is not the same as offering an organised answer that addresses both halves equally and covers a full range of ideas within a page. Answers that tried to work through Passage B chronologically and then move on to approach Passage A the same way often ran out of space and ended abruptly.

Pleasingly there was a clear sense of candidates trying to use their own words most of the time with the better answers showing some effective organisation of ideas and, in some cases, grouping together related points.

**The following answer, produced by a candidate in this examination series, makes over 15 Reading points, balanced fairly evenly over the two parts of the question. It is not intended as a model answer, as for example organisation and concision might have been further honed, but does serve as one example of a successful response:**

*Mammoths are important characters in the Nenets' culture. They are well known and considered bad omens because of their ties to evil gods. Yuri Khudi was afraid when he discovered it but still sensed it was important and decided to let someone else know. His old friend reacted in the same way and was able to contact the local museum and authorities who flew in helicopter to see the animal. Mammoths are also important for science. They are closely related to living elephants. The preserved state of this mammoth and the fact it is complete with flesh, milk tusks and teeth, makes the carcass useful for research. Scientists can use it to study an extinct species, and as evidence in debates. The director of the museum is grateful for this discovery.*

*Natalia was hesitant at first, thinking about how her mother would react to find them both gone. Then she is surprised by the lack of activity since she expected the tram to be working. She begins to notice the silence and notices the rising moon. She struggles to catch up with her grandfather and indignantly demands to know where they are going. She tries to get him to reveal their destination. She is struck by how asleep the street is and is distracted by a beggar who seems to be dead. She collides with her grandfather's elbow and almost falls. Natalia notices but does not understand his excitement. She only sees the emptiness of the street but then finally sees the elephant. She is struck by its size and at first she does not know what it is. She becomes entranced with its movements.*

### **Advice to candidates on Question 3:**

- this task is a selective summary – not a précis – not all information in each passage will be relevant to your answer
- read the question carefully and underline the key words which indicate the focus of each part of the summary
- re-read each passage in order to find the precise information to answer each part of 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
- write up your answer in full sentences; refer only to your notes rather than the passages
- do not write an introduction
- do not try to compare the passages
- do not use quotations in your answer to **Question 3**
- do not write a narrative, or answer 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)

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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 the passages carefully and purposefully more than once
- remember to consider both explicit and implicit meaning within a passage
- take note of any extra information offered e.g. in an introduction to a passage
- read questions carefully, paying attention to the specific guidance offered
- 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 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 in this series generally seemed familiar with the layout of the paper and the demands of each question. There were still some responses that depended too heavily on the wording of the passage in **Questions 1 and 3**. Centres are reminded that candidates are expected to adapt and modify the material in the passage for higher band marks, and that copying from the passages is to be avoided.

Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible and were able to finish the paper within the time allowed. The vast majority of candidates were at least able to attempt each question. Whilst most candidates had been entered for the appropriate tier, some clearly would have benefited from being entered for the Core tier.

There did not seem to be many significant misunderstandings of the content of the passages, although a surprising number of candidates could not differentiate the whale and the submarine and, as a result, there were some confused references and consequences. Some candidates misinterpreted the number of characters featured in the passage where the professor's friend and Ned were often confused. Ned was variously incorrectly represented as the Professor's friend, the helmsman or the captain of the stricken vessel, and even the professor himself. This demonstrates the need for candidates to re-read the passage carefully to tease out finer details and incorporate them in their responses. A number of candidates had not read the introduction to the passage which helpfully explained the setting and characters involved as well as the context of the passage. It is crucial that candidates read all the material to pick up important detail that can be used to inform the best answers.

Copying was evident in many answers to **Question 1**, especially in response to the first bullet point: there is a significant difference between using textual detail in support of points and lifting whole sections of the text. Candidates must change the language of the passages in response to **Question 1** and **Question 3** in order to achieve a higher Reading and Writing mark. For **Question 2**, in order to achieve higher marks, candidates must make appropriate choices of words and phrases and need to make specific and detailed comments about these choices. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to write detailed explanations of the effects of their choices, demonstrating sound understanding of the writer's purpose. Weaker responses tried to explain the selected language in the same words as the choice. Candidates

should avoid using a grid or table format to respond to this question, as it usually limits their ability to explore the choices they have selected and often leads to repetition.

In **Question 3** the majority of candidates managed to find a reasonable number of content points, but many responses contained repeated ideas. There were many repetitions of the physical and mental rewards of freediving points in part **(a)** and of the cramps/numbness point in part **(b)**. It was pleasing that the majority of candidates are trying to use their own words in **Question 3**. However, they must be aware that the meaning must not change so that the summary is factually inaccurate. Inclusion of material outside the passages is also not rewarded and is self-penalising. This happened frequently in part **(b)** on the causes of drowning. There were some examples of excessively long responses - an issue that often leads to a lower Writing mark. Most lengthy responses were due to inclusion of unnecessary material, indiscriminate copying of the passages, or repetition. Some responses were offered in note-form; where a candidate has included a plan, they should put a line through it to indicate clearly that it is not part of the final response.

On this Reading paper 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 and avoid using lifted material from the passages. Most responses were written in an appropriate register, but some Writing marks were affected by awkward expression or limited style, over-reliance on the language of the passages, or structural weakness and incoherence. Candidates should ensure that they pay attention to the length guidelines for their response to these questions, particularly **Question 3** where lengthy answers cannot score highly on the Writing mark.

It is essential that the skills of selection and modification are demonstrated in all three questions on this paper. In addition, there needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions. Candidates should aim to plan their responses; effective planning ensures that there is no repetition between sections of a question, that they are all given equal attention and coverage, and that there is a coherent and logical structure to the response. It also helps to ensure that the response includes the three assessment objectives: the use of ideas to demonstrate explicit understanding; the use of detail to show close reading; the development of ideas to prove implicit understanding.

### Question 1

**You are the professor. Write a report for the marine society after your release from the submarine. Your report should explain: how you and your companions fell overboard and came to be on the submarine; how you feel about the discovery of the truth about the ‘monster’; your concerns about the captain and the existence of such a vessel.**

**Base your report on what you have read in Passage A. Address all three bullet points. Be careful to use your own words. Write between 1½ and 2 sides, 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)**

Stronger responses to this question selected and condensed the events in the passage and modified the ideas to create a suitable style for a formal report, and a convincing voice for a learned professor whose belief in a legendary creature has been challenged and contradicted by the extraordinary discovery of a man-made submarine. They were able to sustain the use of supporting detail throughout the response, firmly tethering any development to details in the passage. The second bullet allowed them to infer the professor's personal response to the shocking discovery through a full exploration of his feelings, and the third to develop their ideas on the possible threats or advantages posed by the submarine and its captain. The best responses firmly linked their ideas for the third bullet to details in the passage: the violence of the collision with the ship, the rough handling of the sailors and professor by the submarine's crew, and the secret existence of the vessel are some examples of details used to support the notion that the submarine may be used for criminal activities in the future.

A feature of better responses was the reordering of the events of the passage in line with a report written after the event – beginning with details such as the time of the collision for example. The best answers balanced the three sections without the events dominating, sometimes integrating elements of the story with for example amazement at the power of the submarine and comment on its reckless collision with their peaceful vessel.

Mid-range responses made reasonable use of the passage but tended to stick closely to the events and ideas in the passage, and relied more on the order and often the wording of the passage. A noticeable

feature of such responses was the detail of the collision occurring at 11.00 pm coming later in the response (as it does in the passage), or the inclusion of direct speech from the passage, which is not in keeping with a formal report. Here, the first section often predominated with fewer ideas presented for the second and third bullets and leading to an uneven response. At times the third bullet was evaded by repeating the questions posed in the passage about the vessel and its crew rather than by attempting to answer them through the development of the ideas offered.

Opportunities were also missed for the development of ideas and the drawing of conclusions in bullet 2. For example, the professor's reaction to the truth about the monster would be limited to shock and fear, rather than curiosity about its structure or amazement at its design. Some candidates in taking on board the persona of the professor did use details from the passage, if a little mechanically, offering such comments as "When I saw the lines of rivets, I couldn't believe my eyes". Where answers developed these comments - for example, "The strong steel plates kept us out and the water too. How could they make that? I could go down and examine the sea-bed with a boat like that"- they were often more convincing.

Less successful responses copied out parts of the passage without recognition of the need to select, develop and modify the content, structure and language of the original. There was no sense of a report and they generally took the form of giving an unselective narrative retelling of the story as a response to the first bullet, rather than choosing only the details that would be required for a formal report of the events. These responses would often include descriptions of the sea at night which were unnecessary and inappropriate. Some careless reading was evident in the misuse of facts, with confusion about Ned's role in the sequence of events, in particular. When responding to the second and third bullets weaker responses often displayed a confused understanding of the vessel itself, some still thinking it was a monster rather than a submarine. Such responses were unable to demonstrate any significant understanding of the passage. It was common for these responses to ignore bullets 2 and 3 completely.

The least successful answers were often thin, simple or short. Some candidates invented their own material describing a huge storm which led to the sinking of the ship, or a ride on a submarine and then being left stranded on a deserted island. Where almost the entire response was copied from the passage there was very little option but to award Band 5 marks.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity, fluency and coherence of the response and how well it used language to capture the importance of the discovery and the urgent need to convey the information to the marine society. The better written responses adopted a formal but urgent tone and a mixture of informative and reflective content with the professor's own suggestions as to what the discovery may mean for the future of marine exploration.

#### **Advice to candidates on Question 1:**

- read the question and the passage carefully – do not rely on skim reading
- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to make it an appropriate response written in the required style
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- select the most appropriate ideas from the passage
- be prepared to re-read sections of text to work out details about which you are unsure
- develop and extend at least some of the ideas relevantly - think yourself into the situation of the character writing
- create a suitable voice, tone and style for the persona in the response.
- leave sufficient time to read your answer back and make any necessary changes

#### **Question 2**

**Re-read the descriptions of (a) the sea in paragraph 6, beginning 'the monster had...' and (b) the vessel in paragraph 11, beginning 'I hoisted myself....'.**

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

**(10 marks)**

The response to **Question 2** should be written in continuous prose to allow candidates to express fully their ideas about their selected words and phrases. 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 for offering a range of

appropriate choices in each section. Responses that went on to give the specific meanings of the words in context 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 10.

Candidates aiming for the higher marks need to demonstrate understanding through exploration and explanation of the effects created by the writer. This involves the ability to recognise images and explain any connotations they hold. Recognising devices such as metaphors or assonance only attracts marks where the candidate can explain their usefulness. Close analysis of the words is required in this question. Candidates should avoid generalisations such as 'it creates an effect on the reader,' or 'this caused the reader to read on.'

Many candidates found this question the most demanding of the three, as it requires a wide vocabulary, close reading, and an ability to relate to subtleties of language beyond explicit meaning. It was noticeable in this series that fewer candidates answered the question using a grid or table format. This benefited candidates greatly, as when using a grid often the same material is duplicated in two of the three columns. Though possibly useful as a means of planning, using a grid as the final answer often forces responses to be expressed very briefly or in note form and does not allow for varying development of comments according to the complexity of the language choice being discussed.

The best answers selected their examples with care, making sure they fitted the question and were balanced between the two parts of the question. They showed precise focus at word level and were engaged and assured in their handling of their appropriate choices. They included and explained images used, for example the huge scale of the submarine stressed by 'hoisted myself to the summit'. Many discussed the calm and beautiful reflection of movement and/or artistic imagery used in 'shimmering sheets spattered'- one candidate even suggested that it was like a picture by Jackson Pollock. Others suggested something of the eeriness of the scene.

Mid- range responses gave a mainly suitable selection with a mixed range of explanation, possibly touching on effects at times. Single words or overlong phrases were sometimes included which made the comments imprecise.

Less successful responses often ignored the wording of the question failing to focus on the sea in (a) or the vessel in (b). This often led to indiscriminate selections of words and phrases, for example 'rammed' and 'monster' in (a). These were often followed by lengthy comments that could not be credited as they did not focus on the question. Other candidates adopted a 'technique spotting' approach identifying literary techniques, such as alliteration in 'shimmering sheets spattered' or onomatopoeia in blotches'. 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 vessel is powerful in (b). These less successful responses often took the form of a commentary on the entire paragraph for each half of the question, containing some relevant choices and some brief explanation of them. Occasionally candidates offered an extremely sparse number of choices, only very slight comment or simply lifted the whole paragraph and offered a general comment.

**The following response from a candidate in this examination series offers just one example of what might constitute an appropriate response to the question. It is not intended to be a model answer, and although this candidate defines the literary devices as used in the passage, it is not necessary to do so to achieve marks in Band 1. The answer offers evidence of understanding. Explanations of effect might well have been further refined.**

**(a)        *the sea in paragraph 6***

*The descriptions of the sea are mysterious and eerie, combining a sense of danger with beauty and calm. 'Shimmering sheets spattered' uses sibilance to create the thrash and movement of the waves. When read aloud the 's' sound uses onomatopoeia to sound like the ocean as it rises up all around them. The simile 'plunged into a pool of quicksilver' creates the idea that the sea is dangerous and against them and that the men cannot stay afloat in the slippery liquid. The adjective 'phosphorescent flickers' again suggests the idea of the supernatural by creating an unknown, mysterious, almost magical mood. The metaphor referring to the sea as 'dense gloom' makes the water seem unwelcoming and dismal, almost as if there is no way out for them. 'Gloom' sounds eerie, and as though the ocean has a dark, threatening, almost murderous side to it.*

**(b) The vessel in paragraph 11**

*The phrase 'hard, impenetrable substance' suggests the immense power and superiority of the 'monster' and that the creature cannot be harmed or damaged and that the crew are unprotected and vulnerable compared to the protected beast. The term 'metallic resonance' shows how the vessel is armoured and makes an echoing sound that stresses its strength and magnificence. 'An immense steel fish' again shows its power and 'steel' stresses how it cannot be defeated. It is an underwater soldier. The use of the word fish with 'immense steel' suggests that the small generic fish is enhanced and now stronger than anything else in the sea, thus the vessel itself is superior to any other boat in the sea. This reiterates the idea of power and it being the most feared thing in the water. The adjectives 'smooth and polished' suggests the vessel is well cared for and deliberately streamlined for life under the sea which suggests sinister motives. The phrase 'half submerged creature' suggests it may have come up to attack and is threatening and waiting to inflict suffering on its victims.*

**Advice to candidates on Question 2:**

- read the question carefully to ensure that all your choices are relevant
- re-read the whole paragraph before making selections; choose the best and not those which happen to come first
- choose a range of words and phrases that seem powerful. Do not write out whole sentences, but also do not offer only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase
- do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle
- remember to put quotation marks around your choices. This makes it easier for the Examiner to identify them and makes it easier for you to focus on the exact wording
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them
- avoid general comments such as 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there', 'this creates a strong visual image', or 'this draws the reader in and makes them want to read on'. Such comments will not earn any marks at all
- if you are not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- remember you do not get any marks for identifying techniques unless you focus on the meaning and effects of the words themselves
- to explain effects, think of what the reader sees and feels when reading the word or phrase because of the connotations and associations of the language
- include images from each paragraph, and try to explain them.

**Question 3**

**Summarise (a), the attractions and benefits of freediving, as described in Passage B; and (b) the possible causes of drowning, 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, responses needed to identify fifteen points that were relevant to the question and to present them succinctly and in their own words as far as possible. This is an exercise in informative writing, which should be clear and to the point, and in a different form from the passages. There were twenty-two content points available in the Mark Scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. The content points were evenly spread across **(a)** and **(b)**.

The majority of candidates demonstrated an awareness of the appropriate style for a summary, with less wholesale copying or responses written in the style of a commentary. The majority of candidates read the question carefully and attempted to select relevant material using their own words where possible.

Some candidates found the second passage more accessible than the first, perhaps due to the more informative style of the passage. There was though a good deal of information not required for the answer. For example, the expense of free diving is not an attraction or benefit, nor is compression of lungs to size of lemon. This task is not a précis, but a selective summary and stronger answers kept that in mind.



A small but significant number of candidates based their answer to both (a) and (b) on Passage B which meant that there was nothing to reward for Reading in part (b). Some candidates limited their achievement by writing in partial or complete note-form, despite the instruction on the Question Paper to write in continuous prose and full sentences. Others offered commentary or narrative, neither of which are suitable responses to this task.

The most successful responses selected and re-ordered the relevant information from the passages, with a clear focus on the actual questions, and wrote them in fluent sentences, within the prescribed length and using own words as far as possible. They avoided writing introductory statements and making comments, and concentrated on giving a factual objective summary, more or less equally balanced over the two sections. While it was acceptable to give the points in the order in which they appeared in the passage, more able candidates changed the sequence so that related points could be grouped together. For example, in Passage B the physical and mental effects of freediving required reorganising to avoid repetition. The better candidates, for example, recognised that pushing one's body to its limits and physical achievement were the same point whereas the weaker ones did not. In Passage A a significant degree of selection was required to exclude unnecessary information and ideally the style adopted needed to be far more informative and objective than the original passage. The strongest candidates were able to do this successfully.

**The following answer, produced by a candidate in this examination series, makes over 15 Reading points, but if handwritten would easily fit onto one page. It offers an example of how a successful response may be presented but is not intended as a model answer.**

**Section (a)**

*Freediving is exciting as it's an extreme form of diving that often takes place in stunning places. You experience a sense of independence and can be more self-reliant than in any other sport as you learn to control your breathing and discipline your body. It's a real mental and physical achievement where you can learn about yourself and creatures of the ocean, like sharks. You may also get to swim with amazing creatures like dolphins and whales whilst you demonstrate the natural bond that humans have with water and become aware of the ocean and planet's health and the danger it is in.*

**Section (b)**

*Drowning is easily possible in the ocean. Wet clothes become heavy and can drag you down, and it may be hours before you are found, meaning your energy gets drained making it difficult to stay above water. Cold temperatures may numb body parts and if salty sea water is swallowed dehydration may arise. If it is dark it may be difficult for people to find you and being alone is consequently more tiring. If your mouth swells up you can not call for help. You could lose consciousness and be submerged.*

**Advice to candidates on Question 3:**

- read the question carefully and underline the key words which indicate the focus of each part of the summary
- re-read each passage in order to find the precise information to answer each part of 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
- write up your answer in full sentences; refer only to your notes rather than the passages
- do not write an introduction
- do not use quotes in your answer to **Question 3**
- do not write a narrative, or write 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)

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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 any extra information offered e.g. in an introduction to a passage
- read questions carefully, paying attention to the specific guidance offered
- 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 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**, offer 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. It is important too that when they do alter wording and rephrase a fact, the meaning should not change. The Mark Scheme for Writing indicates the marks awarded where the response exceeds the permitted length. If a response copied the passage, the candidate would not score highly.

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 - complaints and reasons in bullet one, dissatisfaction and plans in two, and response both to Son's feelings now and to what he was intending to do 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. Pleasingly, 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**

**Write the words of the dialogue which takes place between Mother and Son after her arrival. In the dialogue you should include: Mother's complaints about the journey, and her reasons for not wanting to make it; Son's dissatisfaction about his life, and his plans for the future; Mother's response to Son's feelings and intentions.**

**Base your dialogue on what you have read in Passage A. Address all three bullet points.**

**Be careful to use your own words. Begin your dialogue: Mother: 'How I hate travelling...' Write between 1 1/2 and 2 sides, 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)**

Most responses addressed all three areas outlined in the question and adopted the correct register for the genre. Some contained convincing dialogue between two relatives who do not have a close relationship and who have opposing views and attitudes. In good responses these opposing views were clearly expressed using details and ideas from the passage that were modified and developed effectively.

For the first part of the task candidates were expected to focus not only on the mother's complaints about aspects of her journey but also on the various reasons for her reluctance to leave her apartment and the bubble. This first section provided the opportunity to select details that gave an insight into the mother's leisured lifestyle, her annoyance at being disturbed by the son she rarely sees, the ravaged condition of the outside world and her fear of the Monitors. The judicious selection of significant material in this part of the task provided scope to develop ideas in later parts of the dialogue.

Good responses included ideas that could be used as a basis for the differences in attitudes and views of the two characters: the son's dissatisfaction with his life and the need to change it, and the mother's satisfaction with her life and her objections to his views and plans.

Many responses referred to the futuristic and synthetic nature of the mother's apartment; the holo-phone and the mentally activated devices. Good responses did not use the details mechanically but developed them effectively to convey her satisfaction with the lifestyle that provided her with everything she required with no effort at all and which allowed her to indulge in enjoyable pastimes, such as painting flowers on her face. This created the sense of exactly the type of featureless apartment and meaningless way of life that her son objected to and wanted to escape from. Some candidates referred to the idea that he objected to communicating by holo-phone and had little contact with his mother.

Most responses included details of the mother's view from the hoverplane with descriptions of the 'featureless and flat surface' with 'broken buildings' caused by nuclear warfare. These were not always modified and developed. In good responses the implications of living in such an inhospitable environment were later used as arguments to dissuade the son from returning to the surface of the planet. The details were also used to display the mother's reluctance to leave the safety of her apartment and to be reminded of the violent past.

It was also made clear in some responses that the Great Benefactor had saved everyone by ending the warfare; it was not always made explicit later that her son's ungratefulness for his peaceful and protected life was something she could not comprehend. References were made to the Monitors and the mother's fear of being detected by them. In better responses these were developed and the level of control exerted was later given as a reason for the son's dissatisfaction and his need to escape the bubble.

Less good responses included details whose relevance was not made clear. Some were focused on the physical characteristics of the transporter module and contained references to the 'pearlescent polyacrylic armchair' and the 'lobsterite and chilled mandrake juice' that 'slid out of the hatch'. While these details indicated the futuristic nature of the transport, they are also an indication of the synthetic and unnatural environment that the mother found convenient but which her son found distasteful.

This first section provided the opportunity to create a convincing voice for the mother and to convey the distant relationship she had with her son. In good responses her character was firmly established and an insight was given into her way of life and attitude to being forced to meet up with her son and view the outside world that she hates.

For the second part of the task good responses created a convincing voice for the son and conveyed effectively his unhappiness and the need to break free from his current lifestyle. They developed the dialogue from the passage and explained what his 'yearnings' were and why he needed to 'cross the boundaries'. They expressed his need to explore the planet and visit places that he had heard or read about, and some referred to outdoor pursuits, for example, fishing and rock climbing that were no longer possible in the bubbles. Some also made references to his mother's view of the mountain topped with 'icing' and expressed a desire to climb mountains and to see snow. Less good responses used the phrase from the passage 'I must see and feel and breathe the surface of the planet, or I shall die' without developing the ideas or referring to his claustrophobic and unnatural life in the apartment and the artificial air of the bubble. Some expressed a desire for him to feel the wind in his hair or the sun on his skin.

Good responses criticised the idleness of their lives where there is no need to work, and the boredom of a life without the need to strive and struggle for what they needed to survive. They referred to his mother's life of artificiality and confinement within her apartment and her pursuit of trivial leisure activities. He had the desire to face challenges and to make his life useful.

In some responses references were made to the amount of control they had over their own lives. The son questioned the motives of the Benefactor and discussed plans to challenge him and take power from him. Some questioned whether a life of peace and protection was a fair exchange for their lack of freedom and their obedience of the rules.

Better responses also used detail from the passage to outline his plans for the future; he wanted to rebuild the torn buildings and broken cities that his mother had described to him. The plan to develop and use a radiation-proof suit to make life on the surface a possibility was firmly linked to ideas in the passage. The best responses were those that developed the ideas from the passage and which referred to his mother's views and attitudes included in the first part of the task.

For the third part of the task candidates were required to respond to the son's views and plans; better responses had included a good range of ideas in the first two sections which could be further developed here, resulting in an integrated whole. Candidates could refer to the son's initial communication by holophone or to his later meeting with his mother. Good responses sustained the character of the mother and expressed her views clearly and convincingly. There was a range of credible responses to her son's intentions. Some gave patient explanations of why life outside the bubbles and a return to the Old World were impossible due to high levels of radiation. He had little knowledge of life before the Enclosure and Mother ridiculed the naivety of his plans. She also expressed fear that his ideas would jeopardise their safety and they would be punished by the Monitors. Some conveyed her confusion and disbelief that he could possibly be unhappy when provided with everything he needed and some expressed annoyance at his ingratitude. In some responses she displayed concern for his health and her fear that he might die because of his actions.

Candidates could decide whether they parted on good or bad terms, or whether the mother agreed to join her son because she realised that her own lifestyle was meaningless too. The latter depended on the persuasiveness of her son's arguments; in some responses his ideas were not convincing or forceful enough to ensure that this outcome was credible.

Good responses avoided repetition of ideas. Candidates are expected to select details relevant to each bullet point without duplication; good responses displayed an appropriate selection and focus on each part of the task.

Stronger responses allowed both characters to speak for sustained sections, less successful responses tended to contain short, stilted pieces of dialogue that reduced the opportunities for ideas and personalities to be developed and for cogent arguments to be expressed clearly. In some responses there was too much

focus on pleasantries at the beginning and good byes at the end which contained few relevant details and opportunities for development. Some responses included too much narrative which often relied on the wording of the original and did not allow the characters to fully express their opinions. In better responses candidates appear to have decided the viewpoints of both characters in the planning stage then added relevant details to support their views.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity and fluency of the response and how well it used language to explain both of the characters' 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. The weakest responses relied on the wording of the passage and displayed a limited range of appropriate vocabulary.

### **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) Mother's apartment in paragraph 2, beginning 'She looked around.....' and (b) the view from the plane in paragraph 8, beginning 'At first the surface below.....'**

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

**(10 marks)**

Candidates are required to select examples of appropriate language from both paragraphs. Most responses were balanced with an equal number of choices, and many candidates identified a sufficient number of words and phrases. Paragraphs 2 and 8 contained a range of interesting language and images from which appropriate examples could be selected. Less good responses only included one or two examples in each section; this is not sufficient to display an understanding of the writer's use of language and to secure marks in the higher bands.

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 contained examples of quite ordinary language, for example 'small' and 'one-roomed'. These do not allow deeper meanings, associations or effects to be explored; they were often accompanied by simple or literal meanings. Some responses did not address all of the words that were selected. For example, in the description 'perfectly square' the word 'perfectly' was not always explained, and in the phrase 'hundred stacked above hers' many responses did not address the use of 'stacked', missing the opportunity to explore the idea that people were piled high, similar to commodities in a store room.

Part (b) often contained less appropriate examples. The phrases 'she closed the portal blind in disgust' and 'bustling magnificent cities' did not focus on the view from the plane and could not be rewarded. The terms 'Wide Water' and 'hyper-nuclear weapons' were not good examples of interesting language.

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 long quotations were followed by specific references to individual words and precise explanations of their use. Comments about the overall effects of language can only be rewarded if they are supported by specific examples; without analysis at word level they are likely to be fairly general observations. In part (a) some responses contained the comment that the apartment was like a prison, without explaining which specific words and phrases contributed to this effect. Some responses displayed an understanding that the apartment was lifeless, regimented and boring; good responses selected words and phrases that demonstrated how this atmosphere was created. There was also an understanding that the apartment was futuristic in style, not all responses illustrated this with specific quotations. In part (b) some answers correctly identified the feelings that the writer wanted to evoke, for example sympathy and sadness, without identifying

individual words and explaining how they generated those feelings. The comments that the view was dull, boring and a scene of total destruction were not always accompanied by appropriate examples from paragraph 8. Good responses linked words and phrases which had similar meanings or connotations, for example, in part (a) 'perfectly square' and 'grey metal squares' both suggest the precision, uniformity and functionality of the room.

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, 'desolation and desertion shows that the buildings were desolate and deserted' does not display a satisfactory level of understanding and cannot be rewarded. Good responses selected short, specific examples and gave clear explanations of their meanings and effects. 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. The precision of those choices might have been improved in (a) where one or two are rather long and the last is actually from paragraph 3 so not rewarded. Candidates are not expected to include all of the potential examples from the paragraphs.**

**(a) Mother's apartment in paragraph 2:**

*The phrase 'small and perfectly square one-roomed apartment' gives us the impression that the room is cube shaped and built with military precision. The phrase 'without colour and identical to those of the hundreds stacked above hers' highlights the dullness of the building and the lack of creativity in the building's design. The word 'stacked' implies that the building was hastily constructed reminding us of boxes piled on top of each other in warehouses waiting to be assembled. The words 'myriad of tiny halogen lights embedded in the ceiling to create a shimmering effect' gives readers the impression that there are lots of lights acting like stars in the night sky. The word 'shimmering' gives us the effect of stars twinkling. The phrase 'grey metal squares' once again highlights the military precision of the design and the dull grey reminds us of army uniforms. The use of the words 'the apartment was featureless' shows the reader the simple and clear designs. The effect is of order, in contrast to the world outside.*

**(b) The view from the plane in paragraph 8:**

*The writer tries to create the effect of a ruined and empty landscape. The words 'featureless and flat' suggest that nothing of interest can be seen outside, there are no buildings or landmarks that can be used as points of reference as everything looks the same. The phrase 'monochrome grey carpet' suggests that the green carpet of grass has been destroyed. 'Desolation and desertion' is personification - the buildings feel as though everyone has left them. 'Shards of concrete and glass hanging' give an image of sharp and jagged remains of the building that could be dangerous. The word 'hanging' creates suspense as they could fall any time and injure someone. In the phrase 'pointing fingers pleading to an indifferent sky' the writer uses personification. The buildings appear to be praying and begging for someone to help them. The 'indifferent sky' is ignoring them which makes us feel sympathy for them. The simile 'cake frosted with white icing' could be a reminder of happier times because cakes are associated with celebrations. The mountain range also looks tempting, unlike the damaged cities and empty landscape.*

**Advice to candidates on Question 2:**

- avoid general comments such as 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there' or 'this is a very descriptive phrase'. Such comments will not earn 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. That can give you up to half marks for the question, if the meaning is accurate.
- to explain effects, think of all that word might suggest to a reader - the feelings, connotations and associations of the language
- remember you do not get any marks for identifying literary techniques or devices unless you focus on the meaning and effects of the words themselves
- learn to recognise images and explain them. Say 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 stages of the Apollo mission, as described in Passage B; (b) what we learn about life under the Great Benefactor, 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. This was the highest-scoring question for many of the responses. Most candidates were aware of the appropriate form, style and tone for a summary. Better responses avoided introductory statements and commentary and concentrated on factual summary, more or less equally balanced across the two sections.

Most responses contained a satisfactory number of points, securing high marks for content; some achieving the maximum of fifteen points. In most summaries part **(b)** contained fewer relevant points. The Writing marks were not always high, 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. In part **(a)** good responses included factual information about the most significant stages of the journey and landing, without unnecessary detail, comments about the importance of each stage, or repetition. Less successful responses included the whole sequence of events, displaying little judgement about which were the most important procedures. Some contained details about the space centre, the rocket, the thoughts of the astronauts and the potential problems that might occur. Some responses copied phrases from the passage regarding the significance of the mission, for example, 'millions of people were watching.....' and 'claim their place in history'. These were not relevant to the task and could not be rewarded. Part **(b)**, in most responses, was less focused. Some summaries commented on the emotional and psychological restraints of living in a controlled society, some explained the reasons why people lived in bubbles and referred to the effects of nuclear war. This section required candidates to re-order the material from Passage A and several responses effectively organised the material into advantages and disadvantages of life under the Great Benefactor. In less good responses comments were made about the benefits of people having everything provided for them in return for their obedience of the rules. Responses that included discursive writing often lacked focus and concision.

Writing marks were also awarded for concision. Some summaries contained wordy explanations. In some responses part **(a)** contained overlong descriptions of the detachment of the lunar module and the loss and re-establishment of the radio signals. Unnecessary information was sometimes included about the lunar orbits; some scripts copied the wording from the passage about the Sea of Tranquility and some included the full names of all three astronauts and the dates of various stages of the mission. In part **(b)** less concise scripts also included details that were not necessary, for example, that the mother and son had not met for 'five sun cycles' or that she had not left her apartment for many months. Responses that referred specifically to the two characters were often less succinct than those written in terms of the general population, as they sometimes lapsed into a narrative account rather than informative writing. Some summaries contained overlong descriptions of the mother's apartment and the copying of phrases, for example, 'were mentally activated and would materialise soundlessly from the walls'; these resulted in a lack of concision.

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) weaker responses included large chunks of copied material, for example, 'climbed through the tunnel connecting the Command module to the lunar lander and entered the spaceship they called the Eagle'. This sentence and the one that followed it, 'With the flick of a switch...' could have been paraphrased in a few words. Using the language of the original often led to unnecessary commentary and loss of concision. In part (b) good responses used alternative words for 'featureless', 'identical' and 'mentally activated'.

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

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

**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 stages of the Apollo mission (Passage B)***

*The Apollo mission in 1969 had many stages. First they had to thoroughly check that the Saturn 5 rocket had all that they needed for the mission. After 96 hours in space the astronauts on board Apollo entered the lunar orbit and on the 13<sup>th</sup> orbit they started to go into places on the orbit that had not been explored before. Then two members of the crew climbed on board the Eagle for the lunar landing. Once detached from the mother ship, Aldrin and Armstrong made a series of manoeuvres to begin their landing. They had to fire the thruster exactly on time for the landing to go smoothly. It did and they then had to perform experiments, collect rocks and take pictures of the Moon's surface. All they had to do then was to rest and launch back into space and connect back to Colombia. Then they came back to Earth and made their mark in history.*

***Part (b) Life under the Great Benefactor (Passage A)***

*The life under the Great Benefactor is to live in small apartments with nothing in them. There was no furniture or devices present but they were to be activated through the mind. All those who survived lived in the same bubble and because of the Great Benefactor's work of ending the wars he protected all those in the bubbles so that there was no purpose in ever leaving the apartment or to do any work. Travelling to other planets is possible through hoverplanes. Communication is done through holo-phones where one talks to holograms of each other. However, all that one does must be within the Great Benefactor's rules which the Monitors enforce in every bubble.*

**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)

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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 and views logically and organise their writing effectively
- create thoughtful and well structured arguments, construct detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- write in a variety of well-formed sentence types, at times to create effects
- select a variety of effective and appropriate vocabulary with precision

## General Comments

The majority of scripts displayed a good understanding of what was required in both sections of the paper and Examiners were pleased to see that time management overall was much improved this series, leading to organised and purposeful responses in both the Directed Writing and the Composition. There was also evidence of planning in both sections of the exam which helped candidates to structure and develop their ideas and achieve better marks. Examples of rubric infringement were extremely rare.

Most responses showed a committed engagement with the topic in **Question 1**, some with an effective understanding of the crucial bias in the wildlife magazine article, others less secure in their own arguments but still displaying a sound grasp of the issues addressed in the text. Most candidates, at average and above levels of attainment, wrote in their own words but Examiners did note that there was some lifting of specific sections or a simple paraphrasing or retelling of certain aspects, in weaker scripts. Better responses here often referred to the biased language of the article and picked up on specific vocabulary, such as 'massacre' and 'murder' treating the wolves as if they were sentient beings and this heightened understanding assisted in both the reading and writing aspects. Average candidates, in general, were concerned with showing a good understanding of the arguments involved on 'both sides' and occasionally developed or added slight evaluation of these points. Weaker candidates tended to simply retell what happened to each of the farmers, often quoting rather than summarising, and then cited 'the agency's' role separately which led to limited links with the text or with the arguments raised in the article. Occasionally, insufficient use was made of the points in the passage, where responses drifted into diatribes against the 'bad wolf of fairy tales' or an appeal to 'save the wolves!'. In both cases the many other issues of the magazine article and the main topic in question were ignored.

In the compositions, the narrative writing options proved most popular and there were some sophisticated 'twist in the tale' and original responses here. However, a few Examiners were impressed by the engaging descriptive essays featuring a celebration of a historic event as many of these had a clear sense of authenticity and sensory details; patriotic fervour featured strongly and proved to be quite emotional at times. Better responses in the composition section as a whole were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected, the vocabulary used in the title and how to engage the reader. There were some weaker scripts in which the candidates had misunderstood a crucial word and therefore the entire essay was affected. Examiners noted that quite a few candidates had misread 'duty' as 'beauty' in one of the discursive essays and 'reality' for realisation in a descriptive title. However, there were some interesting and modern takes on the idea of 'duty' in the twenty first century that were thought provoking, relevant, organised and well illustrated. Most essays displayed evidence of planning and forethought, although some candidates could have taken more time to consider a topic or title better suited to their experience. Both narrative titles, in some cases, would also have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good story telling, such as

the use of detail and description rather than event after event, as well as the kind of narrative shaping which engages the reader in stories.

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

#### **Section A**

##### **Question 1:**

**Read carefully the wildlife magazine about the increase in the wolf population in Spain. Write a letter to the magazine in which you:**

- **identify and evaluate the arguments of the farmers and the environmental agency**
- **explain your views on the situation, making it clear which side you support and why.**

**Base your letter on the article, but be careful to use your own words.**

**(25 marks)**

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

The format and style required in this task were generally well understood, so that most responses adopted an appropriately formal tone and candidates wrote letters which were mostly sensibly structured and which followed a sequence of ideas. As candidates were not specifically required to write as candidates, there were occasions when the voice of a wildlife expert was used and this added to audience and style. However, Examiners noted that some responses were written from the farmers' perspective, as though another character had been invented. These were accepted but were not detached sufficiently from the events in the text to deal with the range of arguments overall. High marks were awarded where ideas in the passage were considered carefully and where the letter was both accurate and appropriate in style. In the middle range of marks, one or two aspects were dealt with more critically but there was less range in the reference to all arguments made in the passage. Weaker responses either wrote only from the point of view of one sector, usually the farmer, and quoted or retold their situation and the style and format of a formal letter tended to be forgotten in the process, until the end. However, at this level, for example, there was no proper ending to the letter or the intended audience, a wildlife magazine, was confused with the 'environmental agency' or the government in general.

#### **The marks for Reading**

The best responses adopted a consistently evaluative stance towards all the arguments expressed in the article and scrutinised critically the ramifications of one or more approaches to the wolf situation in the area. This type of response generally took an objective point of view from the outset, although there were a few excellent letters from stipulated 'animal lovers' in which arguments concerning the wolves were improved by effectively thought out and realistic solutions to the situation. Too often generally good, evaluative responses had not considered any type of solutions and tended to 'tag' a hurried suggestion, usually one that involved wolves being kept on a type of reservation and 'fed by humans', which destroyed earlier rather passionate arguments about the wolf as a wild animal that required freedom to roam. Better than average answers presented the arguments of the farmers and the environmental agency in a balanced form. This was quite an achievement in that the environmental case was given only in three very short statements but the best responses recognised that the article was deliberately biased and that the author could not hide the fact that he considered the wolf to be the villain of the piece. In these letters, the ability to construct a sound 'pro-wolf' case from biased and limited information supplied showed clever and evaluative understanding of the article as a whole.

As previously stated, the environmental case was given in only in three very short statements: the declaration of an endangered species, the jailing and fining of farmers and the influence of television wildlife documentaries in the last paragraph. The highest level of reading ability was evident when the implications of these three statements were understood and developed into a generalised explanation of the principles this view was based upon. Similarly, on the farmers' side, the talk of guard dogs, fencing, financial losses, the unsuitability of the land for cultivation, the migration of young people to the cities, could be picked out more easily and the implications and connotations explained. This kind of selection and understanding was indeed demonstrated in the best responses, although the impact of arguments stemming from these depended greatly on the assimilation of these and in the structure of the letter and the writing itself. How well

the reading material had been absorbed could be seen by how succinctly the information about the farmers' problems was embedded into the text of the letter so that it became integrated rather than added at the end.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 2 and above where the ideas were evaluated to some degree, higher marks to integrated evaluation and a sense of overview of the entire wolf problem. A mark of 7 was awarded for many responses where there was clear evaluation of one or two ideas in the article, but some points were simply reproduced or did not appear in the response at all. For example, many responses, usually those that sympathised with the farmers' plight, gave most of the letter over to often reiterating the effects of 'the wolf threat', as outlined above, and it was only when the environmental agency's role was considered that any type of personal views were attempted. Responses in general showed a good ability to select points but in this case, where two or more 'sides' or arguments require attention, it is the ability to mesh or 'dove-tail' different aspects and produce a more integrated letter that received better reading and writing marks.

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 showed some understanding of the hardship endured by the farmers since the increase in the wolf population and their subsequent 'attacks' on their livestock, primarily sheep. Candidates setting out to 'favour' the wolves' plight also drew attention to the points concerning the farmers: that the wolves must have run out of food for them to attack the sheep, that jumping fences or dealing with guard dogs showed their desperation and the addition of abandoned dogs swelled their number which also caused them to descend on the farmers' flocks of sheep. However, the reading marks were given to those points mentioned in the passage and candidates who chose to write from this angle often had to rely on conjecture rather than evaluation. A mark of 5 or 6 could be given where there was more straightforward reproduction of a range of points with some overall understanding of the issues shown.

Weaker responses showed some misunderstanding or merely itemised a list of reproduced facts, drifted away from the passage but without the evaluation mentioned earlier. Sometimes these responses focused on the wolf and the letter became a wildlife plea for help with the situation of the farmers or environmental agency briefly mentioned, although the latter aspect constituted the only reading marks for the response. Examiners gave 3 or 4 marks in cases such as these or in other responses where much of the letter became more of a discursive essay with a few points from the passage added hastily at the end.

Overall, most responses showed an ability to select the information they required from the passage so that the majority received at least Band 3 and above. Examiners were impressed by some of the very strong and detailed responses that displayed sound reading skills and an ability to 'read between the lines' in response to a passage that was biased, though quite subtle on a first reading, and gave limited but pertinent information about the other side to the 'wolf situation' on the outskirts of Madrid. Some responses began reasonably well, reminded of the purpose of the response by the address to the writer, but a lack of clear understanding either of the passage itself or a sense of necessity to 'take a side' meant that any points made about the farmers' situation or the environmental stance were ad hoc and often quotes from the passage were used indiscriminately instead.

### **Marks for Writing**

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

### **Style and Audience**

The majority of responses were appropriately set out in letter form and used the reasonable, objective, formal register and style that would be expected in a letter to the author of an article in a magazine or newspaper. It was possible, as was shown in many accomplished responses, to display strong views about the government, the environmental agency or farmers' actions or arguments while maintaining a suitably formal register throughout. There were some responses where the style became a little too emotional, usually from animal lovers protesting about the government killings of wolves in the past or farmers' declarations to kill them 'on sight' if present. However, these were rare and most responses displayed some empathy and understanding of the predicament of all concerned and attempted a balanced letter from the outset.

Most, across the mark range, wrote an introductory paragraph making clear the purpose of the letter, though better responses displayed a strong sense of audience from the beginning, often indicating that the writer needed to be more empathetic in articles dealing with the plight of wildlife and environmental concerns.

In the middle and lower mark range, the sense of audience was rarely prominent. If at all present, it was confined to final two or three lines, thanking the editor for publishing the information and hoping for more of the same. Responses here showed less consistent awareness of the intended audience and some referred to the writer as though he was a member of the government or was someone who could influence and change governmental policies.

Weaker responses lost sight of the letter format altogether by the end, with no closing paragraph and no valediction. A stronger sense of purpose and audience when writing a formal letter could help to improve performance at this level and provide a sense of structure and paragraphing that was often missing.

### Structure

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for writing, handled the material confidently and integrated their own arguments cogently. It was clear that at these candidates ensured that they had fully assimilated the issues outlined in the article before putting pen to paper as many started with a plan that indicated a clear structure and approach. The issues addressed and questions posed in the article were assimilated into a convincing personal argument that was clearly derived from the ideas in the passage, but the strongest responses led by challenging the bias of the article. At the highest level, an overview of the issues involved was given. The necessity to understand that both animals and humans were all inhabitants of a planet that required more consideration and nurturing than it had seen in the past was discussed in the most assured and occasionally passionate responses. The thread challenging the writer about his bias against the wolves was woven throughout these letters and reference to the leading language used in the article was picked up: 'marauding', 'massacre' and 'killing spree' were deliberately employed in arguments stating that the wolves had 'instincts as opposed to intentions'. Aspects of the farmers' plight were integrated rather than listed and, unlike more average responses, there were no simple or straightforward 'answers' to the situation but some solutions were considered and, overall, there was a sense of oneness in that man and nature were interlinked and there were no 'quick fixes'.

Responses given 8 or 9 for writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the article in a response that was not list-like but was structured with slight development and paragraphed, often with some concluding solution such as 'creating a reserve for the wolves' or acknowledging that, like the culling of animals, farmers should have the right to kill a wolf if it was in the act of attacking his/her sheep.

Responses given marks below Band 3 were very list like and written in either very short, simple sentences or long rambling non-sentences and there was an absence of paragraphs. However, most responses followed a straightforward structure and Examiners generally found more serious weaknesses in the accuracy than in the structure of the writing in **Question 1**.

### 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, mature and virtually free of error. Some strident responses, immersed in audience and style, occasionally lost marks due to lack of proofreading.

Responses given 8 or 9 were usually purposeful and clear though rather predictable in approach and 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 basic spelling and punctuation errors was evident. There were some examples of reasonably good responses that insisted on using commas in the place of full stops; this was more common this year than in previous series. Examiners noted that more than often 'sheeps' or even 'ships' was common spelling even at this level. Also the confusion between 'nothing' and 'anything' or use of double negatives as in 'They do not get any support from no-one.' was also quite common.

Responses given marks in Band 4 often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of basic punctuation errors. This meant that Examiners could not award a mark in Band 3 where mostly correctly structured sentences are required. Elsewhere, sentences were consistently simple and quotes were used to illustrate rather than the point being made in one's own words. Commas used where full stops were needed were very common here and the use of capital letters was insecure.

### Ways in which this type of answer could be improved

- Think about the broader issues being addressed in the passage as well as specific points being made.
- Be aware of the genre used for the reading passage. An editorial, for example, can and does contain bias so it is worth considering this in your response.
- Be aware of the genre you are using for your answer. Think carefully about the right style for an article or letter, for example.
- Check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing full stops or misspelling of key words, as these will inevitably reduce your mark.

### Section 2: Composition

#### Question 2: Argumentative//Discursive writing

- (a) **What do you understand by the idea of duty, and do you think it is relevant nowadays?**  
(25 marks)

OR

- (b) **'Look before you leap.' Do you think it is always good advice to think first and act afterwards?**  
(25 marks)

Both of these questions were quite popular choices at all levels of achievement and the majority of candidates were able to offer some ideas and an element of discussion, particularly in the second option. It was noted by Examiners that this series there were quite a few instances in which candidates had chosen an essay title without understanding the most vital word in it. Unfortunately, the first discursive title that specifically asks 'what do you understand by the idea of duty?' proved to fit into this category. One response ignored the word itself and wrote about 'beauty' and others wrote about sacrifice and pain without linking these or showing any understanding of the word itself. The number and quality of the ideas given in this answer *depended* on the concept of 'duty'. Often 'What has to be done' was the understanding, and gave rise to illustrative examples. Sometimes 'duty' was equated with 'responsibility' which, though not exactly accurate, was acceptable.

There were some extremely thought provoking and persuasive responses to the first question in terms of their content and structure. The most engaging and reflective piece of writing questioned whether we, as human beings, had lost our sense of duty in this the twenty-first century. Moving between definitions of 'what has to be done' and responsibility, this response challenged all of us to consider how much the human race had changed since the twentieth century when 'young boys lied about their age in a race to join the armed forces and fight for their country'. The premise of 'everybody for themselves' was explored and the media, in all its forms, was blamed for 'removing the word from the dictionary' as 'we are so caught up in ourselves that there is no automatic 'setting' that would make us feel that we were obliged to help anyone but ourselves or our own family'. Whilst perhaps romanticising the young men and women of the two World Wars, as well as leaving some gaps in a passionate argument, the response still received full marks because it fully answered the question from the candidate's perspective, at the age of sixteen.

There were other good responses that picked up on the idea of 'relevance in today's society' and there were many who could cite ordinary individuals who had risked their lives for the sake of others 'without any consideration, like an automatic reaction'. This essay title seemed to divide responses into the excellent or the very weak and marks were therefore either in Band 1 for both Content and Structure and Style and Accuracy due to the sophisticated ideas, development and philosophical approach and rhetorical, persuasive and authoritative writing that often read like rousing speeches.

The alternative question elicited a more varied range of responses. Good responses argued cogently and persuasively for the proverbial 'Look before you leap' as many discussed the perils of 'rushing into something'. However, the best discussions were those that saw the benefits of both consideration and planning when making the 'right decision' but also recognised that without spontaneity we would all become dull and 'old before our time'. Many of these responses contained relevant situations highlighting when it was important not to rush or be rushed into making hasty decisions. An extremely mature response, similar to the excellent essay about modern society in the first essay choice, widened the discussion and involved the reader by emulating the type of over-zealous marketing style of selling that one sees in the media all the time. This pastiche livened up the argument but there was also gravitas and an excellent sense of

understanding of the pressures of modern life. However, good cases were also made for spontaneity; perhaps not as many, as it was noted that everything that was exciting had an element of danger involved so did this mean that we should not: go skiing or surfing, hang glide or do any extreme sports? A few responses noted the importance of 'listening to one's heart rather than one's head' and the best of these essays had this 'Thought versus Instinct' debate, illustrated by various details. Nearly all these compositions considered a balance of opposing policies in decision-making, and as a result produced the best answers in **Section 2** overall.

Planning such answers usually forced on candidates the discipline of objective writing and many of these essays received Band 1 and Band 2 marks for both aspects of writing. Responses given marks in Band 3 for content and structure generally made sensible comments, often on both sides of the debate, although there was patchy development of ideas or a lack of cohesion in the argument. Weaker responses were characterised by confusion about the proverb itself and often spent more time trying to explain what it meant than discussing whether it was the best option or not. Others that did know what it meant did not have enough examples or sufficient things to say and the end result was circular and contradictory. These types of responses resulted in marks in Band 4 for content and structure, although there were a few that were more difficult to follow and received lower marks than this.

Style and accuracy marks were awarded across the range in both questions, with the higher marks for writing which was varied, controlled and precise. Effective rhetoric and good sense of audience in the style often lifted a Band 2 into Band 1 or a Band 3 into Band 2. The most engaging were those that had a clear sense of voice which challenged and amused or even shocked the reader sometimes and this compensated for minor errors in accuracy and allowed Examiners to nudge the mark into the higher band. Conversely, responses which were clear and otherwise competent often slipped into Band 4 because of the seriousness and frequency of errors. Limited vocabulary and a simple, unvaried style also depressed some marks in the middle range. Again, in this section there were commas used instead of full stops and sentence structures that lacked control which kept marks out of Band 3. Punctuation within sentences was weak at this level and occasionally Examiners commented that some candidates would have performed slightly better had they chosen a straightforward story. Certainly quite a few candidates should have 'looked before they leapt' and considered the essay choices with more care, especially those who did not understand the exact meaning of a word or a phrase in the title question.

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

- Make sure you understand and address the key ideas in the question
- Avoid simple assertions – explain your ideas to convince the reader of your point of view and use examples to illustrate if possible.
- 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 scene in which a dream came true. Capture the surroundings and atmosphere, as well as your thoughts and feelings about the moment.** (25 Marks)

**OR**

- (b) **Your community is celebrating a historic event in the open air. Describe what is happening around you.** (25 Marks)

The descriptive writing questions were very popular choices, particularly the second option, throughout the candidature. The first gave some guidance on how to structure the response, which was used to good effect by many candidates across the mark range, while the second offered an opportunity to share a unique, patriotic experience and provide a range of details candidates have experienced at some point in their lives.

The first question produced a great variety of responses across the ability range. Good responses were often those that were based on something very real, precious and surprisingly familiar: walking down the aisle of a church with one's father by their side, winning a prize at sport or drama or a sixteenth birthday surprise. However, the best responses were those that considered some of these and used one as a kernel of an idea for a description with more impact. The most engaging details were evocative and original and the descriptions of feelings were genuinely moving, although feelings being difficult to describe often were

missing from some of these descriptions. Most scenes included an event, because it had to relate to a dream, but this did not become a narrative. Usually, an exhilarating atmosphere and detailed surroundings were portrayed such as the view of a stadium from the entrance tunnel and the roar of the crowd, the smell of popcorn and hot dogs, a trickle of one line of sweat down the back of one's neck and almost incrementally the scene takes three dimensional shape. Examiners noted that many candidates had written plans for this question and that the most successful descriptions were those that moved or inched between each point whereas other potentially good descriptions slipped into narrative when the 'scene' became overshadowed by entire details of preparing for the event. Rather than having to tell the reader everything in advance or stage by stage, the best description focuses on one area like a slow motion extract from a film and this does not need to be 'explained' by narrative if the sensory detail and feelings are connected – like the spokes in a wheel the detail is confined to that space. When this question was done well, it was done extremely well and easily placed into Band 1.

Middle range responses were more predictable in the scenes and atmospheres depicted. Although there were often some effective details there was generally a need to explain who was who and where the place was which spoiled the effect of some atmosphere and made the essay patchy in spite of the potential.

Weaker responses very often lapsed into narrative rather quickly as there was the initial misunderstood 'need' to explain where, what, who and why and once in narrative mode there was little time spent on stopping to describe. Often the advice 'show don't tell', if explained and illustrated by a piece of description in a short story, frees candidates from the unnecessary narrative side to this particular genre.

Very successful Band 1 responses to the second question were characterised by being in the moment, slow motion attention to sounds and smells and describing subtle changes in people, the weather, the lighting, the actions of children – playing manically one minute and at dusk slowly dancing or falling asleep on a grandmother's lap – and people in general. Writers have often been told 'Write what you know' and, as in the first question, the best responses felt real. Some of the best descriptions stood out because they told an internal story about the first time that a young person really starts to understand national pride and feels part of their country and this colours their writing as they notice it in *others*: shedding a tear at the national anthem, pulling themselves up to attention as the flag is raised and other subtle shifts in their behaviour. This extra element of being able to describe emotion in others is a sign of sophisticated writing in Band 1.

In the middle range there were some lively accounts which occasionally stopped long enough to supply some description but too often there was a sense that everything going on had to be catalogued or itemised and the end result became list like, at the bottom end of Band 3. Band 4 responses were more list-like or narrative based than those in Band 3 with some rather limited accounts of festivals and fireworks.

Marks in Band 1 and high Band 2 for style and accuracy were awarded for the most controlled writing in which a wide range of descriptive vocabulary was used precisely, but not overdone. Occasionally, although a wide range of varied vocabulary was evident, the right word was not always selected to achieve the desired effect, no doubt because of the specific nature of the event.

#### **Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved**

- **remember the key features of descriptive writing.**
- **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.**
- **do not try to explain the how, why, what and when aspects. Concentrate on details that slow the action down and make the reader feel they are there.**



#### Question 4: Narrative writing

- (a) **The teacher looked distraught, said ‘That’s it! I can not take any more’, and walked out of the classroom. Continue the story.** (25 marks)

OR

- (b) **Write a story which includes an amazing moment of realisation.** (25 marks)

The first question was probably the most popular question on the exam paper. The second question was sometimes not understood correctly as some weaker narratives were based on fake identities and situations that were exposed because the candidate had misunderstood ‘realisation’ for ‘reality’.

Compositions beginning with a distraught teacher were varied; the best examples involved flash-back and concentrated on what had led up to the incident, and what was the natural and logical outcome, so that candidates could draw on clearly relevant experience and use an interplay of credible characters to good effect.

More commonly, responses still veered towards the dramatic but without the plotting skill or the ability to create such believable characters as that of the previous candidate. Flash-back needs to be taught and practised as it is a sophisticated skill that many of the narratives at Band 3 would have benefited from being able to include. Weaker responses tended to lack any credibility, as in the double murder plots above, and little or no attention was paid to creating a character that was real. Story-telling can often be seen as the ‘easy option’ but creating a realistic plot and believable characters takes time and skill.

The second question was not as popular but the openness of the task led to a great variety of narratives here. Examiners commented on quite a few very moving narratives that belonged in Band 1. Weaker responses sometimes recounted over-complicated plots, similar to the first narrative, which in the same way became a series of events as there was insufficient attention to character or setting in the first place. Candidates at this level also needed to create more manageable stories and marks for content and structure would improve.

Marks for style and accuracy varied among those who chose the narrative option as both weaker and extremely good candidates opted for this genre. The best and better responses used a wide range of sentence structures and well-chosen vocabulary to help create specific effects when creating credible characters with habits and flaws. A variety of sentence structures is also essential in creating different moods and pace in narratives. The style needed to be controlled and competent to justify a mark in Band 3.

#### Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved

- Remember that stories need more than events to interest the reader.
- Complicated plots can be difficult to manage – a simple but effective idea often works better and creating a credible character and setting also helps.
- Characters’ thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader by avoiding long explanations that spoil the pace of the story.
- Check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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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 wide ranging vocabulary selected with precision

## General comments

Most scripts showed a good grasp of what was expected in both the directed writing and the composition. Responses were substantial and purposeful, on the whole, with relatively few brief or undeveloped answers. There was evidence in many scripts of a clear awareness of how marks were awarded in the different questions and writing genres and most followed the rubric.

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

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

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

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Section 1. Directed Writing

#### Question 1

Read carefully the article on 'Why I'm teaching happiness' in the Reading Booklet Insert and then answer **Section 1, Question 1** on this Question Paper. Write a letter to the Headteacher, expressing your views on teaching about happiness. You may agree or disagree with the Headteacher's arguments.

#### In your letter you should:

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

(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.

Most answers showed an understanding of the purpose of a letter in response to the article and in better responses the writer's arguments were scrutinised and commented on purposefully. At this level, a realistic approach to education was discussed – the pressures on school curriculum space and on candidates to succeed with high examination results. Many, however, simply listed and agreed with the writer's views on the different points and did not adopt the critical stance which is required for marks in the higher bands. Weaker responses focused on only a few points and often just the value of being a happy individual, and did not cover the range of points made in the article.

#### The marks for reading

Good responses followed the bullet points but adopted the evaluative stance required for marks above Band 3. For example, these responses tended to take issue with the writer challenging the perception that results are not all important, that in order to develop children have to experience pain and disappointment. These higher responses pointed out that happiness is subjective and it is something which cannot be taught, thus demonstrating an informed, intelligent appreciation of the relevant issues and arguments. In overall terms, candidates were quite assured in their use of tone and register and many took on interesting and often convincing roles; for example a parent, fellow teacher or candidate. This kind of evaluative approach to the material in the passage was required for marks in Band 2 and above. A mark of 7 was given where there were glimpses of evaluation of some of the points but a more consistently critical stance was required for higher marks. Where responses reproduced the points made in the passage, often with straightforward agreement, Examiners could not award marks above Band 3. Although some responses covered the points made in the article systematically, agreeing with some and disagreeing with others, there was at this level less scrutiny of the ideas in it and limited comment on them. A more superficial grasp of the purpose of school, rather than the underlying issues, was evident in this range. In these responses, candidates agreed or disagreed that happiness lessons should be taught, many equating happiness lessons with life lessons and the development of social skills. This simple agreement or disagreement did not, however, always amount to the evaluation described above in relation to better responses. A mark of 5 or 6 could be awarded, depending on the breadth of coverage in the answer and the extent to which candidates used their own language and expression rather than the writer's. In other cases, there was a little evaluation of one or two points – usually some discussion of curriculum offered and subsequent career paths available – but other ideas in the passage were not referred to at all. Here, despite some evidence of depth in the response, the range of points covered was too narrow for a mark in Band 2. Responses at this level could have been improved by a wider coverage of the points made by the writer as well as a deeper grasp of the issues being weighed up in the article.

One unproductive approach in responses at this level and below was the inclusion of extraneous material including personal anecdote, narrative, generalised discursive endorsement of the views presented or expositions on the value of happiness. Many candidates did not use their own words, as advised, and tended to reproduce phrases from the original for example 'emotional learning and emotional intelligence'; some invented statistics - 'the suicide rate among teenagers'. These features suggested an insecure grasp of the task in **Question 1**. Other less successful approaches included a tendency to drift away from the passage into details which were not in the article and were not really suggested by it either. For example, some responses used the 'tortured ... candidates' as a springboard to give details about the different types of punishments and sanctions meted out by schools and parents; others gave details of what the candidates

considered to be successful careers. Ideas and details which could be inferred from the passage were rewarded by Examiners, but in some less successful responses candidates' own views were detached from the source material and sometimes a little naïve. For example, some believed that schools could be completely abolished or discussed their own family members' successful careers. A better understanding of the requirements of the task, as well as how marks are awarded, was needed in these cases.

### **The marks for writing**

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

### **Style and audience**

The majority of responses were appropriately set out in letter form and used the appropriately formal register and style that would be expected in a letter to a Headteacher. Most, across the mark range, wrote an introductory paragraph making clear the purpose of the letter, though better responses showed more awareness of their audience in the way their openings were phrased and continued to address the writer throughout. For example, some signalled their attitudes to the article early on by suggesting that 'school is all about pushing the boundaries of what you think is possible' and some thought that the views expressed by the writer denied candidates the chance to strive for greatness in terms of examination results and future careers. Many candidates in the middle range were extremely complimentary toward the writer in their introductions and conclusions and although the tone of these paragraphs was appropriate, perhaps the evaluation of the article was rather limited by this over enthusiastic style and praise for the writer's stance. In weaker responses, introductions were more mechanical. More often at this range, the format and intended audience were forgotten, so that the letter was not finished formally or reference was made to 'the writer' rather than a direct address to the Headteacher being made.

### **Structure**

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for writing, handled the material confidently and presented their own arguments cogently. At the highest level, an overview of the issues involved emerged rather than, or as well as, a discussion of the specific points made by the Headteacher. A sense that there was a balance of factors to be weighed was conveyed by these successful responses which were often subtly argued but yet clearly structured. Responses given 8 or 9 for writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the article in a response which was adequately structured, often with some concluding comments outlining the candidate's own view. Responses given marks below Band 3 were characterised by brief or no introductions and a simple list of some of the writer's points in sequence.

### **Accuracy**

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in Band 1. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. Responses given 8 or 9 were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Responses given marks in Band 4 sometimes showed some clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation errors which precluded Examiners from awarding Band 3 marks and in addition, there was sometimes a simplicity of language and style. Sentence separation errors also appeared at this level and the frequency of errors became self-penalising, as did insecure grammar and awkward phrasing.

### **Ways in which this type of answer could be improved**

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

## Section 2: Composition

### Question 2

Argumentative/Discursive writing

(a) Should a government influence people's diets? What are your views? (25)

OR

(b) 'Combat sports, where the aim is to injure one's opponent, should be banned.' What are your views on this subject? (25)

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

In the first question, the best responses were culturally and globally aware; these responses brought into focus issues of government intervention in regions of poverty and malnutrition. Better responses examined 'diet' in an open, exploratory way, taking into account notions of personal choice and the nature and scope of government responsibility. Some thoughtful discussions included ideas about why something needed to be done to improve people's eating habits, the role of the government and the freedom of choice for individuals.

Some candidates found the term 'diet' problematic, possibly because the term is readily identified with slimming. A number wrote mainly about 'healthy' diets, with government influence and intervention emerging only as an afterthought. The focus on health issues, anorexia and obesity resulted in drifting away from the task. The content was sometimes thin and the writing was stylistically uninteresting in such cases because candidates had found little to say and lacked focus. Structure, organisation, and the logical development of their argument sometimes proved to be problematic for this reason. Such responses fell in the middle range.

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

The alternative question was a less popular choice but many candidates responded impressively to this task, supporting thoughtful arguments with interesting and sometimes surprising personal knowledge and expertise. The best responses engaged very directly with the specific terms of the task, incorporating perceived ambiguities regarding interpretation and definition into the body of their response and then providing convincing evidence and exemplification. The spectrum of issues explored was broad, from the political/macro-economic, through the pragmatic (earning an income and learning self-defence) and matters of criminality and corruption, to the more abstract. These responses considered a variety of combat sports presenting balanced logical arguments and some used 'injury' as a cohesive device, often comparing this with the injuries received in other 'non-combat sports' (football/rugby).

Weaker responses made only a few points/ideas, repeatedly re-presenting the notion of combat sports, however defined, as degrading spectacle. These tended to be very vague, not use examples or confuse combat sports with video games, sometimes not considering 'injury' at all. There was some misinterpretation of what was meant by combat sports.

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

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

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

### Question 3

#### Descriptive Writing

- (a) You come across an abandoned building you never knew existed. Describe its exterior and surroundings before giving details of how you enter. Describe the atmosphere inside and everything your senses experience as you explore the building. (25)

OR

- (b) Describe a place called 'Paradise on Earth'. (25)

The first question provided a great variety of responses across the range. The best responses not only demonstrated linguistic and stylistic skills but used a variety of devices to create atmosphere. Complex atmospheres relating to senses experienced were developed depending on the different parts of the abandoned house being explored.

Middle range responses tended to give a lengthier preamble about the setting. Some candidates in this range were a little too ambitious in their attempts to use sophisticated vocabulary and over-elaborate sentences. This sometimes resulted in forced, awkward or stilted expression, with meaning collapsing under the weight of adjectival excess, or the impression of disjointed and jarring experiences.

The tripartite structure of the task seemed to suit less confident responses well, giving a structured approach to the writing. Weaker responses tended to focus on the exterior and surroundings or adopted a narrative/horror story genre with clichéd language and gothic images. Fleeing the scene proved to be a popular ending.

The second also produced responses across the range of marks. There were some original interpretations of 'Paradise' which provided scope for well-developed writing. The better responses related feelings to surroundings and linguistically explored, and reflected on, their own personal paradises; one of the most successful described being locked in a room surrounded by books and another was tantamount to having access to clean drinking water. These better responses exhibited a ready and easy control of syntax and vocabulary and an authentic, natural feel.

Not many candidates adopted a narrative approach but the weaker responses presented clichéd descriptions almost like brochures or accounts of holiday, which could still present some interesting images but could be limiting or repetitive. Occasional responses tended to discuss the notion of 'paradise'.

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

### Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

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

#### Question 4

##### Narrative Writing

(a) Write a story entitled 'The Great Pretender'. (25)

OR

(b) Write about how an old film had been obtained secretly. (25)

The first question was the more popular of the two options.

This task was very popular and there were many examples of narratives with shocking conclusions and fascinating twists in the tail. 'The Great Pretender' was often seen as a deceiver or criminal often posing as a good citizen. There were also quite a lot of doomed romances where people were cheated on; some writing was clearly based on personal experience and hence was convincing and sometimes moving.

Stronger responses, almost invariably, were effective in developing a sense of place and character. There were some powerful portrayals of the emotional suppressions/psychological disturbances of the 'pretender', some of the best being where the pretender-protagonist authored the story. There were some cohesively developed renderings of the chilling and reasoned way with which pretence was unravelled or executed over time. These better responses explored emotion, different points of view and integrated time/split settings/character development into complex narrative structures. The best ones used language, sentence variety and punctuation as stylistic devices which often produced irony and were hugely entertaining.

Average responses showed a clear identification of 'The Great Pretender' as a character with a background and did provide a complete story.

Weaker responses tended to veer toward fantasy romances - superficial and sometimes quite turgid accounts of deceit in love or friendship. These, typically, were weakly constructed and amounted to little more than a series of unlikely events. Vocabulary used to construct character in such cases was often plain or clichéd 'rosy cheeks, cherry lips, sparkling blue eyes' with weak endings; for example, 'It turned out she was my long lost sister, so we went home'.

Relatively few candidates attempted the second task. The best compositions were highly accomplished, demonstrating careful crafting and complex plotting. These were ingenious and engaging, with some impressively original denouements. Candidates were able to exploit a range of opportunities, the manipulation of time sequences and use of accompanying narrative devices, for example and often handled these skilfully and effectively.

Weaker responses tended to centre on very predictable spying scenarios, demonstrating a fairly limited sense of place or character and a perceptible lack of control in structuring the process of building of narrative tension. Often, the 'old film' aspect of the question was not important to the plot, sometimes just tagged on at the end.

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

#### Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved

- Remember that stories need more than events to interest the reader.
- Plan the ending before you begin so that you can shape your story appropriately.
- Characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader.
- Originality is important. Try to think of unusual approaches to your topic, but keep the details credible.
- Check your writing for errors, especially missing full stops.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/33

Directed Writing and Composition

## Key Messages

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

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

- use an appropriate form and style, adapted for the intended audience and genre
- structure ideas logically and organise their writing 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

This paper was frequently well answered with most scripts showing a good grasp of what was expected both in the Directed Writing and Composition. Some of the writing was lively, most was purposeful and on the whole there was an awareness of how marks were awarded and the requirements of the mark scheme. There were few instances of where more than one composition was attempted, showing an increased awareness of the correct rubric, but there were also some unfinished pieces, showing the need for more effective time management.

**Question 1** was generally well answered, with responses that selected and summarised ideas from the text. Better answers evaluated different aspects, although the majority did focus only on the entertainment industry, with very little supporting evidence from any other sphere of celebrity. There were one or two references to sports people and to explorers or politicians. The more developed answers recognised that fame could be 'double edged' or how it 'twisted reality' and how easy it was for teenagers especially to become caught up in it. Weaker answers drifted into descriptions of celebrity centred incidents or paraphrased the ideas from the text, often concentrating on blaming the media.

In the compositions, there was mostly clear awareness of how a particular style would suit a specific genre, whether argumentative, descriptive or narrative, and in the better scripts, this ability to develop the style certainly enhanced the content. Some weaker answers lacked awareness of overall structure, particularly for **Question 2 (a)** and **2(b)** where lack of paragraphing was a visible sign of the weakness in sequencing of arguments. The descriptive titles worked well when specific details became the focus and when the writer did not try to cover too much over too long a time span. Both narratives led to some original and well structured writing across both reality and fantasy.

Few mistakes were seen in the best writing. Vocabulary that was ambitious and varied, along with precise use of sentence structures helped to engage the reader. The style, especially for the letters in **Question 1**, was usually appropriate and consistent. Some weaker responses need to avoid repetitive vocabulary and too many sentences began the same way, often beginning with 'I'. There seems an increasing trend to use a lower case 'i' mid-sentence, which should be discouraged. The punctuation of dialogue and the use of inverted commas for quotations were often inconsistent. Omission of articles, especially when referring to 'media' instead of 'the media' was a common fault. It was surprisingly common for inappropriate prepositions to be used. The major errors in punctuation were the incorrect use of apostrophes in plurals and the lack of full stops where they were required. When commas were used judiciously, they improved the clarity of meaning, but comma splicing was still a common error in many scripts. The most significant grammatical errors were mixed use of agreements and insecure tenses.



## **Comments on Specific Questions**

### ***Section 1: Directed Writing***

#### **Question 1**

Read the article below about celebrities and their influence on people in the Reading Booklet insert. Write a letter to the journalist, in which you discuss what he has to say about celebrities. You may agree or disagree with the journalist's views.

In your letter you should:

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

Base your letter on what you have read in the article but be careful to use your own words. Begin your letter: 'Dear Journalist...'  
(25 marks)

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

Most answers showed an understanding of the purpose of a letter in response to a magazine article and in better responses there was balanced scrutiny of the writer's views with some purposeful comments. At this level there were considerations of what constitutes a real celebrity and awareness of the longevity of well-deserved fame. Many, however, simply listed and agreed with the writer's views on different aspects, usually adding their own examples but not adopting the analytical stance which is required for a mark in the highest bands. Weaker responses focused on only a few points, often the idea of 'fabricated role models' and the manipulation by the media, often generalising about the overall influence of celebrities, mostly in the entertainment industry, as if this is an accepted norm these days.

#### **The marks for reading**

Good responses covered both bullet points, with clear identification of the journalist's views and evaluation of them, along with candidate's own ideas and examples in support. The majority of answers agreed with the overall premise of the article, but the best of the answers looked at the reasons behind the development of 'the cult of celebrity' and its effects on different groups of people. Consideration of 'the difference between being a celebrity and being famous' or the 'gossip tidal wave' as well as 'the rise and fall of countless celebrities like an extremely short lived empire' all showed that perceptive element required for a higher mark for reading. There was not much coverage about the heroic feats mentioned in the passage, and in fact it seemed that although a number of candidates recognised that Sir Edmund Hillary climbed Everest, many thought that Roger Bannister was with him. On the other hand, there was clear understanding of how scandals and bad publicity, although damaging to the status of an individual, would actually be the methods by which those people remained in the spotlight. There was recognition, as suggested in the passage, that this was sometimes manipulated by the media, but also the more perceptive answers showed how an initial distaste by the public for elements of bad publicity then turned into pity for the celebrity figure who was hounded by the media. This kind of evaluative approach to the material in the passage was required for marks in Band 2 and above. Expansion of the ideas from the final paragraph, about the varying effects of celebrities on teenagers or adults, led on occasions to some effective development gaining marks of 7.

Where responses reproduced many of the details from the final three paragraphs, with limited comments and the use of examples rather than evaluation, Examiners could not award marks above Band 3. These answers tended to concentrate on the fleeting nature of modern celebrity, the sense of being part of a celebrity couple, television appearances and teenage reactions to stars. If such summaries of the major points in the passage were done well in own words, a mark of 6 could be awarded. Where the passage was loosely paraphrased the mark was no more than 5, but there still had to be coverage of various ideas from the article. If there was neither breadth nor depth then responses would fall into Band 4 or below.

A number of answers included examples of modern celebrities, especially Justin Bieber, K-Pop stars and Michael Jackson, along with methods of becoming famous such as You Tube, Twitter and television shows such as 'Pop Idol' and 'I'm a Celebrity...'. Where the examples were used to support points being made, they were useful. Some candidates, however, gave these examples instead of making an evaluative

comment, simply attaching them to the theme of any one paragraph. Invented statistics or quotations from made up people were intrusive and unhelpful and showed a lack of understanding of the purpose of **Question 1**. There were a few inappropriate approaches where there was an attack on the writer for daring to suggest that there was anything wrong in wanting to be famous and it was the right of every young person to aspire to celebrity status. Such answers showed rather superficial reading of the text.

### The marks for writing

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

### Style and audience

The majority of the responses were set out as a letter using the appropriately formal register and style with virtually all following the rubric and starting 'Dear Journalist...' Most ended suitably too, although a few did finish very suddenly, without any sense of concluding paragraph or even final sentence; a suitable ending is important, even without any valedictory signing off. Overall there was a pleasing recognition of the intended audience.

Most, across the mark range, wrote an introductory paragraph, usually agreeing with the overall viewpoint of the writer and then explaining how they would go on to cover various aspects. Better responses would hint at their own attitude in such an opening paragraph by adopting a particular style or by the deliberate choice of vocabulary, as in 'Now, because of your informative article, I can no longer deny that our society is obsessed with celebrity drivel.' In weaker responses, introductions were more basic and often launched straight into a specific point such as, 'I have decided that celebrities are an important factor of influence towards society today' – this would be followed by a poorly structured letter. Occasionally there was an attempt to be too complex 'I hereby to write you a letter' which lacked both style and accuracy. There is evidence of a number of phrases being used in introductions which use various words and phrases incorrectly and give an immediate impression of a faulty style. These include 'I want to discuss about...'; 'I highly agree with you.'; 'I agree to your points...'; 'I agree in...' and 'countless of benefits.'

The majority of responses maintained their style throughout the letter with confident, fluent sentences with a wide range of vocabulary. Some less effective answers were accurately written but relied on short sentences with a narrow, sometimes repetitive range of vocabulary, based on the language of the text.

### Structure

Many answers consisted of an introduction, several paragraphs about different points in the article with a summative conclusion, usually highlighting the most significant factor already covered. There were signs of improvements in cohesion between sections, by the use of appropriate linking or transitional words (firstly, on the other hand, all in all) which all led to a more organised approach. In the middle range of marks, the structure was often guided by expressions at the start of each paragraph that acknowledged the writer, such as 'You write of celebrities who...'; 'As you say in your second paragraph...' or 'Next you say that..'; it is unfortunate that sometimes this became rather like a list. Lack of paragraphs made reading difficult and was sometimes an indication that ideas needed sequencing. At the highest level, an overview of the issues involved emerged through the candidate's own interpretation, rather than covering the writer's points step by step. One example was a paragraph that began 'Fame is an easy way out – the short cut - to excelling in life.' This went on to consider how the media glorifies fame, mainly for money and how youngsters aspire to become stars without any other goals in life. This blended original ideas but was still tethered to the text. There is still room for improvement in the use of cohesive strategies to link ideas in many answers.

### Accuracy

Accomplished writing that was consistently accurate and fluent was given a writing mark in Band 1. These responses tended to be authoritative in style and also well sequenced. Responses given 8 or 9 were usually clear and purposeful, though not ambitious and more reliant on the language of the passage. Some otherwise quite effective answers were affected by use of repetitive vocabulary or a lack of full stops/comma splicing. Weaker responses could often convey meaning but there were some basic errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling. The most common errors were mixed agreements and tenses; using 'would of' instead of 'would have'; mixing they're/their/there; writing 'and etc.' at the end of a sentence; poor use of apostrophes and over use of semi-colons. Words from the passage that were spelt incorrectly included 'celebrity', 'celebrities' and 'bizarre'. Other words that were frequently misspelt were: truly, achieve, receive,

worshipped, disagree, views and believe. In word processed scripts it was difficult to decide whether numerous errors were spelling or typing mistakes, which emphasises the need for careful proof reading.

### Ways in which this type of answer could be improved

- Make sure that you select ideas and opinions from the reading material and evaluate them in relation to the task set.
- Try to develop ideas from the passage but without drifting too far away from the subject.
- Be aware of the genre you are using for your answer. Think carefully about the right style for an article or letter, for example.
- Use appropriate paragraphs.
- Check your writing for basic punctuation errors.

### Section 2: Composition

#### Question 2

Argumentative/Discursive writing

(a) 'In a few years' time, the books we love and cherish will be replaced by flat, grey electronic texts.'  
Give your views on this statement. (25)

OR

(b) Are teenagers today free to express themselves as individuals? (25)

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

Average responses contained some good ideas which were relevant and gave opinions about the topic which were valid. The discussion might not be as developed and the sequencing of ideas often seemed random, indicating lack of planning.

Weaker responses were lacking in material or tended to repeat one or two ideas. In the second question, candidates sometimes ran out of ideas and did not offer a real conclusion.

The majority of candidates who answered the first question concentrated on the advantages and disadvantages of using electronic means to read books. There was clearly a great deal of technical knowledge shown that occasionally took over, with the actual idea of reading somewhat forgotten. In better responses, where very high marks were sometimes gained, a balanced approach was taken with as much discussion about the qualities of 'real' books. Ideas such as 'The beauty of the book is not only found in the text, but in the book as a whole,' and 'For all that e-readers lose out in sentimentality, they certainly make up for with functionality,' showed some thoughtful consideration of the issues.

The most common advantages given for e-books were the convenience, capacity to hold lots of different texts, light to carry, overall costs, the chance of reducing de-forestation and the opportunity of encouraging non-readers to start reading. The benefits of real books were seen often in emotional terms, with the physical feel of the book being important, but more detailed answers often mentioned the effect on writers and publishers as well as readers, how book shops would go out of business and how you could be sure of getting the original text. Many responses concluded that e-books were best for a quick read or for use when travelling, but real books were better for study as you could write notes all over them.

Middle range responses tended to list some of these factors but did not really develop them beyond an initial comment. Many of these responses offered well balanced statements but lacked depth of argument or enough details in support. Some answers became overly involved in the technical aspects, to the extent of discussing studying using the Internet, losing track of the original question.

Weaker responses were more reliant on listing advantages with less discussion of why books would be replaced, often simply accepting that this would be the inevitable conclusion at some point. One point that was stated quite often was that 'downloading books is free'; this may be the case in some places or on some systems but is certainly not a universal truth and thus this idea skewed some arguments.

The alternative question was not such a popular choice and did give rise to some variations in the understanding of the question. The two main interpretations of 'free to express themselves' seemed to be whether teenagers could show their individuality in their dress, their actions and in their choices about their lifestyle, or, whether they had anyone to talk to i.e. someone to express their opinions to and share their thoughts. This second question was generally less well done than the first.

More thorough answers here concentrated on the need for teenagers to find out who they were, usually implying rebellion against the status quo. There was some awareness that in many societies the family bonds were so strong that aspects of teenage life publicised in other cultures, especially drinking, drug use or arguing with parents, would simply not be considered here. A few responses mentioned gay rights and how society does need to move on in terms of sexism and racism as well. There were a few well written answers to this question, including phrases such as 'shackles of conformity hold us back,' where the whole question of teenage development was discussed.

Weaker responses here were typically brief and under-developed with phrases like 'I certainly do not like to express myself to my parents.' There was some lack of clarity as to whether this simply meant candidates did not want to speak to their parents, or whether they meant they did not want to share their true feelings. Either way, some planning of ideas before writing might have helped to organise a clearer argument.

For Style and Accuracy, the highest marks were given for clear, accurate writing and an awareness of audience. Middle range answers were generally quite accurate but suffered from the use of repetitive and plain vocabulary. This was especially the case with the first option, where phrases such as 'I believe that...', 'electronic gadgets' and 'technological availability' certainly seemed over-used. In discursive writing, effective use of punctuation can be of benefit in emphasising a point and the lack of variation in sentence structures was seen in many answers.

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

- Make sure you understand what the question is asking for.
- Try to avoid abstract statements – justify your points with apt examples.
- Develop each idea at sufficient length and sequence sentences within paragraphs.
- Use clear and precise English and check for basic errors.

### Question 3

Descriptive writing

- (a) You come across a puppet show being performed to a crowd of children in a town square. Describe what you see and hear, and the atmosphere around you. (25)

OR

- (b) Describe a trip through a bazaar, spice market or souk in which you stop, at least twice, to consider buying an item. Describe how this experience excites your senses throughout. (25)

Neither of the two descriptive titles was chosen as frequently as in previous series. There did seem to be some range of what was considered to be a puppet show in the first option. There were some vivid descriptions of traditional puppet booths with either hand or string puppets in action, but there were also descriptions of television characters on a big screen as well as life size figures in a more theatrical setting. The consistent feature of virtually every answer was the description of the children watching the show, detailing their expressions, laughter and general enjoyment. There were some powerful descriptions where one child would be noticed because they were not behaving in the same way as the crowd, such as the little boy who sobbed when the villain appeared, or the child who still stayed sitting silently watching after everyone else had started to leave. In following the wording of the question, most descriptions covered what the staging looked like – sometimes with exaggerated decoration, often a little tatty, then the music or sounds of the puppeteer and the noises of the crowds. Very few fell into a narrative of telling the story of the puppet show, but a number did spend a lot of time introducing their own role and explaining how they arrived in the town square. Overlong introductions are not necessary in a descriptive piece.

The time scale of these descriptions was often based on the fact that the writer stopped to watch in the lunch hour, or whilst on an errand, thus effectively restricting the description to images within a short time span. Clearly some candidates took note of the words in the question 'you come across...' leading to it being an accidental rather than a planned viewing. There were a few weaker answers where the emphasis moved

from the actual puppet show to a celebratory meal and description of everything else that surrounded this entertainment, thus becoming a narrative of a day out.

The second option also produced responses across the range of marks, with a number of high quality answers evoking a particular atmosphere with believable details. Descriptions of spice stalls and sellers of saris gave the most opportunity to explore strong smells and vivid colours. The crowded nature of these settings gave the opportunity for description of a range of people, with a good balance often chosen.

In the middle range, some responses gave a tour around the market, often with the writer doubling back to try to purchase an item seen earlier. Such an approach sometimes seemed rather lacking in atmosphere as one stall would be described after another, relying on physical details but without a personal response.

Some weaker responses tended to lapse into narrative with the emphasis on being pushed over or getting lost, but all still managed to describe at least one stall with a few details. The difficulty in ending a description mirrors the sometimes over-long explanations at the start and both of these aspects are evident in weaker responses.

For Style and Accuracy, these descriptions gave opportunities for the use of wide and varied vocabulary, which raised the quality of some answers. A comment on a sound in a market was 'like seagulls, loud and crass and unrelenting' which showed some originality. Better responses included a range of sentence types, with controlled complex sentences being well punctuated. Both options in the descriptive writing gave opportunities to use snatches of dialogue, which, if short and pertinent were effective in developing character or mood. It was the poorly punctuated and over reliance on speech that weakened some answers. There is still a tendency for candidates to use strings of words that are not sentences in description, such as 'The variety of fine fabrics flowing freely in the breeze'. Use of the present tense is generally the best option for description, apart from those instances where the writer is comparing a scene (as in the puppets) to something remembered from their own past. It is important in this case to return to the present tense after the memory.

#### **Ways in which the writing of description can be improved**

- Avoid too much narrative preamble and remember to provide descriptive details.
- Try to make your description as real as possible; simple, believable images work well.
- It is good practice to write in the present tense, not changing tenses through the description.
- Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.
- Be especially careful to use full stops at the end of sentences and to avoid comma splicing in long sections of description.

#### **Question 4**

Narrative writing

(a) Write a story called 'The Watcher'. (25)

OR

(b) 'As I was about to knock on the heavy oak door, a booming voice commanded 'Enter!' and stopped me in my tracks.' Use this quotation at some point in your story. (25)

For both of these titles there were a range of original and also straightforward narratives. There were some engaging ideas that encompassed both realism and fantasy, but also some where dialogue was over-used and a string of events took over any development of character or plot.

The first question attracted a number of approaches, some where the watcher was a type of guardian angel, some where the intentions were criminal and some when watching was part of the job. Many adopted a setting that was based on spies, detective work or crime stories, in which more effective responses developed the individual characters and their relationships with each other and with their task. These types of stories tended to have a clear structure, but often quite a predictable ending. They often seemed to be based on television or film characteristics and were generally set in the present day.

Some of the most impressive pieces were those that had their base in a myth or legend. One excellent story was about a fallen knight who came back to protect his village after his own death, while another gave their watcher spiritual powers to protect other people. A different approach was where a family of rabbits was

being watched by a bird of prey. Interesting settings of watch towers and lighthouses added to the atmosphere in several narratives.

The weaker narratives were those where there was an assassination attempt, or a criminal investigation that went from one event to the next without thinking of an effective climax, and with little variation in pace, as well as over use of dialogue.

The second option gave rise to some realistic stories, where the door was the entrance to a place of authority, such as head teachers, Supervisors at work and even grandparents. One effective narrative was about a boyfriend approaching the door, behind which was the formidable father of the new girlfriend. Based in reality such narratives often provide believable and realistic details and reactions. At the other extreme, there were narratives based on religious figures or historical figures where the door figured somewhere in a quest. Based on a ready-made pool of information, such stories usually had a clear structure, although more ambitious pieces would offer a twist to the predictable ending. Some fantasy stories which included this quotation did not know how to end the piece, showing how some pre-planning is necessary in order to avoid leaving the reader with a disappointing denouement. There was a welcome reduction in the number of narratives where the conclusion turned out to be a dream.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given when the writing was lively, varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. Maintaining a consistent style is important, as is not jumping from third to first person. There was some ambitious vocabulary chosen, such as 'the denizens of the village' and 'in the aftermath of a cataclysmic storm' but there were also quite a number of narratives that could have been improved by more precise choices of words. Errors in sentence separation and control, as well as mixed tenses, if persistent, limited even competently told stories to Band 4. Frequent errors in basic punctuation, such as missing capital letters and incorrectly placed apostrophes, along with spelling errors in common words were typical of weaker narratives. If dialogue is used, it should be punctuated accurately.

#### **Ways in which narratives can be improved**

- Plan the ending before you begin, so the story has some shape.
- Include realistic details of your characters as well as their thoughts and feelings to make them credible.
- Remember that stories need to be more than a list of events.
- Make sure you use varied and interesting vocabulary and vary sentence types.
- Check your writing for errors, especially for punctuation.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/04  
Coursework Portfolio

## Key messages

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

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

## General comments

There were a large number of entries for this component and, in general, the standards of reading and writing were satisfactory. Many candidates wrote from personal interests and experience and their writing was all the better for that.

The Key Messages, printed above and repeated from previous sessions, represent what the Moderators were looking for. The first two of the Key Messages had evidently been followed by many Centres. The third, refers to the choice of challenging assignments, and while the choice was usually appropriate to candidates of average ability, some of the tasks did not always stretch the better thinkers and writers.

An example of this was a package of assignments used by many Centres and consisting of a task starting with the words 'Don't get me started...', a description of the tragedy of 9/11, and a response to an article on the television programme, 'Educating Essex'. The only one of the three tasks that tended to evoke a high quality response was the second. The first misled potential Band 1 and 2 candidates into writing on comparatively trivial topics and sometimes in the form of a rant. The third was often a collection of disconnected responses to the same quotations from the article. There was only rarely an overview of the shortcomings of the article, and no realisation that the picture given of the school was the result of manipulation by the television company. Good candidates did not appear to have been warned that they needed to go deeper into the article as a whole to get reading marks in Band 1. Centres using these tasks might consider whether they are not now rather outworn, and try to experiment with tasks that are suited to the interests and specific abilities of their candidates.

The fourth of the Key Messages refers to one of the most important indications of a good writer. There were those who immediately stood out because they could write fluent sentences in which ideas were clearly related. Candidates at a lower level wrote in repetitive sentence patterns and often their sentences were short, so that ideas did not connect in a coherent pattern.

What was disturbing was the number of candidates, including good writers, who did not understand the conventions of punctuation. The three main problems were as follows:

- sentence separation errors where candidates frequently used commas instead of full stops;
- the omission of commas in more complex sentences, necessary to clarify meaning;
- the incorrect use of colons and semi colons, where sometimes semi colons were placed in the middle of a simple sentence.

The final Key Message refers to proof reading which had very evidently not been carried out by a large number of candidates. This meant that final drafts contained word-processing errors, and there were frequent mistakes where the two words (such as 'of' and 'off' or 'there' and 'their') had been confused

because the spellcheck had not indicated a mistake. Some candidates misused the spellcheck so that the word that appeared in the text was manifestly nonsensical.

Centres are reminded that coursework, which has hugely valuable educational advantages when properly conducted, gives great opportunities to candidates to do their best. However, there are also responsibilities that come with coursework, challenges that candidates must accept if they are to do well.

Despite these comments, the majority of the folders were very worthwhile, and candidates had frequently put a good deal of effort both into planning their work and in presenting it neatly and efficiently. Similarly, much of the administration was carried out well by Centres, the assessment was generally good and internal moderation was carried out with care.

### **Administration by Centres**

Administration was generally sound, and the Moderators extend their thanks to Centres for their efforts in providing accurate and complete lists. However, there were some occasional problems.

- Samples were correctly submitted as required by Cambridge, except that a number of Centres did not include the folders with the highest and the lowest marks. These are essential because of the way in which the moderation is carried out.
- The sample must contain a copy of the mark sheet, either the MS1 (filled in by hand) or an electronic version. It must also contain the Candidate Assessment Summary Form (CASF) for all the candidates in the Centre, and not just for those in the sample. The CASF shows changes made to the original marks at internal moderation. The mark sheet and the CASF must tally, and Cambridge carries out checks on the Centres' behalf to ensure that this is so.
- There were many examples of marks on the CASF that were not the same as the marks on the mark sheet or the folders. The mark on the CASF was always taken as the mark intended by the Centre.
- There were some examples of folders where one or more assignments were not submitted. The Centre did not always follow the procedure. This was to give a mark for writing as if all three assignments were present, and then to deduct one third of the marks for each missing piece. If the missing piece was the third assignment, then in addition, there was no mark out of 10 for reading.
- Some Centres did not provide a copy of the text used for Assignment 3.

### **Assessment by Centres**

This was again generally sound, and there were only minor instances where the overall rank order for the Centre was not accurate. There was a tendency to mark slightly leniently both for writing and for reading, and in some cases this added up to a trend in the overall assessment of -3 or -4. However, by 'slightly' an adjustment of -1 or -2 was normally indicated, and that was not necessarily over the whole mark range. Many Centres had obviously taken advice from previous reports, and their marks were either unchanged or even judged to be slightly severe.

Moderators took care not to make extreme adjustments based on particular candidates, in order not to penalise others in the sample.

### **Assessment of writing**

It was important to achieve a balance in marking between Content and Structure on the one hand and Style (including audience) and Accuracy on the other.

For Content, candidates achieving high marks demonstrated ability to respond to challenging tasks and to use their thinking skills. Candidates in Band 3 responded to straightforward tasks and used competent but less original ideas with less development and illustration.

For Structure, candidates achieving high marks demonstrated order and balance in their responses and in particular, paid attention to the sequence of their ideas within paragraphs. Candidates in Band 3 wrote in an overall structure, using paragraphs sometimes of unequal weight, but were not required to demonstrate skills of sequencing to a consistent extent.



For Style, all candidates were given credit for adapting their language to a supposed audience, but candidates achieving high marks demonstrated a wide range of language which they used with assurance. They also wrote in a variety of sentence types and lengths so that they communicated clearly and effectively. Candidates at Band 3 demonstrated a competent but straightforward range of language and some ability to relate ideas within sentences.

For Accuracy, it was important that at Band 1, errors were either absent or very few, and it was not in order for candidates whose sentences were incorrectly separated by full stops to be given a mark in this range. The same was largely true of marks 34 and 35, where Moderators were looking for a high degree of accuracy as well as an indication of a personal style. Some candidates were placed in Band 3 by Centres, although they made so many errors and wrote in such a simple vocabulary that they should have been in a lower band.

Three points were noticed and, where appropriate, need consideration and appropriate action.

The first was that errors were often not annotated in the text. It was not clear that they had been noticed by the marker, especially when the comment at the end suggested that there were few mistakes. This was at odds with what the Moderator noticed. Final drafts should be annotated to show where there are errors of punctuation, proof reading or usage. The amount of error was often the reason for an adjustment to the marks.

The second point was the practice of annotating in the margin where there was evidence of achieving an objective at an appropriate level in the mark scheme. While this was admirable in that it proved that the mark scheme was being used, it is important when assessing the writing that the various strands of a band description are achieved consistently. In some cases, credit was given for a very slight match with the description. For that reason it was probably better when the summative comment identified those strands that were sustained throughout the response.

The third point was that there was a tendency in the summative comments only to credit what was positive and to ignore what were sometimes quite important weaknesses. Assessment is partly the matching of strengths and weaknesses. Those who ignored the weaknesses usually gave too high marks to the work.

### **Assessment of reading**

Most candidates understood that they were to respond to the text by selecting ideas and opinions and to comment on them. By doing this sufficiently and with understanding they could be given a mark in Band 3. However, it was not enough merely to express disagreement without sound reasoning, and those who made subjective comments were worth no more than 5 marks. Those candidates who entered into mini debates with individual points and who responded with some weight were worth a mark in Band 2. Candidates in Band 1 expressed an overall view of the text, offering a review and criticism before analysing it. They also grouped and structured ideas so that the response had some consistency of thought. Some Centres were too ready to give marks freely in Band 1 to candidates who did not achieve a consistent and overall view of the article. While much of the marking was accurate, there were instances where candidates were over-marked by one or two.

Some candidates used the text as a stimulus and wrote a response that was not directly related to ideas and opinions that they had read. They should not have been marked at more than 4.

The reading mark scheme in the syllabus is clear and should be used carefully in awarding marks.

### **Annotation**

Some Centres did not annotate individual assignments, all of which required the marking of errors and some form of summative comment.

### **Drafts**

Some Centres made very good, educational comments on the drafts. These included matters of editing, such as adjusting the length of sentences or making general changes to language, and changes to the structure of the work, such as shortening some sections or providing an alternative ending. There were also warnings about checking accuracy.

The best drafts had advice from the teacher at the end of the work and notes on the text by the candidate.

It was not appropriate for teachers to make notes in the body of the text, either to correct errors or specifically to draw attention to them. Where this happened, usually only in the case of one teacher at the Centre, it was unfair and defeated a purpose of coursework which is to make candidates responsible for their own work. By advising them with general comments, teachers were able to make the process more educationally valid.

Many drafts had no comments on them at all and there was no evidence that changes had been made in producing the final version. This meant that an educational opportunity had been missed.

### **Plagiarism**

There was no evidence that there was any widespread abuse, but Moderators are used to spotting what may not be original, and one candidate was discovered copying from the Internet. This was a leaflet about healthy diets and it is this type of assignment that lays itself open to abuse and endangers the future of coursework. Proper supervision and planning of the work can ensure that this type of matter does not occur.

A second type of writing that is prone to copying from the Internet is the research essay. This is where the Centre allows candidates to choose areas of study and leaves them to find their own material. Where this was done there was widespread partial copying of content, largely because candidates did not know how to make notes and use them in their own writing. While this practice should be properly monitored, it would be better not to set this type of essay, which is not the sort of personal writing that is required. The section on Assignment 1 in the Coursework Training Handbook gives guidance on setting appropriately.

### **Assignment 1**

The choice of topic for this assignment is now much wider than in previous sessions. Candidates were obviously prompted to choose for themselves matters about which they felt strongly. They needed to write about topics that they knew something about, and they also needed to avoid the Internet as much as possible. If they did use it for important facts, it was important that the final response should be as personal as possible and that it should have some strength of intent and persuasion.

Candidates who responded to a single topic set to the whole class by the teacher were often at a disadvantage.

Candidates in one Centre achieved some very competent and lively writing on a variety of topics that included:

- *Comprehensive education*
- *Violence in the media*
- *The pay given to footballers and soldiers*
- *Technology rules our lives*
- *Female empowerment.*

In other Centres, topics looked promisingly controversial:

- *Are all blondes dumb? (written by a girl)*
- *Underage pregnancies*
- *Which is more important, health or grades?*

There were some good words of speeches on, for example, homework, zoos and the jury system. These continued to work well, although it was better to make it clear who the audience was and the occasion on which the speech was given.

The best leaflets were not set out as leaflets but as a series of headings with the words underneath. Without layout, the text was more coherent and sustained. These were best done as descriptions of candidates' schools for new year 7 candidates, for example. Leaflets about endangered species did not read as original work and were done without any personal involvement.

'A Life in the Day of...' is nearly always very unchallenging. One Centre set it to all candidates and in the sample, only one account contained content of interest and thought. Information about waking up in the morning and what one had for breakfast was not engaging.

There were some good factual accounts of activity weekends, and holidays. Provided that the style is different from Assignment 2, these are in order as tasks.

Letters to the council about the provision of public transport or to the Principal about spending money on the college were also effective tasks. These again provided the writer with a voice.

## Assignment 2

Most of these pieces were fiction and gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their ability with language and vocabulary. Some wrote in a narrow range of vocabulary, which affected their marks. It was important that descriptive language was appropriate. Some responses used language for its own sake and the effect was cloying. The important thing about language is that it must convey pictures that relate to the writing and that engage the reader's attention.

Stories often sounded real and had interesting endings. There were some narratives that used too many events and which sounded incredible. It was normally better to avoid airplane accidents and haunted houses. Some warfare and science fiction stories were tedious, and letters from WW1 were very variable.

Much attention was given to titles which engaged the imagination of the reader. This is a small selection:

- *The Insider*
- *Not just Adam and Eve*
- *The Man in the Street Light*
- *Witch or Princess?*
- *Dangerous Rubbish*
- *The Hybrids.*

One candidate wrote pretending to be a clock and another wrote about a finger that was discovered in a salad bought at a supermarket.

There were comparatively few accounts based on personal experience, which was a pity since these have often been very effective in the past. They have often arisen from autobiographical fragments.

There were quite a few descriptions, for example of the last lesson of the day, the School cafeteria, break time or a snowy day.

This assignment was done well and was often the best written of the three.

## Assignment 3

The assessment for writing almost overlapped with that of reading since Moderators were looking for a well-structured response, and the structure usually revealed an understanding of the article itself.

It was increasingly clear that the best articles were those with which candidates could disagree. It was quite difficult to extend and qualify ideas that no normal person could deny. Most articles that were controversial were also quite silly, so it was easy to express opinions to counter what had been read.

In general, Centres set the same article either for all candidates or one article per class. This was sensible, since individual choices tended to impose unequal standards of difficulty which might not be appropriate. One Centre did set a number of different articles and achieved a similar standard with each one.

There were still examples of inappropriate texts. These included:

- informative texts from the Internet, mostly in paragraphs of two or three lines, rarely containing any opinions of note and were badly structured (with repetition);
- news reports from newspapers;
- multiple articles, or articles that were too long for candidates to absorb;
- literary texts (such as the whole of *Romeo and Juliet*) which led to candidates making inappropriate comments about language (tested elsewhere in Papers 1 and 2).

The majority of Centres set appropriate articles, some of which were on the following topics:

- *The curfew will alienate teenagers*
- *Ask FM*
- *Private Education*
- *Children smoking*
- *Bullying*
- *Corporal punishment in Schools.*

These were all topics that were familiar to teenagers. Less so was the Terry Pratchett article on the right to die.

Moderators again thanked Centres for the efforts they made to produce valuable and often entertaining work. This session continued to prove the educational advantages of coursework.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/05  
Speaking and Listening

## Key messages

The main message to Centres is to ensure that candidates do not rely too heavily on their scripts or prompt material. 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, brief PowerPoint slides, flip charts, or smart phone applications. Candidates will not be able to score high marks if they simply read from a script; awareness of audience and an attempt to engage the audience is a key skill being tested in Part 1.

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 and this often leads to quality work.
- In Part 2, Moderators would like to hear stronger evidence that candidates are aware of their role in the discussion. The candidate’s role should not be that of a passive interviewee, but should be one which is more proactive and seeks to engage with the listener in a collaborative manner.
- It is permissible for teachers to work with their candidates (once the candidate has decided upon a topic) to help enhance the content and to advise upon the approach taken for the delivery. Differentiation by task setting is therefore encouraged for this component. A more capable candidate is likely to attempt a more ambitious presentation and to engage with more sophisticated content - and such a candidate should be encouraged to do this.
- Please restrict Part 1 to 4 minutes, and Part 2 to between 6 and 7 minutes - as specified in the syllabus. It is difficult to justify the awarding of high marks to Part 1s which are short (under 3 minutes) and it is counter-productive to allow Part 2 to run over 7 minutes. This session again saw problems at some Centres with timings, and problems here often lead to problems elsewhere.
- Please would all Centres use digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or a USB drive. Please use recognised audio file formats that can be played by common computer software (e.g. mp3, wav, wma). There is no need to use the blue ‘cassette inserts’ – a list of the candidates in the sample, their numbers, and the mark given to each, either on the CD cover (but not on the CD itself please) or on a separate sheet is fine. Please re-name the individual tracks on the CD to the candidate number and name (instead of track 1, track 2, etc.). Please, avoid using analogue recording and tapes/cassettes.

Messages relating to assessment:

- In Part 1, Moderators advise Examiners to be sure that a candidate has met the criteria for Band 1 fully before awarding 9 or 10 marks. If an individual presentation is of the standard, factually-based, reportage style, even if well done, then a low Band 2 mark is likely to be the highest available, and a Band 3 mark perhaps more appropriate.
- More mundane presentations should be placed in Band 3.
- Candidates who present very short Part 1s or those which rely heavily on a script are not likely to achieve higher than Band 4, where “delivery is not secure, resulting in some loss of audience interest” is the most likely and appropriate descriptor.

- Extremely short Part 1s (under one minute) are likely to satisfy only the Band 5 criteria: “Content is mostly undeveloped....and the audience is generally lost”.
- Examiners are reminded not to award marks for content per se - it is the development of the content which is being assessed; in both Parts 1 and 2 of the Test. For example, “What work experience did for me...” could achieve a Band 1, or indeed, a Band 5, depending on how the content has been planned, is introduced, is organised, and then presented and developed.

An important message relating to protocol

- The test should be conducted only once. It is a formal 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.

### **General comments**

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

Conversely, where Centres were ill-prepared for the test and Examiners were not fully aware of their role, the candidates were not as successful. In these Centres, the candidates’ preparation of their topics was not always conducive to performing successful tasks, and they were clearly ill-prepared for the discussion part of the examination – and these factors were usually more significant than the choice of topic. Less successful tasks were usually read from scripts and this tended to detract from the overall effect - appearing to be rather lifeless and certainly monotonous. Weaker candidates invariably read from 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.

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

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

### **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 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 Form as they appear on the Mark Sheet.

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 narrower focus; along with a greater range of presentational styles.

Some examples of productive Part 1 tasks from this session:

- the experience and impact of living in a different culture
- being a football referee
- the pros and cons of friendship
- feminism - how far have we come?
- the appeals of the boxed set
- why I want to do nothing else but be a musician
- reducing the voting age to 16
- being trapped in a world of social media
- conspiracy theories cannot all be untrue can they?
- celebrities who make a real difference.

#### **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 questions or areas of interest that might be appropriate given the scope of the topic.

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

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

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

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

The least successful discussions were those where the Examiner talked too much - sometimes jumping in too quickly and interrupting the candidate. Some Examiners should be careful not to answer their own questions. A few Examiners asked too many closed questions, which unsurprisingly elicited weaker responses, which did 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) describe. 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 their individual reports 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)

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**Paper 0500/06**  
**Speaking and Listening (Coursework)**

## Key Messages

It is important for a Centre to choose either Component 5 or 6 before planning the schemes of work through which this examination is to be delivered. The two components are very distinct in their format and execution. Component 5 is exam-based and rigid, being suitable for Centres who wish to assess their candidates on one specific topic on one chosen date. 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.

Having chosen Component 6 Centres should pay close attention to both the current syllabus and 'Speaking and Listening Handbook' to ensure the requirements for the administration of the component are met in full. In particular, the Individual Candidate Record Cards should be treated as 'living' documents that are completed when each task is undertaken. It is permissible for candidates to fill out these sections themselves but please check the accuracy and amount of detail given. Specific information about the choices made for each task is required by the Moderator and not just generic statements that are unhelpful. For Task 1 a comment reading 'a talk about a hobby of your choice' is not helpful but 'my interest in (explain specific hobby)' is useful for the Moderator.

Cambridge requires a Centre to provide four different items in the 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 that have already been sent to Cambridge and the Individual Candidate Record Cards for the candidates included in the sample. Each one of these items is very important in the process of assessing a Centre's performance. 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, or in the worst scenario, an inability on the part of the Moderator to complete the process until the relevant items are received.

Please would Centres use 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 such as mp3, wav and wma but not AUP. Please check the quality of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge.

It would be very helpful if for each candidate a separate track is created and its file name is the candidate's name and examination number.

Please follow the specific instructions on page 42 of the current syllabus that outline the way in which the recordings of candidates undertaking tasks should be introduced by the Teacher/examiner. For paired activities it would be helpful if candidates introduce themselves and the roles they are playing before beginning the task so the Moderator can clearly distinguish who is speaking and when.

Although there is no formal requirement that activities should be of a minimum length, please consider whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met if the activity is very short. 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.

## **General Comments**

Centres are reminded that there are specific forms provided by Cambridge for use with Component 6; namely the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form. Please use these documents. It is worth noting that the Component 5 Summary Form is different and it is not interchangeable with the Component 6 equivalent. Any choice as to which component to undertake should be made before any assessment takes place.

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. The integration of literature into the activities is again encouraged.

## **Comments on specific tasks**

Moderators have noted that the tasks which worked most successfully were the ones which had clearly been candidate driven rather than teacher led. Where the candidates took ownership of a topic and genuinely believed in what they were saying, they performed well. Well planned and prepared responses to tasks were generally more successful but, in particular, Tasks 2 and 3 do not benefit from over-scripted and seemingly 'artificial' performances where spontaneity is missing. The balance between preparedness and a candidate's ability to think about changes in the direction of the discussion and to react accordingly needs to be maintained if higher skill levels are to be achieved.

### **Task 1**

Once again Moderators reported a wide range of topics being undertaken although the task generally took the form of an individual presentation. Some Centres allowed candidates a choice of specifics within a general framework such as 'Room 101' or 'My Family' while others allowed a completely free rein as to the topics chosen. Either approach is acceptable but when choosing topics it is important to take into account that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when choices are made.

Some examples of productive Task 1 activities include:

- My life through the songs/moments/events that define me
- My love of dance/theatre/Guides (or any personal experience that is relevant and thought-provoking)
- My faith
- My participation in...
- The movie/book/television series I love/hate the most.

### **Task 2**

The Pair-Based Activity works best between two candidates of similar ability discussing a topic they have prepared and that they feel strongly about or engaging in a lively role play that allows them to demonstrate their discursive strengths. A clearly defined focus is better than a general exchange of views on any topic be it football or School rules. Where candidates have clear viewpoints that lead to persuasive argument the resulting task will be more successful than when candidates are unsure of their opinions.

Some examples of productive Task 2 activities include:

- A discussion about how to spend an allocated budget for a School function (e.g. a Year 11 Prom)
- Arguing for and against violent video games
- Acting as co-editors making choices for the front page of their newspaper
- How the School should commemorate a specific event (e.g. the centennial of WW1)
- The merits of one personality over another where each candidate champions one famous person (e.g. Rooney or Suarez, Miley or Beyonce)
- Acting as employers choosing who should be given a job from a list of prospective candidates (and variations on the theme).

### **Task 3**

Task 3 may take the form of a group discussion debating an issue which is topical and possibly controversial or a role-play where each candidate plays the part of a character. Both can be successful as long as the assessment criteria for the group work are met. 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. To this end, it is advisable to create groups of similar ability levels so that weaker candidates are not disadvantaged and to consider the group dynamic so that each member has 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:

- A trial scene based on a literary text – e.g. George Milton, Arthur Birling, Voldemort
- Plan and perform an extra scene from a play
- A discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- A Jeremy Kyle style role play possibly with literary figures as the central characters
- Balloon debate – who to include/discard from a list of famous people where each candidate champions the cause of their chosen celebrity.

### **General Conclusions**

The general standard of assessment by Centres is at the correct level. There were fewer administrative problems this November, as opposed to in June 2013, but the need for all Centres to disseminate and follow the specific instructions given by Cambridge regarding the requirements for the sample remains a concern. Centres must be clear as to which of the two available speaking and listening components they are choosing. The vast majority of candidates undertaking speaking and listening activities appear to be enthusiastic about the experience and benefit from careful planning and practise.