

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/01
Reading Passage (Core)

General comments

Overall, candidates responded well to this paper and seemed to enjoy Gerald Durrell's description of his family of hedgehogs. Examiners were unanimous in their approval of candidates' answers to **Question 2** which produced much competent, relevant and enjoyable writing in which understanding of the implications of the passage was successfully blended with imaginative yet appropriate original additions. Most candidates appeared to respond with enthusiasm to the requirement to write a dialogue and showed that they were comfortably at home with the requirements of this genre. Only a few missed the point of the task and wrote either monologues or letters.

In general, however, candidates scored comparatively less well when answering the various parts of **Question 1** and only a minority achieved marks of 20+ for this question. The reason for this would appear to be less a failure to understand the passage but more a failure to pay close attention to a precise consideration of what was required by the individual questions.

All candidates approached the examination seriously and answered the questions conscientiously. Presentation was generally good and tidy and handwriting, with a few exceptions, was mainly legible. There was very little indication that candidates were adversely affected by the pressure of working under time constraints, although one Examiner wondered whether the pressures of time led to some candidates not making a draft plan for the writing task (**Question 2**) when to have done so was likely to have been to their advantage.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

As mentioned above, a significant number of candidates failed to do full justice to themselves in their responses to the different sub-questions of **Question 1**.

- (a) The reason Gerald Durrell went to various parts of the world to collect animals was to provide them for zoos, as stated in the first line of the passage. Although many candidates answered this question correctly, a surprisingly large number missed the point and claimed that his reason was that he wanted to be a mother to animals, while other candidates apparently did not read the complete question carefully and claimed that the reason he went to various countries to collect animals was because he wanted to collect animals.
- (b) This also proved to be a question that discriminated well between those who had read the passage and questions carefully, and those with a less focused understanding. The requirement was to explain the change that takes place in baby hedgehogs a few weeks after they are born, using information *from paragraph 1 only*. The key features of the change are that the hedgehog's *spikes* change from being *soft* and *white* to being *hard(er)* and *brown*. All of the italicised words needed to have been mentioned for the award of both available marks. Omission of one or two of these resulted in only one mark being awarded. A significant number of candidates forgot to mention *spikes* at all, which meant that their answers were, inevitably, unfocused.
- (c) This question was generally correctly answered, although some candidates wrote that the writer fed the hedgehogs with a friend's *baby's* feeding bottle and not with a *doll's* feeding bottle.

- (d) Similarly, most candidates scored well in their responses to this question; nearly all identified one or two of the comparisons made between human and hedgehog babies and a pleasing number made four or more comparisons to be awarded the full four marks available for this question. The points of comparison are as follow:-
- ready for food at any hour of the day or night
 - (a chorus of) shrill screams
 - little (pointed) faces/(black) noses
 - (each head decorated with) a crew-cut of white spikes
 - (noses would) wave desperately from side to side
 - (in an effort to) locate the bottle
 - the need to clean the nest regularly
- (e) This question also differentiated between those who gave precise explanations of their chosen phrases and those who were less focused in their responses. The following words and phrases contained the required descriptions: 'tiny legs could not support their weight'; 'curious swimming motion'; 'tummies dragging on the ground'. Most candidates successfully identified all or some of these phrases although some tried to justify including the statement that the hedgehogs made daring excursions as much as 15 centimetres away from their box. This reference was not accepted as it contains no description of *how* the hedgehogs moved. One mark was awarded for each of the different words or phrases identified. However, a further three marks were available for an explanation of how each of these helped the reader to visualise the hedgehogs' movements. In order to achieve all three of these marks, it was necessary for candidates to explain each word or phrase independently. Those who made a general explanation, referring collectively to all three words or phrases, usually gained only one mark. The most successful responses came from those who had clearly imagined the hedgehogs' movements (e.g. the curious swimming motion suggested that they were moving across the floor like little fat snakes). Less successful responses tended simply to paraphrase the meaning ('their tiny legs could not support their weight means that their bodies were too heavy for the legs') without considering the figurative aspects of the writer's language. The least successful did no more than repeat the words of the original ('the curious swimming motion suggests that they moved curiously as if they were swimming').
- (f) This question was generally well answered, with most candidates identifying snails or strawberries or both. Some, however, simply lifted the word 'titbits' without making it clear what was being referred to.
- (g) Although many candidates showed that they had a general understanding of the effect the writer achieved by writing, 'I should have known my sister better' as a separate paragraph, fewer were able to give a clear explanation of its stylistic effect. To score both available marks it was necessary to refer to the way in which the one sentence paragraph had an emphatic effect as well as to its contextual purpose of preparing the reader for something significant that was about to happen. Quite a large number of candidates simply explained the meaning of the statement without making any reference to the fact that it was written as a separate paragraph. Incidentally, many candidates correctly guessed the outcome that the sister succeeded in killing the hedgehogs through overfeeding them.
- (h) This question also proved challenging with relatively few candidates achieving all six available marks. As with 1(e) it was necessary to give precise explanations of the words in the phrases referred to in the question, rather than merely expressing the same words in a different order. Therefore, in (i) in order to show clear understanding, candidates needed to explain 'thrived' (grew strong and healthy) and 'diluted' (watered down). In (ii) it was necessary to explain the meaning of the writer's simile ('like four survivors on a raft') by making reference to the desperate way the hedgehogs attacked the milk as if they had been without food for days and their lives depended on it. Finally, to score both available marks for (iii) it was necessary to give an explanation of 'emphasised' (stressed strongly) and 'greediness' (eagerness for food).
- (i) Most candidates achieved between four and six marks for this question, although only a small number achieved all seven. Overall, it was clear that candidates had a good understanding of the passage, but many tended to make generalisations rather than select specific details. The points included in the mark scheme were:-
- 1 Hedgehogs are very good mothers
 - 2 They build underground nurseries/nests (of leaves)

- 3 They are born blind
- 4 They have spikes
- 5 The mother teaches the young to hunt for food/look after themselves
- 6 They follow her in a joined-up line
- 7 They feed on cow's diluted milk when young
- 8 The young are always looking for food/greedy/scream for food
- 9 They have pointed faces/black noses
- 10 They do not know when to stop feeding
- 11 Their eyes open as they grow
- 12 They also eat snails and strawberries

Question 2

As mentioned earlier, candidates' responses to this question were generally of a high standard. Nearly all were relevant and showed good understanding of the points of view of both mother and daughter, and of Gerald's passion for animals. Written expression was generally of at least a satisfactory standard and there were very few scripts indeed where the candidate's command of English was so limited that meaning became unclear. Most communicated effectively although unforced errors (commas used incorrectly instead of full stops; misspellings of basic vocabulary etc.) prevented them from reaching the highest band for written expression. Nevertheless, there were a pleasing number of scripts in which candidates showed sufficiently secure technical control and a sufficiently varied vocabulary to be awarded full marks for this feature of their response.

As far as content is concerned, the best dialogues were firmly embedded in the criteria – using and commenting on information with some very imaginative development – and containing appropriately used and controlled colloquial language which conveyed effectively the banter between mother and daughter. Additional details included references to previous times when the sister had been less than successful in caring for one of her brother's animals; fears that the squeaking of the hedgehogs would disturb sleep; that they would get stuck under furniture by their spikes; that they would have to be handled by someone wearing gloves and so on.

Less successful responses tended to be more mechanical in their use of details from the passage; although they were clearly linked to the bullet points, the dialogue contained in them tended to lack appropriacy and the information was more copied from the text than imaginatively developed. There was also a tendency in responses at this level to lose focus on the task (that is, the need to take care of the hedgehogs) and for the sister to go on at too great length about her social life and studies and, in particular, to fail to deal with the requirement to give her thoughts about her brother and his interest in animals.

In conclusion, however, candidates performed well on this paper and there were many positive features in their responses. The main area for improvement, as in previous years, is in the responses to **Question 1**; careful concentration on responding precisely to the wording of questions and close reference to the passage are the keys to improving performance.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/02

Reading Passages (Extended)

General comments

While many candidates worked diligently through the three questions and had obviously been well prepared for the Examination, there were a number who did not appear to take their work so seriously. Their handwriting was often untidy, their work careless and there was a lack of careful thought. These candidates did not normally receive high marks.

There are three important principles that all candidates must learn before taking this paper.

The first is that the three questions require different approaches. In their response to **Question 1** candidates need to understand material from the passage and adapt it to the requirements of the question, which may involve changing the genre or writing from a particular point of view. Comment on the content of the passage is acceptable in this question. The response to **Question 2** is analytical, although it does not require critical language. **Question 3**, the summary, is a series of relevant facts taken from the two passages to answer a specific question, and nothing more. Commentary in this question is penalised.

The second is that candidates need to practise reading questions and doing precisely what they are asked to do. A common fault is that they do not answer the whole of the question.

The third is that candidates must not copy whole phrases and sentences from the passages. Using own words not only proves that candidates have understood what they have read but that they can, by their choice of words, express shades of meaning and put a gloss on an idea. The only exception to this rule is in **Question 2** where candidates are required to quote words and phrases in order to explain their effects.

It was clear that in this session, there were many candidates who were unclear about these three guiding principles.

There was no strong evidence that candidates did not have enough time to answer the questions, although many of the summaries of Passage A were rather insubstantial. It may have been that some candidates spent too much time writing their answers to **Question 2** and then found that Passage B took some detailed reading, thus leading to a superficial re-reading of Passage A. Most candidates read Passage B carefully, and this part of the paper was answered well.

There was also a distinct improvement in answering **Question 2**, especially the first part. More candidates understood what form an answer should take and the attempts to explain effects were better. However, the Examiners were concerned that many candidates did not seem to recognise quite simple words such as 'dominates', which they explained as 'huge' rather than picking up the idea of mastery. 'Menace' also appeared to defeat many candidates, and they found it difficult to unravel the imagery in Pliny's description of the terrifying cloud.

Some candidates who were entered for this tier would have been better entered for the Core tier, and others were clearly second language English candidates.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1

Question 1

Imagine you are a reporter, writing from the area. Write the newspaper report which would have appeared a week after the eruption of Vesuvius. Use the following headline: *Tragic death of respected Naval Commander: Eruption causes terror and destruction in the Bay of Naples*. Base your report on what you have read in Passage A.

To make this an authentic newspaper report, candidates needed to write an introductory paragraph that gave the reader an idea of what the rest of the article would contain and which linked the death of Pliny with the general effect of the eruption. Many candidates did this, and also established the time of writing the report, adding one or two other pieces of relevant information. In an exercise like this, the quality of the introduction is most important. Some introductions were very straightforward and set the tone for the rest of the writing.

It was important to balance the account of the tragedy and the death of Pliny. Some candidates ignored the first and wrote almost entirely about Pliny. It was quite common to use the general facts and figures concerning Pompeii and Herculaneum and to ignore the younger Pliny's account of what he observed, and how he escaped.

Newspaper reports also include interviews, and one would have supposed that this reporter would have found a survivor who could give an account. Last session, there were some good, originally worded interviews with the family that was rescued from the boat, and the Examiners expected that candidates would have been fully versed in what to do in this exercise. Although many referred to the younger Pliny and to Pomponius, they almost always copied out the words of the two characters, sometimes at inordinate length. It was rare to see a candidate who turned what they said into reported speech or who paraphrased the words. It was difficult for Examiners to give any extra credit to candidates who copied in this way.

The account of the elder Pliny was also too close to the original and very laborious. Facts about him needed to be selected, and there was an opportunity for candidates to refer to the qualities of character that made him abandon his survey of volcanoes and turn to the task of rescuing others. Few candidates commented on the breadth of his learning and experience. It was essential for candidates to try to adapt the material to the needs of a newspaper reader, and brevity was also a virtue.

Very few candidates paid attention to the situation of the reporter viewing the scene of desolation and responding in the way the report was written. This was an opportunity for creative thought. Some candidates had little idea of what they were doing and referred to 'the eruption that happened in the year 79' and the fact that 'it was all excavated nearly two thousand years later'. The report was supposed to have been written one week later. Some candidates thought that the eruption had taken place in 1979.

This exercise is a very good one for practising candidates, and the following three extracts might help Centres in teaching what should be done with the passage.

A possible opening (that gives the likely reaction to the scene and which escapes from the wording of the original)

The terrible tragedy of Mount Vesuvius has left countless thousands of Roman citizens dead in towns around the Bay of Naples. It is estimated that 20,000 died in Pompeii alone. A week after the event, poisonous gases have nearly dispersed and it is safe to approach the area. The few residents who have returned are aghast at the scene of desolation, the huge mounds of stone and the mud that have buried our seaside towns. It is thought that Pompeii lies under 29 metres of rubble and it is impossible to believe that we shall ever see the town again.

Interview with the younger Pliny (which could lead on from the above)

One survivor was the eighteen-year-old nephew of the great commander Pliny. He was still traumatised by the death of his uncle and by his experiences on the day of the eruption. He spoke about the sheer force of the explosion, which shot upwards as firmly as the trunk of a tree before branching out and falling on the land below. 'You could not imagine such a terrible cloud,' he said. 'Everything went pitch black, and then fire started to shoot out everywhere, uncontrollably. It was like a mad thunderstorm, except that the lightning was orange and red.'

Dealing with the elder Pliny

Commander Pliny was one of the greatest heroes of our age. Not only was he a military historian and strategist, but he wrote books on natural history, commanded the navy and was a first rate administrator. His scientific interests led him to study the volcano at closer range, but he abandoned this when he saw that citizens needed rescuing. This showed his humanity. Sadly, he appears to have over-exerted himself and may have inhaled poisonous gases, for the very next day, he collapsed and died.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of: (a) Vesuvius in paragraph 1; and (b) the clouds in paragraphs 5 and 6. Selecting words and phrases from these paragraphs to support your answer, explain the effects the writer creates in using these descriptions.

As stated above, there was some weakness in approaching the vocabulary used in these descriptions. It was a very good starter for those who realised that the mountain was personified throughout the description, first as a ruler, then a guard and lastly as a monster or a spirit. Some did recognise the devices and also went on to see the fiery cloud as some sort of dragon with a yawning mouth of fire. These candidates did well and were well on their way to scoring good marks.

Those candidates who thought about specific meanings of words and who then went on to examine the effects of the pairing of words did well too. In explaining *'broods secretively'* they thought of a grim-faced person or creature, working out a scheme against the people who lived below, allowing it to fester in its lonely mind.

On the whole, the first part of the question was answered better than the second part. Candidates needed to use the words to re-live what Pliny was trying to tell them, to see the frightening shapes and to take them literally.

There were still some candidates who did not choose words and phrases, who wrote a description of the description, and who made general comments about the brilliance of the writer in making the scene come alive. These answers were given few or no marks.

Here is an example of an answer that would get full marks.

The effect that the writer creates in the description of Vesuvius is one of threat and of fear. The mountain 'dominates' the whole area – its presence cannot be avoided, and the word suggests the mastery of a ruler. The image of the sentinel is one of a guard, hardly benevolent, since the towns 'huddle' together, presumably out of fear. The personification of the mountain is developed in the fearful image, 'broods secretively'. Here the mountain has turned into some kind of 'ghostlike' being that hatches its private plot against the area. The 'menace' that it threatens is 'silent', so there is no hint of what is to come. Only 'magnificent' contrasts with the idea of mystery and fear. In the sunlight the master, or even the king, is seen in all its splendour.

The effect of fear is turned into terror in the description of the clouds. The 'pine tree' image supplies the reader with an image of power as the stones are 'shot' high, violently into the sky as firmly and as solidly as a tree trunk. Then they fan out at the top as the debris starts to descend. The cloud is at first 'white and spotted' – the mixture of smoke and debris – but then 'black and dreadful'. We all know how we react to a black cloud, but to add the word 'dreadful' signifies some earth-shattering event. Most terrifying of all are the 'long fantastic flames' that emerge from the cloud – not ordinary flames, but those from fantasy, only to be imagined, and 'long', therefore dangerous. There are also two images, the 'fiery, snakelike vapour', which communicates the idea of a snake as a dangerous animal, but more specifically, the sudden movement of the fire. The second image is 'yawned'. Here the monster yawns, as if waking up to a day of destruction, and what you see when you peer into its mouth is terrifying fire.

Part 2**Question 3**

Passage B took some reading, largely because some of the facts were repeated and needed cancelling out in the summary. Nonetheless, most candidates made a good job of the passage and scored quite well. However, hard work took its toll and Passage A was not so well summarised. Candidates were frequently satisfied with a few obvious points from the beginning of the passage, and again young Pliny's testimony was avoided. Candidates scored the whole range of the marks.

Many candidates still do not understand some of the pitfalls of writing a summary. The exercise is different from the others and requires a plain, informative style of writing. Candidates should remember that they are required to find fifteen facts that answer the question relevantly. Here are some points of advice:

- Avoid writing introductions or end-pieces. Start with a few words from the question that lead directly to the answers.
- Avoid giving lengthy explanations. Make sure that the choice of words expresses the point clearly.
- Use only fact. Avoid making comments or writing in the style of a commentary.
- Do not copy phrases and sentences from the original.
- Do not include extraneous or irrelevant material. Just answer the question.
- Read both passages from beginning to end. Remember that points are as likely to be found at the end of the passage as at the start.
- Remember to write about one side in total - average handwriting is approximately eight words to a line.

Here is an example of a high-scoring summary:

The discomforts of exploring volcanic areas are that your food tastes of sulphur and that everything is covered in ash. You can slide on it and it impedes your movement. The wind makes progress difficult, and you have to clamber over rocks and scramble over glaciers. You have to hold on to rocks to prevent falling. Exploring is dangerous because there could be an eruption at any moment. Rocks can fall on you. The ways into caves can be restricted and everything is dark inside. You do not know whether the tunnel will collapse and there is the possibility of the sudden draining of dangerous acidic lakes. Volcanic gases and hot steam are also dangerous.

The eruption of Vesuvius was a terrible event because it killed so many thousands of people by covering Pompeii in pumice stone and Herculaneum in mud. People endured the shaking of the earth and the sucking back of the sea. There was a terrible black cloud and flames that shot out of the blackness. There was no one to rescue them and when they tried to escape their carts slipped on the stones. When they returned, thinking that it was safe, they were killed by the poisonous gas.

Location Entry Codes

As part of CIE's continual commitment to maintaining best practice in assessment, CIE has begun to use different variants of some question papers for our most popular assessments with extremely large and widespread candidature. The question papers are closely related and the relationships between them have been thoroughly established using our assessment expertise. All versions of the paper give assessment of equal standard.

The content assessed by the examination papers and the type of questions are unchanged.

This change means that for this component there are now two variant Question Papers, Mark Schemes and Principal Examiner's Reports where previously there was only one. For any individual country, it is intended that only one variant is used. This document contains both variants which will give all Centres access to even more past examination material than is usually the case.

The diagram shows the relationship between the Question Papers, Mark Schemes and Principal Examiner's Reports.

Question Paper	Mark Scheme	Principal Examiner's Report
Introduction	Introduction	Introduction
First variant Question Paper	First variant Mark Scheme	First variant Principal Examiner's Report
Second variant Question Paper	Second variant Mark Scheme	Second variant Principal Examiner's Report

Who can I contact for further information on these changes?

Please direct any questions about this to CIE's Customer Services team at: international@cie.org.uk

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Papers 0500/31

Directed Writing and Composition

General comments

As always in this Paper, candidates had to work hard to complete two good answers in the time available. There were few signs of poor time management. A few candidates did not finish their composition, but this did not necessarily go against them. Some answers to **Question 1** were too long, and the Examiners mentioned that it was possible to get high marks for a comparatively short article that used the material from the passage cleverly and concisely. There were also some very long compositions, which rarely demonstrated control of structure.

There were welcome signs that some thought had gone into the content of the compositions, and there were some fine pieces of exciting and most engaging writing, perhaps more so than in previous sessions. The Examiners pointed to numerous occasions on which the writers had 'drip-fed' vital information as the narratives progressed so that interest was maintained. Against that there were stories where the Examiners could not work out what was happening at all.

There was an improvement in the argumentative essays (**Question 2**). These really needed to be planned out, since the worst, as usual, were those that ran out of worthwhile things to say and generally repeated themselves in the second half of the writing. Candidates who examined both sides of an argument or a statement usually had most to say.

There was also an improvement in the writing of descriptions. Unlike narratives, descriptions occupy a very short time span, or can be a series of 'moments' in an event or at a location. Candidates took the opportunities given in this year's paper to describe emotions in addition to places and people, and the best of the writing was realistic. The test was whether the picture that was created was clear to the reader. It was most encouraging that so many candidates now realise the difference in technique between description and narrative.

There was much that was good about the content and structure of the writing, and Centres will be aware that these are assessed by one set of mark band descriptions while style and accuracy are assessed separately.

However, there was a good deal of inaccuracy, chiefly of punctuation. Candidates frequently failed to understand the convention of the full stop. This was partly due to misunderstanding of what does and does not join sentences together. For example, many candidates thought that a string of sentences all starting with a pronoun constituted proper sentence construction. Commas were again missing in complex sentences where their use would have made the writing easier to understand. The apostrophe was used randomly.

Tenses were carelessly used. The chief problem was where candidates started in one tense and changed to another, often temporarily. Grammar problems varied according to the proficiency of the candidates, some of whom were really at second language level.

Spelling was normally secure, although candidates who found spelling difficult made very frequent errors, often of simple words.

Some candidates who made frequent errors nevertheless wrote in a fluent style. Their sentences were soundly constructed and they used a sufficiently wide range of vocabulary. Lower marks were given where the sentences were consistently simple and the vocabulary limited.

The mark for content and structure was frequently higher than the mark for style and accuracy. Some candidates scored higher marks for writing in **Question 1** than in the composition question. This was because the content of the interview and of the question itself gave more cues. In the composition, candidates had to think for themselves and had to create their own language and voice.

Finally, the Examiners again noticed that many candidates relied too much on the wording of the interview in **Question 1** and there was much copying or semi-paraphrasing of the text. Candidates should be advised that there is no place for copying whole phrases and sentences and that by using their own words as far as possible, they demonstrate their understanding of what they have read to the Examiner.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1: A boy called Fizhan has been given a Young Citizen of the Year award for his tremendous efforts in looking after his disabled mother and his younger brother and sisters. Read the transcript of an interview between Fizhan and a journalist called Keisha Jacobs. Imagine you are Keisha. Write an article for a newspaper sold in the area where Fizhan lives. In your article you should explain Fizhan's situation, how he copes, and how it has affected his life. You should persuade readers that they should be more aware of situations that people like Fizhan and his family are in.

This question was often well done. Many candidates wrote at some length and complexity about the need for public awareness of the type of situation Fizhan is in. The use of persuasive language helped the Examiner in deciding the final mark for writing. Some candidates wrote in an ordinary and rather flat style throughout. Others adopted a lively and persuasive voice throughout.

The first paragraph was important in explaining what the article was about; detail about the award and detail about Fizhan. The best candidates were able to include some very useful ideas that would have attracted the attention of a reader. Occasionally there was no introduction or, more commonly, two lines that contributed nothing more than a formal opening. Centres are recommended to consider the importance of a brief but interesting introduction to this type of question.

While accuracy was most important in awarding a mark for writing, there was a particular slant on style in this question. It was important that the writer developed a voice. While Keisha's duty would have been to report, because it was an article and not a news report, she would also have been able to include comment of her own and to slant the information in the direction indicated by the question. The description for Band 1 requires 'an authoritative/persuasive style', and this, as mentioned above, was best shown in the section of the answer that made the reader more aware of Fizhan's situation.

Most candidates located information about Fizhan's situation. However, most of this section was copied from the original, even the part about 'in reverse'. The best candidates edited this part and in doing so, reduced it to their own words. Fizhan's attitude towards his life as a carer and the award was mentioned by nearly all candidates, and some of them integrated these details well into the article.

When writing about the effects on his life, candidates did not take enough care to explain what the problems were about his friends and about his education. Some of them tackled one but not both. The best answers not only explained the effects but led to the turning point when Fizhan dropped his defences and admitted his problems. This linked his social dilemma with getting his friends to come and visit him and even give him a hand. Few realised that by helping them with their homework, Fizhan would have progressed in his own work.

Many candidates did not pick up the various ways in which Fizhan coped and some ignored this part of the question entirely. Yet, in a sense, it was the most important part of the article. It underlined the part that his mother had played, learning that he needed his own space and time, letting his friends in to his life and letting other people know about what he was doing so that they too could help. Some did not mention that he had learned to be a proficient cook. The hint at having a girl friend was perhaps the final step in his partial liberation at the point of the award.

Many candidates used the interview sufficiently for seven marks. Those who scored above made some attempt to fit all the parts together. Mechanical use of the material without much adaptation scored five or six and those with a lower reading mark did not use enough of the material.

Questions 2-4: Composition

Question 2: Argumentative/discursive

Most candidates understood the need to plan their answers so that each paragraph said something new. Not all paid enough attention to the order of what they said, so that the essay could reach some sort of conclusion. The answers to **'Travel broadens the mind'** were good because the rubric to this question mentioned access to places via the Internet. Candidates were able to consider in some detail the advantages that the Internet gave. They then discussed the advantages of actually visiting other countries to immerse themselves in the culture and to meet the people. They seemed to have enough confidence in the topic to extend their ideas into a strong sequence of sentences as well as a decent overall structure. The speeches entitled **'Basic Rights for Teenagers'** were sometimes well done. Some answers had difficulty in staying on the topic and drifted onto writing about teenager complaints, rarely mentioning rights. However, those candidates who started by defining three or four basic rights, such as a roof over one's head and a good education, expanded their ideas and wrote convincingly.

Question 3: Descriptive

Most candidates remembered the difference between descriptions and narratives. The chief problem was to create a picture that was coherent to the reader. To write a series of details with no pattern was most confusing. A view could be taken from different perspectives, or a few interesting but minor events within a limited time scale could serve as signposts. The **'moment when you were involved in some special event'** was mostly about atmosphere and emotions. Candidates could describe the place, the people who were there, the sense of expectation as a winner was announced, and feelings of pride and fear. Candidates did this well, especially when writing about quite minor happenings such as having to sing a song in public. One candidate described her nerves before the event, the actual singing and the excitement of getting through safely to the applause of the audience. The **'Enchanted Journey'** was the least well done of the four titles in the two papers. Some candidates were tempted to write stories of elves and fairies, which were never made to sound real and were mostly narratives. The candidate who described a ride on a roller coaster did much better. Candidates who chose **'waiting for something unpleasant or fearful to happen'** wrote well. Common topics were waiting to see someone when you knew you had done something wrong and waiting for news of a close relative taken to hospital. These described emotions soundly and usually led to a brief and moving ending. The noises coming from another room in the house offered some really original responses **'as you gently open the door'**. Some candidates spent too long leading up to the crucial moment, but the descriptions of hilarity or pain, or whatever, were invariably interesting, and some of the sights that met the writers' eyes were most peculiar. Most involved adults dressed up and making fools of themselves. Overall, despite the oddity of the content, the reader was rarely left in any doubt that it might have happened.

Question 4: Narrative

In this session there were rather more narratives that sounded as if they could have happened. Candidates remembered to include realistic detail, and they frequently distributed important pieces of the plot throughout their writing to keep the reader's interest alive. This 'drip-feed' effect worked particularly well in **'The figure sprinted away from the angry crowd and headed towards a gap in the buildings'**. The reader needed to know the identity of the figure, why the crowd was angry and something about the buildings. Good writers gave this information but only in the points in the story where it was needed. **'The Dare'** was often original, despite the fact that many of the victims finished up high and could not get down. There was plenty of background information to be drip-fed. The best was the story of a girl who climbed a tree only to drop into the grounds of a temple, at the feet of one of the guards. There was plenty of atmosphere here, and the location was singularly interesting. As regards the story of the red envelope that dropped out of the cereal packet and which said **'Read me now'**, some candidates insisted on describing a whole series of incidents in not very convincing detail. These stories lost the reader's interest. However, most of the instructions in the letter were unusual and created an air of mystery and tension, leading to some really good outcomes. Some of these were to do with parents challenging their son or daughter. Others were more serious, such as kidnaps and such like. The blood and gore associated with the shooting of kidnapped parents was overdone, but the best finished with a sense of light-hearted fun. The title **'Locked in'** resulted in some good atmospheric writing, slightly nearer descriptions than narratives.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Papers 0500/32

Directed Writing and Composition

General comments

As always in this Paper, candidates had to work hard to complete two good answers in the time available. There were few signs of poor time management. A few candidates did not finish their composition, but this did not necessarily go against them. Some answers to **Question 1** were too long, and the Examiners mentioned that it was possible to get high marks for a comparatively short article that used the material from the passage cleverly and concisely. There were also some very long compositions, which rarely demonstrated control of structure.

There were welcome signs that some thought had gone into the content of the compositions, and there were some fine pieces of exciting and most engaging writing, perhaps more so than in previous sessions. The Examiners pointed to numerous occasions on which the writers had 'drip-fed' vital information as the narratives progressed so that interest was maintained. Against that there were stories where the Examiners could not work out what was happening at all.

There was an improvement in the argumentative essays (**Question 2**). These really needed to be planned out, since the worst, as usual, were those that ran out of worthwhile things to say and generally repeated themselves in the second half of the writing. Candidates who examined both sides of an argument or a statement usually had most to say.

There was also an improvement in the writing of descriptions. Unlike narratives, descriptions occupy a very short time span, or can be a series of 'moments' in an event or at a location. Candidates took the opportunities given in this year's paper to describe emotions in addition to places and people, and the best of the writing was realistic. The test was whether the picture that was created was clear to the reader. It was most encouraging that so many candidates now realise the difference in technique between description and narrative.

There was much that was good about the content and structure of the writing, and Centres will be aware that these are assessed by one set of mark band descriptions while style and accuracy are assessed separately.

However, there was a good deal of inaccuracy, chiefly of punctuation. Candidates frequently failed to understand the convention of the full stop. This was partly due to misunderstanding of what does and does not join sentences together. For example, many candidates thought that a string of sentences all starting with a pronoun constituted proper sentence construction. Commas were again missing in complex sentences where their use would have made the writing easier to understand. The apostrophe was used randomly.

Tenses were carelessly used. The chief problem was where candidates started in one tense and changed to another, often temporarily. Grammar problems varied according to the proficiency of the candidates, some of whom were really at second language level.

Spelling was normally secure, although candidates who found spelling difficult made very frequent errors, often of simple words.

Some candidates who made frequent errors nevertheless wrote in a fluent style. Their sentences were soundly constructed and they used a sufficiently wide range of vocabulary. Lower marks were given where the sentences were consistently simple and the vocabulary limited.

The mark for content and structure was frequently higher than the mark for style and accuracy. Some candidates scored higher marks for writing in **Question 1** than in the composition question. This was because the content of the interview and of the question itself gave more cues. In the composition, candidates had to think for themselves and had to create their own language and voice.

Finally, the Examiners again noticed that many candidates relied too much on the wording of the interview in **Question 1** and there was much copying or semi-paraphrasing of the text. Candidates should be advised that there is no place for copying whole phrases and sentences and that by using their own words as far as possible, they demonstrate their understanding of what they have read to the Examiner.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1: A boy called Fizhan has been given a Young Citizen of the Year award for his tremendous efforts in looking after his disabled mother and his younger brother and sisters. Read the transcript of an interview between Fizhan and a journalist called Keisha Jacobs. Imagine you are Keisha. Write an article for a newspaper sold in the area where Fizhan lives. In your article you should explain Fizhan's situation, how he copes, and how it has affected his life. You should persuade readers that they should be more aware of situations that people like Fizhan and his family are in.

This question was often well done. Many candidates wrote at some length and complexity about the need for public awareness of the type of situation Fizhan is in. The use of persuasive language helped the Examiner in deciding the final mark for writing. Some candidates wrote in an ordinary and rather flat style throughout. Others adopted a lively and persuasive voice throughout.

The first paragraph was important in explaining what the article was about; detail about the award and detail about Fizhan. The best candidates were able to include some very useful ideas that would have attracted the attention of a reader. Occasionally there was no introduction or, more commonly, two lines that contributed nothing more than a formal opening. Centres are recommended to consider the importance of a brief but interesting introduction to this type of question.

While accuracy was most important in awarding a mark for writing, there was a particular slant on style in this question. It was important that the writer developed a voice. While Keisha's duty would have been to report, because it was an article and not a news report, she would also have been able to include comment of her own and to slant the information in the direction indicated by the question. The description for Band 1 requires 'an authoritative/persuasive style', and this, as mentioned above, was best shown in the section of the answer that made the reader more aware of Fizhan's situation.

Most candidates located information about Fizhan's situation. However, most of this section was copied from the original, even the part about 'in reverse'. The best candidates edited this part and in doing so, reduced it to their own words. Fizhan's attitude towards his life as a carer and the award was mentioned by nearly all candidates, and some of them integrated these details well into the article.

When writing about the effects on his life, candidates did not take enough care to explain what the problems were about his friends and about his education. Some of them tackled one but not both. The best answers not only explained the effects but led to the turning point when Fizhan dropped his defences and admitted his problems. This linked his social dilemma with getting his friends to come and visit him and even give him a hand. Few realised that by helping them with their homework, Fizhan would have progressed in his own work.

Many candidates did not pick up the various ways in which Fizhan coped and some ignored this part of the question entirely. Yet, in a sense, it was the most important part of the article. It underlined the part that his mother had played, learning that he needed his own space and time, letting his friends in to his life and letting other people know about what he was doing so that they too could help. Some did not mention that he had learned to be a proficient cook. The hint at having a girl friend was perhaps the final step in his partial liberation at the point of the award.

Many candidates used the interview sufficiently for seven marks. Those who scored above made some attempt to fit all the parts together. Mechanical use of the material without much adaptation scored five or six and those with a lower reading mark did not use enough of the material.

Questions 2-4: Composition

Question 2: Argumentative/discursive

Most candidates understood the need to plan their answers so that each paragraph said something new. Not all paid enough attention to the order of what they said, so that the essay could reach some sort of conclusion. The answers to **'Travel broadens the mind'** were good because the rubric to this question mentioned access to places via the Internet. Candidates were able to consider in some detail the advantages that the Internet gave. They then discussed the advantages of actually visiting other countries to immerse themselves in the culture and to meet the people. They seemed to have enough confidence in the topic to extend their ideas into a strong sequence of sentences as well as a decent overall structure. The speeches entitled **'Basic Rights for Teenagers'** were sometimes well done. Some answers had difficulty in staying on the topic and drifted onto writing about teenager complaints, rarely mentioning rights. However, those candidates who started by defining three or four basic rights, such as a roof over one's head and a good education, expanded their ideas and wrote convincingly.

Question 3: Descriptive

Most candidates remembered the difference between descriptions and narratives. The chief problem was to create a picture that was coherent to the reader. To write a series of details with no pattern was most confusing. A view could be taken from different perspectives, or a few interesting but minor events within a limited time scale could serve as signposts. The **'moment when you were involved in some special event'** was mostly about atmosphere and emotions. Candidates could describe the place, the people who were there, the sense of expectation as a winner was announced, and feelings of pride and fear. Candidates did this well, especially when writing about quite minor happenings such as having to sing a song in public. One candidate described her nerves before the event, the actual singing and the excitement of getting through safely to the applause of the audience. The **'Enchanted Journey'** was the least well done of the four titles in the two papers. Some candidates were tempted to write stories of elves and fairies, which were never made to sound real and were mostly narratives. The candidate who described a ride on a roller coaster did much better. Candidates who chose **'waiting for something unpleasant or fearful to happen'** wrote well. Common topics were waiting to see someone when you knew you had done something wrong and waiting for news of a close relative taken to hospital. These described emotions soundly and usually led to a brief and moving ending. The noises coming from another room in the house offered some really original responses **'as you gently open the door'**. Some candidates spent too long leading up to the crucial moment, but the descriptions of hilarity or pain, or whatever, were invariably interesting, and some of the sights that met the writers' eyes were most peculiar. Most involved adults dressed up and making fools of themselves. Overall, despite the oddity of the content, the reader was rarely left in any doubt that it might have happened.

Question 4: Narrative

In this session there were rather more narratives that sounded as if they could have happened. Candidates remembered to include realistic detail, and they frequently distributed important pieces of the plot throughout their writing to keep the reader's interest alive. This 'drip-feed' effect worked particularly well in **'The figure sprinted away from the angry crowd and headed towards a gap in the buildings'**. The reader needed to know the identity of the figure, why the crowd was angry and something about the buildings. Good writers gave this information but only in the points in the story where it was needed. **'The Dare'** was often original, despite the fact that many of the victims finished up high and could not get down. There was plenty of background information to be drip-fed. The best was the story of a girl who climbed a tree only to drop into the grounds of a temple, at the feet of one of the guards. There was plenty of atmosphere here, and the location was singularly interesting. As regards the story of the red envelope that dropped out of the cereal packet and which said **'Read me now'**, some candidates insisted on describing a whole series of incidents in not very convincing detail. These stories lost the reader's interest. However, most of the instructions in the letter were unusual and created an air of mystery and tension, leading to some really good outcomes. Some of these were to do with parents challenging their son or daughter. Others were more serious, such as kidnaps and such like. The blood and gore associated with the shooting of kidnapped parents was overdone, but the best finished with a sense of light-hearted fun. The title **'Locked in'** resulted in some good atmospheric writing, slightly nearer descriptions than narratives.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/04
Coursework Portfolio

General comments

Administration

The standard of presentation of coursework folders was, as usual, very high. Nearly all the required paperwork was complete, although there were some examples where the articles chosen for Assignment 3 were missing from the folders.

The majority of folders included an early draft of one of the pieces of work. Some Centres included drafts of all pieces of work, which were not required. Not all the drafts were annotated. Moderators expect to see comments written by the teacher and alterations written by the candidate. Some teachers are still marking individual errors, which is not allowed. Advice given by teachers must not constitute the correction.

Some of the annotation of final drafts was insufficient. Each piece should show evidence of having been marked in detail, and that includes the annotation of error. There were several cases in which the Moderator was unsure whether the teacher had noticed errors or had taken them into consideration when awarding marks. Teachers are asked to be especially vigilant over the use of correct punctuation, in particular, full stops at the ends of sentences.

Quality of the Work

This was mostly high since nearly all candidates took pride in their work and the finished product was good. In leaflets and other work with illustrations, the layout and design was frequently excellent, but the writing was sometimes very limited compared with a fully structured piece of expository work. Writing was nearly always well structured and many candidates used a wide range of vocabulary.

Centres are reminded of the rationale behind coursework. It is a tool that helps to encourage each candidate to become a better writer. It is also the vehicle through which candidates can express their individual thoughts, feelings and imaginative ideas. In order to achieve the first of these aims, it is important that candidates write enough to be able to progress. There was evidence at some Centres that candidates had had the opportunity to write only three pieces during the course, whereas the progression of their ability would be more obvious if they completed between five and seven pieces and chose the best for their folder. To achieve the second aim, candidates need to write about topics that are genuinely near to their own interests and to express their own opinions more directly, using the first person where appropriate.

The least competent work was in response to topics that led candidates to download from the Internet. This led to some very high sounding, serious prose and arguments that sounded unoriginal. In a few Centres some of the topics were not strictly English topics but came from other disciplines such as economics.

Quality of the Assessment

Marking was generally close to the CIE standard. Where there was disagreement, it was usually due to the under-marking of error or, where marks were raised, the under-valuing of style and particularly vocabulary. Many Centres had carried out internal moderation with care. Some adjustments were insufficient to bring particular folders into line and in rare cases the Moderator agreed with the original, rather than the moderated mark.

Plagiarism

Centres must be very vigilant to ensure that all the work is original. Centres are advised not to set topics that require recourse to the Internet. Even where there is no intent to copy long sections, candidates tend to work from notes which have not been paraphrased. Where work is close to the wording of Internet documents, the writing is frequently extremely impersonal and often dull. Moderators have noticed that some teachers under-mark such pieces, which suggests that they may doubt the originality as well.

Comments on specific assignments

Assignment 1

An increasing number of candidates chose to write this assignment in the form of a speech, which made the writing more lively and, at its best, more personal. However, the traditional topics of euthanasia, smoking, anorexia and animal rights continue to be popular choices for essays. Some of the topics that were chosen were more original, but not really appropriate for an English Language examination. Candidates in one Centre really struggled with '*Reduce World Famine*' and '*Freedom and Happiness*'. These were difficult topics for candidates with limited English.

There were, however, some original topics that arose either from candidates' own thoughts or were near to their own world and sensitivities. There was a good set of accounts of various school trips which were very informative and showed some personal enthusiasm. A number of candidates wrote about a rebellion against a tax on exporting soybeans that seemed to have affected everyone. There was a piece about selling an English course on board a bus and a piece on tourism in Dubai. There were two titles, themselves promising, that led to some really good writing; '*Slam! Punch! Superhero*', and '*A day in the life of God*'.

Assignment 2

There were some good detective stories in the style of certain writers. Parody is not a bad thing to do at this age, and there was some fun poked at the style of the genre. There were a lot of autobiographical stories, some of them really moving. Descriptions of places were frequently well done, and very personal. There has been a great improvement in descriptive writing in the last few years. One Centre took the theme of 'Fear' and that elicited a number of engaging stories. Another Centre explored the theme of 'Then and now' very successfully. Other interesting titles included 'Museum of the Mind' and 'How could I have been so wrong?'

Assignment 3

Where candidates chose an appropriate article with an arresting theme and plenty of argument, the more controversial the better, they engaged with the idea and wrote with some spirit. It was probably fairer if the teacher chose the article for them, or perhaps gave a choice of two or three. Where candidates chose the article, the teacher needed to monitor carefully.

Candidates were better this session at engaging with ideas and opinions in the articles, although some tried to write a critical analysis, for example of the choice of words, and these were less convincing. Some teachers had over-prepared the articles with the candidates. This was unnecessary since it prevented them from writing with originality. In any case, once they knew what to do, they were very capable of doing the work for themselves, and were usually worth high marks.

The best task remained one where the candidates wrote to the author of the article or to the publication where it appeared. However, one Centre had the clever idea of giving a speech of welcome to the writer as he visited the school.

There were good articles on *Designer babies*, *Facebook*, *The use of English as against a local community language*, *Lost languages*, *Kleptomania*, *Traditional learning versus fun learning*, *Standing out from the crowd*, and *Trouble for a candidate who wore a beard*.

Some final advice for the selection of appropriate articles:

- Avoid using simple, factual news reports.
- Avoid lists of facts from the Internet. Use a complete argument.
- Avoid very short or very long articles. One side or one-and-a-half sides is sufficient.

- Avoid using whole books or plays.
- Beware of humorous articles unless you are certain the candidates can understand the shades of meaning and attitude.
- If you use an advertisement, make sure there is enough textual substance to make it worthwhile.
- Local issues (like those in *Drum*, an African publication) often work well.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/05

Speaking and Listening

Comments on specific aspects of the Test

Part 1 – The Individual Task

Moderators continue to report that the most common format remains the fact-based informative talk or presentation. Although the syllabus does allow a variety of approaches, monologues, dramatic performances and role play of media/news/documentary reports, for example, are still uncommon.

Centres and candidates are free to focus on topics which lend themselves to standard presentations; Examiners are not discouraging this. However, Moderators would like to see such presentations using a greater range of presentational and language devices.

The choice of topic does, of course, impact on the depth to which subsequent discussion can develop. A very personal piece or a common, perhaps pedestrian topic is unlikely to result in probing and lively discussion. By contrast, a candidate who sets out to explore, to challenge, to be creative, etc. is likely to attract the attention of the listener, and productive discussion will probably result.

Part 2 – The Discussion

It was very pleasing to hear evidence that the majority of candidates were well prepared for this examination. Moderators are happy that in almost all 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 Task. It was clear in many cases that candidates had planned for focused discussion.

Choice of topics

Moderators report an interesting range of topics this session, with more attempts by candidates to use different styles of presentation.

The range of topics which were discussed included well-known people such as Roger Federer, Joseph Stalin and Nelson Mandela. In the music field, candidates talked about soul music, psychedelic music and reggae. Accounts of trips to Disneyland, Las Vegas, and Egypt were heard. Talks on various types of dance – flamenco, tap, and ballet – also occurred. Issues also featured, for example, the nature v nurture debate, science v religion, and books v films. This approach (looking at pros and cons) usually works well. Moderators also heard about a good number of contemporary issues e.g. smoking, drug abuse, divorce, addiction to the Internet, eating disorders, bullying, and racism.

Good topics are those which contain a judicious mix of research and personal involvement, and those which are well-defined and focused. For example, sport as a topic is probably too broad, while 'dangerous and extreme sports' is likely to result in more pertinent discussion.

Assessment

For **Part 1**, Examiners are reminded that "lively delivery sustaining audience interest" is necessary, and that "a wide range of language devices" should be present for Band 1. In other words, a rather straightforward, pedestrian informative talk, which is secure and safe, is likely to satisfy the criteria for Band 3. For higher reward, the candidate needs to be attempting something more challenging, more creative, more ambitious perhaps. Band 2 will indicate partial success of this aim.

For **Part 2**, Examiners are assessing listening skills using an independent set of descriptors. The essence of a good listener is that he/she will choose the right moment to respond and will respond accurately and in some depth, hopefully adding to the conversation. If a candidate responds to most of the Examiner's

prompts soundly, this is likely to result in a Band 2 mark (7-8). For higher reward, the candidate would need to develop and extend the point being put forward. This involves the integration of speaking and listening skills.

This session Moderators noted fewer instances of leniency in awarding high marks for **Part 1**. This is to be welcomed and ensures that fewer adjustments to the original marks awarded by Centres are necessary. In **Part 2**, Examiners are generally accurate. However, please note that if a topic itself is thin and/or weak, productive and rigorous discussion is much less likely to occur in **Part 2**.

Moderators would again like to emphasise the possibility of differentiating tasks according to candidates' interests and abilities. For example, it is permissible for a weaker candidate to select a more straightforward topic and to aim for a safe, competent presentation. It is advisable, on the other hand, for a stronger candidate to select a topic which is more complex and is likely to result in a deeper level of discussion. More challenging topics will also require more sophisticated presentational skills and a wider deployment of language devices, which are needed if Band 1 is to be attained.

Advice to Centres

Moderators would again like to point out that a wider variety of approaches to **Part 1** is encouraged.

Final comments

Moderators enjoyed listening to samples and recognise the amount of effort made by candidates and teachers at many Centres in presenting interesting and appropriate work.

Moderators would like to thank Centres for sending in samples on CD format. CIE encourages this as it makes the task of external moderation more efficient. However, Centres doing so should ensure that the CDs can be played on a regular, portable CD-player, and that they are correctly labelled.