

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

<p>Paper 9093/12 Passages</p>

Key messages

Candidates need to ensure that they read a wide range of material from a range of diverse sources – such as travel writing, memoirs, biographies, autobiographies, newspaper articles, blogs, advertisements – so that they can assess not only the conventions and language associated with different formats and genres but also comment on the effects and qualities conveyed by specific words and phrases; they should be able to comment on how a particular extract is structured in the way that it unfolds and develops in terms of subject, mood and tone. Candidates should be able to explore the contrasts and differences between the sections of a given extract; they need to move beyond identifying essential aspects of language and style such as personification, alliteration and punctuation so that the effects of such features are considered in relation to their context and the extract as a whole. Candidates who write precisely and economically, maintaining a close focus upon style and tone, are those who tend to achieve best results. They also need to be able to adapt their own writing style to incorporate diverse directed tasks – for example, voiceovers, articles, memoirs – and demonstrate secure familiarity with their conventions and style. A secure degree of technical accuracy – especially in the use of spelling, punctuation and tenses – is required at this level.

General comments

The selected passages for this paper offered a wide range of styles, settings and language features. All three texts were found to be accessible and, to differing degrees, engaging for the candidates. The rubric was also well understood with only a few candidates omitting the compulsory question. However, overlong directed writing responses were not uncommon. Candidates should remember that they are being marked for task focus as well as expression and accuracy. Largely speaking, though, the paper was handled with understanding and competence. A few candidates lacked the necessary language skills for passage analysis but there were some strikingly perceptive and well-written responses, notably in answering **Question 1(a)** and **Question 2(a)**.

In the case of most candidates, there was a clear understanding of the need to make precise connections between language features and their contribution to the full effect of the passage.

Less successful responses could often have been improved through more precise identification of effects: phrases such as ‘this makes the reader imagine the situation’ and ‘by using descriptive words the writer sharpens the incident’ cannot be considered useful passage analysis.

There was a pleasing sense of purpose in the directed writing tasks, though enthusiastic engagement sometimes led to overlong responses.

There was a common tendency to devote the first and concluding paragraphs of the commentary to a repetition of the question or a summary of the events of the passage. This, together with often quite lengthy consideration of the target audience, used time which would have been better spent considering key language features.

Specific language features were generally well understood, but candidates must ensure that the features they identify are genuinely present in the passage.

Maintaining a consistent tense presented some significant problems, particularly in the case of conditional constructions; this was particularly evident in the directed writing.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) This passage was generally very well understood and was answered with obvious engagement by most candidates. There was often sustained and perceptive attention to structure, direction, imagery and a range of language features. Weaker responses resorted to a narrative approach, or merely identified language features with little analysis of specific language effects.

The use of the present tense, use of eye witness accounts and the chronological approach served to involve the reader and some responses dealt with this in a productive way. The best responses revealed an awareness that the journalist's account was not traditional journalese but had a strong descriptive strand. Weaker responses showed confusion over the role of the named characters.

The listing of the men's occupations and the personification of the pursuing dust cloud was generally well understood and the omnipresence of 'stone' was commented on, though not always in a developed manner.

Auditory and visual imagery were recognised and categorised, though comparatively few responses commented on the cumulative effect of the images of destruction.

Almost all candidates recognised the implied condemnation of the mine owners in the 'haphazard architecture' reference; there were fewer comments about the 'maze of corridors'. The best responses noted the contrasting lexis 'entrepreneurial ambition', and the lofty and distanced vocabulary used to reflect the lack of concern of 'greedy' money makers which contrasted with the tragedy of the labouring miners.

The final paragraph received variable treatment. Most responses included comment on the change of perspective in the final paragraph. There was general condemnation of Carlos Pinilla and some misreading of 'hard driving' as slave driving. The cliffhanger aspect of the ending was generally understood but very few mentioned the mystery of the voice on the phone.

Quotation was not always expertly used, with some candidates quoting at far too great a length, or merely referring to a range of lines. Quotation from the passage should always be as concise as possible.

- (b) There were some sensitive responses to this task which captured the tragedy of the situation. The majority focused on the scale of the devastation and the challenges to rescue the miners. Some responses focused on the general manager fleeing the site and failing to face his responsibilities.

The best responses, although not a requirement, often mirrored style and also the context of the original, sometimes skilfully contrasting Pinilla's actions with those of the miners left underground. There was continuing focus on, and personification of, the 'guilty dust encompassing everything with its ominous presence'. The construction of the mine featured and the miners inside were described as feeling doomed because of its 'patchwork of archaic scaffolding'. These responses echoed and extended the original, developing the confusion, use of sound and the effects of the blast, with 'vibrations resonating' and 'men shattering to pieces, becoming at one with the stones'.

Weaker responses showed misreading of the passage, sometimes inferring that all the miners had died with the initial blast. These responses often reverted to conventional journalese, with an informative or factual style, simply listing the events which followed or itemising those who arrived on the scene.

Expression was generally accurate and appropriate. Some candidates attempted to continue using the present tense of the passage but were unable to sustain it; this might have been avoided by careful checking.

Question 2

- (a) This proved to be the more popular of the two optional passages. Many responses showed heartfelt empathy and identification with the writer although some weaker candidates found the passage quite difficult to access. Although such candidates could usually understand the basic narrative, they found it more challenging to focus on techniques of language and style.

Responses often commented on the relevance of the title but not the extension of the prison metaphor and the growing sense of constriction throughout the passage. The importance of the personal pronouns in the narration was generally recognised. Recognition of 'the power of three' and its effect in the passage was very good. The metaphors relating to the mother were commented on but not often developed. The strangeness of the 'decapitated' spider was only mentioned in the stronger responses, as were the implications of the mother as a 'comrade in arms'.

The best responses explored the contrasts between the full life lived by others and the writer's limited existence as shown in the complex sentence beginning 'They had interests...' juxtaposed with the simple sentence 'I had only my left foot.' These better responses recognised alliteration with sibilance – 'slowly suffocated' – and the quiet horror of the writer's position. They also often explored the lists of subjects and colours, as if almost endless, in relation to the writer's increasing sense of frustration: 'My mind had become bigger and my scope in painting had dwindled to a mere pinpoint'.

Weaker responses often used multiple examples to make the same point repeatedly. These responses often showed some confusion over, for example, 'well of inspiration' and the significance of 'growing pains'. In these responses, the conclusion of the passage was misunderstood and the expectation of a 'positive' ending often led to candidates thinking that 'I hadn't the comfort of tears' was a reluctant acceptance of the writer's condition rather than the 'agony' of deep distress.

- (b) Some of the best responses to the paper were seen in this question. There were some heartfelt memoirs from the mother and very poignant responses. Responses were almost always adequate, with a good proportion being purposeful and sometimes perceptive.

Weak and merely adequate responses tended to simply rearrange the material of the passage; most realised that it was to be written from the mother's perspective but some missed the fact that it was written later and should be based on the material, and not the techniques, of the passage.

The best responses identified strongly with the situation and found a wholly convincing voice for the mother, considering her emotional reaction. These responses showed perceptive recognition of the mother and child bond, their mutual and often increasing dependence.

With a firmer sense of purpose and context there seemed to be fewer errors of expression than in the other writing responses.

Question 3

- (a) This question proved to be less popular than **Question 2** and there were comparatively few successful answers.

The humour of the passage and the affection the writer had for his grandmother, together with the confidential tone of the author were recognised, but individual examples of these qualities sometimes proved difficult to demonstrate. Many responses showed appreciation of the fact that memoir was a contrast between eating habits and some widened this to a contrast between the different societies.

The context of the war was not always fully understood and the, probably literal, truth of 'barefoot' was sometimes described as 'exaggeration'. Some images were simply not understood because the experience of the grandmother had not been fully appreciated. The 'towering idols' and the guard who was also a prisoner were explained in very general terms. The grandmother was sometimes regarded as merely eccentric. The hyperbole of 'The Greatest Chef Who Ever Lived' was almost always spotted, though only the better responses commented upon the sense of the grandmother being trapped and limited by her experience.

Some of the better responses recognised the deceptively cosy opening paragraph and that the humour is present as a counterbalance to the unspecified horror of the past. The better responses explored the contrast between the grandmother's past poverty and current luxury, and the paradox of her obsession with food and lack of eating it. Such responses noted that contrasts were reinforced by variations in sentence length of the extensive wastage of the younger family compared with the scavenging of grandmother.

Weaker responses showed some confusion – for example the information on the grandmother's relationship with food and the reasons for this were not always appreciated. These weaker responses focused on the narrative rather than the language. The character sketch provided in the first part of the passage was summarised without considering the implication of this and how this was used to provide a foundation for the comments in the second part. The most common feature of weaker responses was a tendency to deal with the passage chronologically rather than thematically, which meant that the penultimate paragraph was scantily covered, and the final paragraph was often omitted.

(b) Responses to this question were mixed, with some very strong and others rather less successful.

Only the more successful responses noted that the question asked for a voiceover, with few taking the opportunity of adding dramatic/televisual touches. For those who did this, the context of the voiceover, particularly the identity of the speaker or programme was sometimes rather vague. Better responses directly addressed the audience, showing awareness of purpose and picking up on the past 'fight for food'. Some weaker responses referred to the grandmother, which showed lack of consideration of the question and many did not base their writing on the material of the original passage.

Most responses focused on comparisons of the past and present and took the position of the old cuisine being healthier than the new.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 9093/22
Writing

Key messages

The following strategies should be adopted when advising candidates how to prepare for this examination:

Focus on the prescribed instructions within each question – for example, in this paper, creating a sense of ‘intrigue and anticipation’ for **Question 1**, ‘atmosphere and place’ for **Question 3** and writing reviews that are ‘positive and critical’ for **Question 5**. Also, ensure that the purpose for each question is understood; in particular, candidates should refrain from writing narrative responses to questions requiring a descriptive piece, and vice versa.

Ensure time management skills are observed. Avoid overlong narratives in **Section A**, as these often lead to short, self-penalising answers for **Section B**.

Although practising past questions is strongly advised, candidates should also adapt to the live questions in the exam and avoid prepared, generic and formulaic answers, especially to questions that involve narrative or descriptive formats.

Within the time limits of the exam, be prepared to spend a few minutes thinking about, and writing out, a short plan to ensure the sound structure of an answer. This strategy may well save time in the long run, if organised and efficient. For **Section B** responses, a paragraph plan is advised.

Candidates should be encouraged to read a wide variety of newspaper and magazine articles, both print and online, as background preparation for **Section B**.

General comments

For **Section A**, strong responses were those with an original flavour and a convincing sense of place, character or atmosphere. For example, in such responses the reader was often able to vicariously experience the feelings of the narrators and other characters, and their reactions to the mystery surrounding a ‘stranger’ in **Question 1**; immerse themselves in the atmospheric descriptions of the ‘ancient site’ to be explored in **Question 3**; and be guided around the ‘art gallery’ in **Question 2**, aware of the appropriate ‘colour, sound and movement’, without too much dependence on a narrative element. Where some candidates fell down in their imaginative writing, it was often due to lack of structural control (sometimes a **Question 2** response was poorly paragraphed, for instance) or a lack of suitable language devices to create effects. A number of answers were hampered by tense confusions, especially when attempting to create intrigue or a sense of anticipated time passing in **Question 1**.

The more successful **Section B** answers kept the target audience in mind throughout and adopted language and structural techniques to match that audience. Weaker responses were unable to use the conventions of different forms, establish a mature, credible voice or develop a well thought out, logically organised line of argument. This was particularly true of some responses to **Question 6**, where lists of clichés, as if from a discursive essay, were used in place of a realistic speech, and also in **Question 4**, where an overly formal or generalised approach was adopted when the task required a connection with an audience reading a school magazine. The relatively few candidates who answered **Question 5** were generally successful in using positive or critical language suitable for an informed comment on a website.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 – The Stranger

The most popular choice for candidates, this narrative piece was generally answered effectively, and the stipulation that the text should be an opening to a story posed few problems. A sense of mystery was achieved by a variety of means: encounters in a public place such as a commuter train; being ordered or advised to meet a new boss; or being surprised by a new personality trait in an old friend, family member or acquaintance.

Many of the better responses concentrated on the possible anticipation and intrigue within an unusual or bizarre set of circumstances. In one original answer, a young boy spots the narrator in a cafe using a typewriter and inveigles him away from this place to his home where he shows the narrator his own creative writing – the originality here indicated by the muteness of the strange boy. In fact some of the best answers involved the stranger deepening the mystery by being unforthcoming with information needed by the intrigued narrator, as in a story where the stranger, called here the Benefactor, is met only at the end, after the narrator is led to this denouement by observing objects and symbols, such as a snowglobe, which remind him of a childhood memory and which ultimately ‘summon’ him to be interviewed by said Benefactor. Often, very good responses employed sudden changes in the situation to suggest anticipation such as the story where the narrator is kidnapped in order to be confronted by a gangster boss – one of the boss’s henchmen suggests to the hapless narrator that ‘the Boss will be here soon. Be respectful. And *don’t* ask him about his past’, thus ratcheting up the tension.

Less successful answers were dependent on the narrator taking a relatively long time to describe their ‘normal’ day, with alarms ringing, showers taken and teeth being brushed, in order to offset the tedium with a more noteworthy meeting later on, sometimes too late to keep the reader’s attention; many of these encounters take place on public transport, often in unrealistic confrontations, with stilted dialogue. Other less than convincing pieces involved the new boy or girl in class, who turns out to be merely sullen or hyperactive rather than ‘mysterious’. Having said this, some better responses were seen that involved these sorts of scenarios, but, having started with a relatively clichéd situation, the writers had to work very hard to describe convincing accounts that intrigued. A disappointing trend was the increase in tense confusions, particularly with the modal verbs ‘can/could’, ‘will/would’ and so on. Generally, stories that consistently used present tense were not penalised, but often present tense, attempted for immediacy in action or otherwise tension-inducing scenes within past tense narratives, was not used in any consistent way.

Question 2 – The art gallery

This question, requiring two contrasting descriptive pieces, was often answered with a relatively narrative format by candidates. This was not necessarily an unhelpful approach as long as enough descriptive contrast was used, since the ‘colour, sound and movement’ elements stipulated would likely involve human interaction. All the same, more credit was given to responses which generated a range of language effects primarily through describing the surroundings in these three terms.

The more engaging and imaginative responses to this question usually involved a description of the gallery owner, or an aspiring artist, setting up the exhibition in tandem with other, more menial, workers to create a colourful atmosphere that would attract customers; added interest was supplied by the possibility of these clients being persuaded to buy the paintings or sculptures displayed. Contrasts often entailed the difference between hushed silence in the preparation as against the hubbub of the crowd of onlookers; some effective answers reversed the situation – where the menials were unruly and loud and the expected crowds did not turn up, disappointingly for the owner or artist.

Many of the less convincing responses were undermined by unnecessary technical errors. Lack of paragraphs was a frequent occurrence, even when they were obviously needed for new types of descriptions or new time sequences. Some weaker answers somewhat mechanically listed the ‘colour, sound and movement’ by paragraph and then resumed a generalised or unclear description. Some others carried the narrative element too far, at the expense of any meaningful or interesting description.

Question 3 – The Ruins

A question that generated some strong writing in a few cases; however, a number of candidates seemed confused about whether this question required a descriptive or narrative response. As in the case of **Question 2**, the other ‘descriptive piece’, some (better) responses carrying narrative elements in the first half, usually to tell how the narrator and/or his friends reached the site, gave way to a more meaningful descriptive format later on, giving enough evidence of descriptive contrast to earn a high grade.

The more convincing answers conveyed a strong sense of history, often in a comparison showing the glory of the past with the sad decline of the culture or civilisation represented by the ruins. Figurative language, especially metaphor, played a large part in a lot of these effective responses. Personification, employed on a selective rather than relentless basis, also provided some vivid writing: the ‘intricate carvings of a lion’s face ... with unnerving details – mouths open with a roar frozen in stone’ for instance. The constant battle between the (human made) ruins and the encroaching and surrounding greenery encouraged a sense of contrast as in this clear image: ‘whilst this old city had been dethroned from magnificence, wilderness had rejoiced’.

Weaker responses tended to either list the components of the site in an unvarying catalogue of misfortune or spend too much time describing everything but the ruins – the sky, the trees, weather in general, birds chirping, rivers rushing – without contrasting these elements with the site itself in any meaningful way. Often, weaker answers to this question were too short, because the descriptions themselves did not reach beyond the abstract and generalised, to a more particularised description, or sometimes when there were some conditions which described ‘atmosphere’ but were much less specific about ‘place’.

Question 4 – Traditional classrooms versus online learning

Some very effective answers were seen for this question, the most popular in this section; it gave candidates the chance to discuss a topic which was obviously close to their personal experience, but also reflected across the different cultures, age groups and social classes. The question itself was open to various interpretations whereby candidates could either give a balanced argument for both sides or be a little more polemical by advocating one of the two methods mentioned – although these one-sided arguments did need to explain why the other was not suitable. For example, those who asserted that online learning had to be the way forward simply because technology was taking over our lives in other spheres of activity were not fully answering the question if they did not inform their readers why traditional classrooms were undoubtedly a thing of the past. Various degrees of formality were used to engage the reader.

Many of the best responses had a clear understanding of the article format and engaging and enjoyable answers were seen which had a strong and lively voice as well as thoughtful and interesting content. Some examples used subheadings as either witty rejoinders to possible reader reactions or, more prosaically, to indicate what was coming next. Tributes to the traditional classroom providing essential social skills as well as a secure learning environment were often seen. One answer which advocated the promotion of online learning covered these social aspects by a series of startling subheadings which included ‘make your own timetables’, ‘hideout from bullies’ and ‘goodbye to unavoidable classmates’ which contradicted the usual perceptions of the positive social atmosphere of schools.

Less successful responses tended to list the advantages and disadvantages in a somewhat mechanistic and formal way, which was not really suitable for a school magazine readership; conversely, some such responses provided overly informal approaches after having declared that this was a serious and culturally important topic in the introductory section. Generally, clichés – often about teachers always being on hand to clear up doubts, or the distractions of video games and social media – were ineffective if these comments did not lead on to more nuanced points about the consequences to the student of these situations. Advocacy of traditional classrooms in particular sometimes led to an overly moralistic and/or bombastic tone.

Question 5 – Science-fiction film reviews

This question, although not answered by many candidates, was generally tackled effectively. There were many ironically detailed responses, using between them the full range of the irony spectrum: scepticism, a sardonic attitude, mock bewilderment, derision and outright sarcasm were included. One film entitled ‘Abiogenesis’ (not a real film) was considered (in the positive review) as a much better watch than those films of its genre, typically ‘worse remake[s] of *The Hunger Games*, with the same tired love triangle, an uncontrollable population and a broken planet’. This opening comment led to a pair of contrasting reviews exploring this dilemma of the derivative plot line. Another interesting response considered the subtopic of re-boots of old film themes from the 1980s: the director, who wanted to ‘bring back soft hazy lighting, celebrity presidents and the imminent threat of nuclear war’ was praised by the critic in the positive review whereas

the critical version was entitled 'Hyperbole on hyperbole' and reflected upon a collective boredom with the overblown nature of such films. Humour was used very effectively in some answers: as well as the different kinds of irony mentioned above, in the eye-catching review of 'the Battle of the Ricktrexians' our acerbic critic points out that the director 'Rick Shaw' (pun intended, presumably) was a confirmed egotist, and wanted the main tribe of the film, the titular Ricktrexians, named after him: 'how totally expected', the reviewer observes, in a deadpan manner.

Fewer weaker answers were seen. These generally consisted of lists of opinions about how 'good' or 'bad' the director and actors were, with few further explanatory details and often in a merely oppositional way, without much nuanced 'contrast' between the two reviews. Website clichés similar to 'this film has it all' and comments such as 'don't bother with this film, it's boring' were not helpful.

Question 6 – Principal's speech

There were quite a few effective responses to this question and the vast majority kept to the requirements of the topic. A variety of interpretations were given regarding the tone of the speeches, which ranged from the 'I used to be your principal, now I'm your friend' type of informality to 'the world is a hard place, but you will be fine' paternalism. Of the three stipulations as to the content of the speech, namely 'good wishes', 'pride in the students' and 'advice ... on a new phase of life', most candidates covered all three although, generally speaking, more comments were focused on the third.

Better answers avoided cliché. Realistic features of a speech from a person of authority were adhered to. One effective response gave 'remain true to your conscience and inner moral compass' as the guideline and proceeded to logically sequence some of the reasons for this view. Another answer highlighted that this moment was 'the end of an important journey and the beginning of another one', using the occasion as a fulcrum to consider past achievements and give a reasoned pep talk about the great possibilities of the future. Other clear expositions did not shirk from detailing the possible pitfalls of this future but attempted to encourage the students to react positively, often citing the principal's own patience with the students when forgiving them for minor misdemeanours in the past. Personal stories from the speaker's troubled personal history were appropriate if candidates were able to integrate the lessons learned into their advice.

Unfortunately many of these stories were overly long, indulgent or merely used as an attempt at comedic effect; weaker candidates thereby lost focus on the advice. Other less convincing responses simply listed the disasters waiting to happen, or were overly moralistic in their tone, usually after trying to avoid this very outcome by blithely stating at the beginning that they were not intending to bore the students on this, their final day.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 9093/32
Text Analysis

Key messages

Candidates should prepare for this component by gaining a solid knowledge of linguistics which they can apply when producing a piece of Directed Writing, commenting on the style and language of that piece of writing in relation to an accompanying text, and when comparing two texts on the same subject for their different styles and use of language.

For **Question 1** part **(a)** the accompanying instructions and text provide the context and background information to guide the candidates as they produce their directed writing text. In producing their reworking of the original text candidates ought to concentrate on making carefully considered choices of appropriate lexis, register and tone to suit the task set and ensure they achieve the highest possible standards of accuracy and expression in their writing.

For **Question 1** part **(b)** candidates need to ensure they compare both the style and the language of the original text and their own, with a clear emphasis on selecting the aspects of language from both texts that may be analysed to demonstrate the specific effects that are created.

For **Question 2** candidates need to identify specific features of each text's language and style, relate these to supporting textual details to examine the specific effects produced and compare how the texts' differences in purpose, context and audience affect the creation of different meanings.

General comments

Many candidates were evidently well prepared for a component designed to test their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of linguistics, and to analyse texts in a comparative fashion. A very small proportion of the responses to **1(b)** and **2** appear to have resulted from candidates chiefly 'gleaning hints' from the information provided in the Questions' instructions rather than carefully analysing the texts themselves. It is good to note that very few candidates produced short passages of superficial commentary.

Question 1(a) is a directed writing task. Candidates need to follow its instructions carefully to produce a written response informed by the style and language of the accompanying text, in this series a transcription of a radio interview conducted by the 'Presenter' with an artist who has collected bottles of water and currently stores them in her studio. Their reworking (or recasting) of the original text should incorporate recognisable conventions of the text type identified in the question's instructions; in this series it was a review (of an exhibition of the collection) appearing in a 'what's on' guide. Careful consideration of the target audience – members of the public wishing to see or do something unusual and people with a general interest in the arts – is required. Candidates are instructed to produce responses of 120–150 words in length and were expected to write clearly, accurately, creatively and effectively for the prescribed purpose and audience.

A good working knowledge of linguistics is indispensable in responding to **Question 1(b)** where candidates are required to compare the style and language of the review produced for **1(a)** with the style and language of a transcription of the interview with Amy Sharrocks, the artist who has collected the bottles of water. Here candidates are assessed for the ability to select and analyse specific textual details, for example those concerning purpose and register, format and choices of lexis and the ability to support with close textual reference their evaluation of the language found in both texts. Recognition of the level of fluency and the range of lexical choices exhibited in the transcription and comparison of the effects produced with those in the candidate's own reworking were key discriminators in the most informed and substantive responses.

In **Question 2**, a sound knowledge of linguistics is again required as candidates are assessed for the following: comparative appreciation of the texts' forms and conventions, and awareness of their effects; an understanding of how purpose, context and audience shape meaning; and an appreciation of linguistic techniques. It is very important that candidates employ some form of comparative approach. A topical approach guarantees continuous comparison in which a concluding section can be used to emphasise the essential similarities and differences between the two texts and the relative strengths of each. It is good to see that a significant proportion of candidates adopted a topical approach – these also tended to be the candidates who demonstrated the most comprehensive linguistic knowledge.

It is again worth reminding both centres and candidates that **Question 1(a)** accounts for only one-fifth of the total marks available and that the analytical and comparative nature of the tasks for **Questions 1(b)** and **2** require adequate time for thorough assessment of the texts and the writing of detailed responses. Candidates are therefore strongly advised to complete **Questions 1** and **2** within one-hour time allocations, having begun to carefully assess all the Texts (three in total) in the initial fifteen minutes of the examination (the total length of the examination being two hours and fifteen minutes).

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) The directed writing candidates produced usually featured solid engagement with the form and style of a review, often in enthusiastic style, and usually in praise of the exhibition (although entirely suitable, negative reviews were very much the exception). Candidates also usually provided a suitable title, additional information such as the dates the exhibition will be open to the public, and a rating (most often a numerical value out of ten or so many stars out of a maximum of five). Reworking chiefly consisted of selecting and using pieces of information conveyed by Amy Sharrocks in the transcription, though some candidates also made gainful use of the information imparted by the Presenter through descriptions of the bottles that make up the collection and an explanation of the collection's purpose (chiefly from lines 14–18).

In weaker responses candidates sometimes confused 'an old kind of factory building' (line 2 of the transcription), where Amy has her studio and stores her collection, with an exhibition space in a museum where the collection would be viewed by a reviewer for the 'what's on' guide (and in turn by the public). There was usually an attempt to convey some information pertaining to the collection (especially the types of bottles and explanations of the various sources of the water they contain) and to represent the reviewer's opinion of the exhibition and whether or not it might appeal to members of the public. Casual salutations (instead of informative titles) were not sufficiently directed to the required target audience; occasionally the reviewer's name was appropriately inserted beneath the reviews produced.

Most candidates demonstrated a secure understanding of the conventions of a review, usually providing an appropriate title (often centred and either underlined or set in block capitals) and directly beneath it presenting the body of the review in crisp sentences and at least one fully formed paragraph. Most candidates judiciously selected information from the transcription to indicate both the size of the collection (Amy relates that it consists of at least 'seven hundred and eight' bottles), the wide variety of bottle types and the nature of the explanations explaining where the water came from and, more importantly, the experiences and memories associated with them. Most candidates also conveyed clearly expressed opinions, usually focused on one or two of the examples of bottles and their contents contained in the interview (lines 20–29) and concluded with a recommendation – or a note of caution – securely directed to tourists or members of the general public.

In stronger responses candidates also provided purposeful and succinct titles (including punning ones such as 'Bottled Memories') and concise opening statements that described the exhibition's appearance and Amy's purpose (often inferring that she believes that water ought not to be taken for granted) through low frequency language intended to appeal directly to more artistically minded patrons. Candidates often advised that visitors should keep an open mind and pay careful attention to the handwritten explanations accompanying each bottle in order to fully appreciate the artist's message (sometimes thoughtfully recast to convey a more overtly environmentally-friendly ethos than was expressed in the interview). There was usually some careful selection of details from the interview concerning examples of the more unusual bottles and associated stories making up the exhibition; these were often presented in support of nuanced opinions offered in a consistently

judicious tone. Candidates usually utilised rhetorical devices in calculated attempts to persuade readers to accept the reviewer's judgments as those of an expert in the visual arts.

Most of the candidates abided by the guidelines concerning the length of their responses (120–150 words) although a few wrote considerably longer pieces that did not consistently correspond with the form and purpose specified.

- (b) This question challenged candidates who did not attempt to analyse style and language or to directly compare different approaches and features in the two texts available to them, the transcription of a radio interview with the artist Amy Sharrocks about her collection of bottles of water and the review of the exhibition appearing in a 'what's on' guide produced for **1(a)**. Only a few candidates did not apply a suitable methodology to analyse the transcription. Overall it was apparent that most candidates had been adequately prepared to analyse a transcription of a transactional conversation in the form of an interview (with the Presenter directly soliciting information about the collection from the artist).

Some candidates did not adopt an integrated approach and sought to deal with each text separately. Textual references were often made without drawing conclusions concerning their functions and lexical properties. Such approaches usually yielded thin and perfunctory responses.

Integrated approaches were almost invariably used to good effect when candidates clearly identified the impact of lexical choice exercised by the speakers in the transcription and then examined their own carefully chosen vocabulary in the review in a comparative fashion. By so doing such responses achieved an equal, or very nearly so, comparative emphasis of 50:50 or 60:40 on the transcription and the review.

In weak responses candidates exerted a lot of effort to merely list the elements of spontaneous speech they found in the transcription with little attention paid to their own reviews. Some candidates reiterated at length what they know about Grice's maxims with little supporting examination of pertinent aspects of the texts for comparison. There was some focus on distinctions in purpose (informative and persuasive), audience (usually perceived to be broad only) and register (semi-formal and usually formal) between the transcription of the radio interview and the review respectively, with some identification of high and low frequency lexis in each text as appropriate. Limited comparative analysis was attempted however.

The majority of candidates demonstrated at least adequate knowledge and understanding of some of the conventions of an interview, especially the question-answer format and turn-taking in adjacency pairs without overlaps, each of which suggests a high degree of cooperation between the speakers. It was often noticed that the Presenter employed stresses to empathise visual features of the collection for the benefit of the audience listening to the exchange over the radio ('the place is filled with bottles of water', 'ornate glass (.) cheap plastic'). Non-fluency features such as pauses (a few noted the significant pause the artist perhaps employs for dramatic effect before she provides the rationale for collecting bottles of water: '(3) it just seemed to me when I started noticing water how much it was taken for granted') and reformulations ('the packed up (.) wrapped up') were usually identified and commented on. They could usually reflect on how the Presenter controlled the conversation even though Amy held the conversational floor with the length of her concluding response (lines 19–32). Candidates usually recognised how a review could be drafted, edited and polished prior to publication as it would need to be both concise and evocative, being one entry among many others in the 'what's on' guide.

In stronger responses candidates made use of their linguistic knowledge to structure their response, for example by proceeding from word- to sentence-/utterance- to whole text-level in their examination of the texts. They correctly identified pertinent elements of style, quoted concisely, and evaluated the effects produced. There was usually some consideration of the Presenter's initial descriptions of Amy's studio to set the scene for the listening audience with purposeful use of adjectives ('cramped little') and listing – 'boxes (.) display cabinets and (.) crates with bottles (.) jars' – to dramatically convey the strong impact of seeing Amy's studio for the first time, and perhaps the deliberate use of anaphora – 'each one comes with a story (.) and each one comes with a card' – to signal the importance of the written information accompanying each bottle of water. It was noted that Amy introduces herself, rather than being introduced by the Presenter, as she needed to move through her studio to better facilitate the interview: 'im right down the back here (4) my name is amy sharrocks'. It was usually recognised that both speakers imparted a large amount of information in an efficient and cooperative manner, some of it initially solicited by simple questions posed by the

Presenter ('what is this place', 'what is this', 'how many bottles have you got') with the most significant ideas conveyed by Amy in a response to the Presenter's characterisation of the collection as 'amys travelling museum'. Amy was assessed to be a most enthusiastic ('the most amazing'), knowledgeable ('she was born in water') and evocative speaker ('orienteed solo (.) in the wind and rain', 'breaking the ice on this lake and jumping in for a freezing cold swim') who uses stressing to good effect as well as consonance ('a memory of the magic moment to put in the museum'). There was usually consideration of figurative language in the transcription employed by both speakers (e.g. 'lets see if we can struggle past', 'it [the collection] lives here in my studio') as well as some of the few instances of low frequency lexis ('dutch collection', 'medical sample') that would be readily understood by the listening audience owing to the interview's context.

Question 2

As was the case for **1(b)**, candidates who did not attempt in responding to **Question 2** to analyse Text A and Text B's language and style in a comparative fashion demonstrated only limited appreciation of the techniques employed and awareness of the effects created.

In weaker responses candidates often dealt too much with the content of both Texts and with listing the techniques they could identify. In such responses there was exhibited some recognition of the use of form and language to inform the readers of each Text and to convey subject-specific concepts. Candidates who eschewed a comparative approach also struggled to identify and clearly explain the differences in purpose and audience between the two Texts and the significance of the differences in their forms and the ways conventions were employed.

Most candidates demonstrated a sure grasp of the purpose, audience and context of Text A, a brief biography of DJ Pearl that appears on a music website, and of Text B, an interview with DJ Pearl published in an online women's magazine. Candidates usually established how the audience for Text A is narrower than Text B's (although a few candidates plausibly argued that the online women's magazine containing Text B might be subscription-only, thus restricting the size of its readership). They could identify the decidedly positive tone of Text A is directly related to the purpose of impressing readers with Pearl's many accomplishments through the use of superlatives ('India's number one female DJ', 'India's best', 'indefatigable clubber', 'pioneered the cause of electronic dance music', 'one of the co-founders of "Submerge" ... India's premier electronic music party') in contrast to Pearl's own use of hyperbole to describe her professional enthusiasm ('exhilarating, pure joy' in relation to the interaction of music and audience and the 'endless hours searching' for tracks to 'fall in love with') in Text B. It was usually appreciated that both Texts consist of a rich mixture of simple, compound and complex sentence types. The minor sentence appearing in Text A – 'Well not any more.' – briefly introduces a lower register to appeal so as to young music fans, and was often compared to some of Pearl's more informal constructions in Text B: 'a bunch of careers', 'whatever they are up for'. The frequent use of subject-specific jargon in Text A ('house music', 'vinyl', 'dance floor', 'clubbing') and in Text B ('House, Techno, Progressive, Trance') was deemed appropriate to the shared subject and a context necessitating a clear appeal to an established audience and the creation of a new one, respectively. Candidates readily recognised that Text B is an edited version of an original interview in which adjacency pairs were formed through the question and answer format (with the questions likely scripted by the interviewer in advance) and the two ellipses indicative of Pearl's pausing and hence the slight non-fluency of her speech on that occasion.

In the strongest responses candidates explored the Texts' structures and analysed language more efficiently and accurately, selecting an aspect to compare and contrast in each paragraph and demonstrating a consistent appreciation for language features. Often they confidently discussed the many factual aspects of Text A – the many proper nouns for people and locations that feature in Pearl's career to date – and the fixed expressions that are a common feature of celebrity biographies: 'having grown up surrounded by', 'major influence', 'from the time', 'year after year'. Alliteration was employed at times to suggest the attractiveness of some of the locations in which Pearl has performed: 'biggest beach', 'sunset sessions'. In Text B Pearl's use of the idiomatic phrases 'stay at the top of your game' and 'immense crests and troughs in this profession' was deemed to achieve the purpose of connecting directly with an audience possibly unfamiliar with the challenges she has faced and her specific accomplishments, while her use of conjunctions to start some sentences ('So I joined...', 'But they really are...') indicate a desire to convey a friendly and honest persona to a primarily female readership. Listing was identified in both Texts (the concluding 'funky, unique and progressive' in Text A; 'the world of clubbing, obscure record stores and DJ sets' in Text B) and respectively interpreted to make an endorsement for Pearl and to provide clarifications about her. Occasionally an instance of personification in Text A – 'let her vinyl speak for itself' – was compared with Pearl's use of metaphor in Text B – when she examines her purpose in playing 'different

styles of music ... to tell a story' – in order to explore how Pearl's conception of music as a conduit between herself and her audience is the true hallmark of her artistry as a DJ.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 9093/42
Language Topics

Key messages

Paper 4 of syllabus 9093 is an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of how the English language operates in different ways, by responding to two of three questions. **Questions 1 and 3** require an analysis of the transcription presented, including fully developed discussion of linguistic points which candidates consider pertinent, and with reference to appropriate theoretical models. **Question 2**, on the other hand, requires candidates to produce a discursive essay on the overall topic of English as a global language, with specific reference to the text provided. Thus, candidates have the option to show the examiner their strengths by selecting their preferred two of the three questions in the paper.

General comments

In the March 2018 series, candidates generally produced extended, well-paragraphed essays which were fluent in their progression from selecting to developing points. There was some evidence, however, of candidates responding to all three questions, which is an infringement of rubric. It should be borne in mind that this is neither required nor advised and, if candidates do produce a superfluous third essay, they are unlikely to have sufficient time left to produce two well-constructed and thorough responses.

It was also evident that most candidates understood the value of creating a plan prior to beginning their essay. It should be borne in mind, however, that plans should not become too elaborate at the expense of time better spent on writing.

Overall this year candidates demonstrated use of a good level of technical terminology although in some cases there was evidence of feature-spotting accompanied by a generalised comment. Thus, such responses did not provide the level of technical analysis that would be awarded marks in the higher bands. Most candidates were able to include reference to theoretical models. To move towards the higher bands, candidates should ensure that such references are entirely appropriate to the points made and are applied in a thorough manner. Merely mentioning the name of a theorist without specifying the relevance of her or his work to the context provided is of little value to the response as a whole.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Candidates engaged well with the transcription and most explored the way in which the relationship between Obama and Grylls grew as the text progressed. There was much discussion on genderlect: candidates who were awarded marks in the higher bands were selective in their applications of theory and saw how Beattie, Fishman, Giles or Shuttleworth were appropriate sources. Candidates who were awarded marks in the lower to middle bands referred only to Cameron or Lakoff, usually saying that the two interlocutors did not fit these models. It is important for candidates to maintain focus on the content of the transcription rather than to anticipate what they feel should be present, and thereby to avoid a deficit approach in the response.

Misplaced anticipation of this kind was also evident in some candidates' descriptions of a high level of formality between the interlocutors, even though this was not in fact present. By contrast, candidates who discussed the initial support and politeness (applying Lakoff's politeness model) which led to Obama's humility and the resulting topic shift were often awarded marks in the higher bands. At this point in the transcription there was a marked change in status, a development of shared humour, and a further reduction in the level of formality. The nuances of these changes were discussed by confident candidates, many of whom analysed the juxtaposition of Grylls' field-specific jargon and his Americanised *yeah* as well as ascribing Obama's lengthier unvoiced pause and paralinguistic behaviour to an allowance for camera action. This latter point was particularly salient where, instead of an intrusive voiceover, the audience was allowed to be shown, rather than told, the ways in which the interlocutors used language to communicate and how it was affected by the context.

Question 2

The passage was engaging and most candidates demonstrated understanding of how technology is affecting English as a global language. In many responses, candidates used rhetorical questions in order to develop a stylistic response. This is not a requirement in a discursive essay and, where this style is adopted, candidates must ensure that their own questions are answered with full development.

Candidates achieving marks in the lower bands often provided a chronological paraphrase of the passage without offering ideas of their own or any examples from their wider study. Candidates whose marks moved towards the higher bands generally included appropriate reference to Kachru, Crystal, Diamond or Milroy, maintaining focus on details from the passage. Often, candidates also provided reference to their own personal experience: where this is used, direct focus must be maintained. Similarly, when providing historical reference to the growth of the English language, this should be brief and focused. Candidates should also be strongly reminded that a stylistic analysis of the passage is not required: this question is an opportunity to analyse and develop ideas on issues which are raised in the passage.

Candidates whose responses moved towards the higher bands demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the ways in which the English language emerged and grew through spread and, from a prescriptivist perspective, is declining through its distribution; they often also made reference to contemporary ideas on the issues of language and technology, bidialectism, language in business and education, and why English might be *an inspirational language*. Where candidates discussed these issues in a fluent, balanced and articulate manner, higher marks were awarded.

Question 3

In many cases, candidates relied on discussion of Ellie's utterances rather than on the ways Ellie and her father were using language in the transcription. Most candidates correctly identified the post-telegraphic stage of acquisition in the child, while the theories of Piaget, Aitchison or Crystal were often appropriately applied in developed responses. Some confident discussion of Hallidayan functions were presented and overall it was clear that candidates had engaged well with the transcription.

Often, a deficit approach with some misreading was evident, with candidates stating that Ellie was mistaken in her use of the modal verb *can*, seeing it as impolite and seeking to replace it with *may*. Here, the child was using modality in an appropriately fluent and informal way in her talk with her father, evidencing her linguistic competence. This was understood by more confident candidates who also explored the father's role as linguistic caretaker, including the ways in which he scaffolded the progression of the child (*show me on your hand*) though at times his utterances were childlike in themselves (*get bit by bugs* and *theres lots of bugs*), as well as the reasons behind this. Here was an opportunity to introduce knowledge of theory by Chomsky and Vygotsky, and this was grasped by some.

Candidates should be aware that any theory mentioned must be applied to developed argument and not merely described to the examiner with little reference to the transcription. Candidates should also be aware that responses gaining marks in the higher bands will use accurate and detailed technical terminology. In the transcription provided there was evidence of the child's competence in using deixis, preposition, tense, understanding of object permanence and premodification, all of which some candidates successfully analysed.