

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/11  
Reading Passage (Core)

## Key messages

- Candidates should be **familiar with key words and phrases of Question Paper vocabulary** to ensure that they focus their answers clearly.
- Some questions require explanation of **explicit** meanings and it is important to respond to these precisely. Candidates should also be aware of the need to **read for inference** (especially in order to show understanding of figurative language such as imagery and the connotations implicit in the writer's choice of words). If possible, candidates should be prepared to **look at the language of a passage as a whole** and to consider the context in which individual words are used.
- **The summary question 1(i) carries 7 marks and is an important factor in the final grade achieved.** Candidates are advised to practise this task carefully in preparation for the examination and to acquire a sound summary-writing technique.
- **Question 2** tests both Reading and Writing Objectives and thus the content of a **response must be closely grounded in the stimulus passage.** The skills of imaginative and creative writing are tested in Paper 3 or Component 4.

## General comments

Overall, the reading material in this paper was accessible to candidates and they engaged well with it. The most successful responses showed a clear appreciation of the requirements of the questions and a secure understanding of the passage on which they were based. Candidates responded well to **Question 2** and there were many lively attempts to create an authentic sense of a conversation between an older and a younger sibling. It was important that the focus remained on the precise nature of the task and that a piece of writing showing understanding of the reading passage rather than creative writing was produced. It is important that Centres emphasise to candidates that it is necessary to observe the conventions of this type of writing when responding to similar tasks in future examinations in order to achieve higher mark ranges.

The writing and presentation on the majority of scripts were of an acceptable standard. Responses should be written legibly and it is advisable that all questions are attempted.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

- (a) Most candidates responded well to this question with many achieving the full two marks available. This was frequently done through quoting the two words 'grand' and 'old' to describe the house in which Kralefsky lived (the word 'large' was not acceptable as an answer as it was used in the wording of the question). Many responses also referred to the fact that the house had a 'wide staircase' although fewer mentioned that it was 'mildewed' or of, at least, two storeys in height. The word 'square' was only accepted as correct if it was made clear that it applied to the shape of the house – answers which stated that the house was situated in a square were not rewarded. Clear understanding that there was a knocker on the front door was rewarded but statements such as the knocker had a 'tattoo' on it were not accepted as it was clear that the passage had been misunderstood. Similarly, references to the steps leading to the house being covered with a 'wine-

red carpet' and the house being 'on the outskirts of the town' were not acceptable as these did not describe the appearance of the house itself.

- (b) This two-mark question also was answered correctly by many candidates although a significant number identified only one correct point. Generally, the fact that the writer was 'glowering' to himself was clearly understood; however, fewer responses mentioned that he was also digging his heel into the carpet and a much smaller number appreciated that his discontent was also shown by the fact that he 'rapped a sharp tattoo on the knocker'.
- (c) The key phrase to quote in response to this one-mark question was 'primness with humour'. Significantly more responses quoted the complete sentence which contained these words. Candidates need to be advised that close selection is required to demonstrate that the phrase has been understood. In these cases, no mark was awarded unless the appropriate phrase was underlined. About an equal number of responses quoted the phrase 'smile of welcome' which, although indicative of good-nature, did not relate to the character being correct in his behaviour as stated in the question and was, therefore, incorrect.
- (d) It is important for candidates to bear in mind that this, and similar 6-mark language questions in future papers, are intended to test the understanding of the Reading Assessment Objective R4 concerned with how writers achieve effects and for this reason it is essential here to explain how the writer's use of language (e.g. that Kralefsky was a '*gnome*' wearing an 'antiquated but very elegant suit') conveys his strange appearance. A large number of candidates gained 3 marks for correctly identifying three appropriate phrases; a small number achieved more than one of the further three marks for showing appreciation of the effects of the language used. In the comparison quoted above, for example, a mention that gnomes are associated with being small, non-human and, perhaps, hard-working, would definitely have gained the additional mark. Simply explaining what was meant by the phrase (often by just stating that Kralefsky 'looked like a gnome' or by picking another appropriate phrase from the passage such as 'not a human being at all') was insufficient for reward.
- (e) The most successful responses to this two-mark question appreciated the fact that Gerry found the idea that his teacher should become friends with him amusing but that out of politeness he tried to control his reaction and stop himself from laughing; less successful responses identified either the humour or his attempt not to laugh but not both and seldom mentioned his politeness. The least successful interpreted the statement to imply that Gerry was scared of Kralefsky or suspicious as to the nature of his offer and, therefore, gave evidence that this section of the passage had not been understood.
- (f) Many responses demonstrated a good understanding about Kralefsky showing Gerry his birds in order that they could bond/become friends/share a joint interest in natural history; there was an equally good understanding that he took him to see the birds as he was late in giving them water that day. It could be suggested that candidates assumed that 'bonding' and sharing an interest in natural history were discrete points rather than being two aspects of the same one. It is also worth noting that many candidates were apparently unfamiliar with the term 'natural history' and assumed that the pair's shared interest was something to do with battles and other events in the past.
- (g) Responses which appreciated that the key word in this question was 'contrast' were the most successful; without recognising the focus of the question they could consequently gain only one of the two available marks. Many showed an understanding that the presence of light and bird song in the attic gave it qualities traditionally associated with heaven or paradise. The second mark was gained when responses went one stage further to make the point that this impression was emphasised by the comparison with the *grubby* corridor by which the attic was accessed.
- (h) Unlike 1(d), the other 6-mark language question, this required an explanation of the writer's vocabulary and not an appreciation of its effects. It is important to note that in all the quoted phrases there are two words (one mark for each) that require explanation. For example, a correct response to 'exclaimed rapturously' would be 'cried out in excitement'; an appropriate definition of 'volunteered modestly' would be 'stated humbly' and for 'danced nimbly' a definition such as 'moved in an agile manner' would gain both marks. Many responses focused on *why* or *how* the characters performed their actions (for example, 'he danced as if he were happy' rather than explaining the precise meaning of the words).

- (i) There were mixed responses to the summary question; some responses were tightly focused on the exact requirements of the task and the relevant section of the passage so that they identified at least seven relevant details about the attic of Kralfesky's apartment and gained all the 7 marks available for the question. Less successful responses gave irrelevant detail about the apartment as a whole and/or included imaginative details not mentioned in the passage and consisted of personal responses written as if they were Gerry, rather than extracting details that were directly relevant to the terms of the question. It should be emphasised that this question carries the highest single mark of all of the sub-questions in **Question 1** and it is, therefore, vital that future candidates practise preparing for it by acquiring a suitable technique. The points noted in the mark scheme that could be made in answer to this task are as follow:

- 1 Creaking staircase (to the top of the house).
- 2 Green door.
- 3 Heavy door.
- 4 Bright/sunny room.
- 5 Grubby corridor.
- 6 Huge attic (taking up whole of the top floor).
- 7 Floor was uncarpeted.
- 8 Large table (only furniture in attic)/sparsely furnished.
- 9 Full of caged birds.
- 10 Floor covered in birdseed.

## Question 2

The most successful responses were focused tightly on the passage and on the specific requirements of the question. They skilfully adapted the writer's description of Kralfesky (in particular the comparison with a gnome and the suggestion that he was not really human) to create a humorous and sympathetic account of Gerry's initial impression of the character which also showed that the writer's intentions had been securely understood. Such responses also recreated convincingly the joyful amazement felt by the writer at the surprise of seeing the number of birds in the attic and continued to reveal sound understanding of the passage by stating that there was obviously more to the new teacher than appeared on first sight and that future lessons were likely to be both interesting and enjoyable as a result of the shared interest in aviculture. The most successful responses also were written in a tone that was fully appropriate to an account of a conversation between two brothers and demonstrated control of English prose. They thoughtfully used the brother's questions to develop and illuminate the narrator's comments. A scripted dialogue or a narrative account containing direct speech were both equally acceptable and each was marked on the appropriateness of the tone used and the accuracy of the written expression.

Less successful responses tended to be over-reliant on lifting from the passage which resulted in there being insufficient focus on the requirement to give *impressions* of Kralfesky and contained only limited suggestions as to how future lessons might develop. These suggestions needed to be convincing to show a clear understanding of the passage. The least successful responses showed very little understanding of the passage as a whole and, in particular, relied on an over-literal understanding of some points such as Kralfesky being either an actual gnome or an alien from outer space.

A further feature of responses that were less than fully successful was an attempt to create a convincing sibling conversation without retaining a focus on the content of the question (Gerry's lesson with his teacher). Such responses over-used teenage colloquialisms ('gonna', 'dunno', 'bro', for example) and frequently contained irrelevant, circumstantial details about the imagined family life of the brothers.

Written expression was generally of a satisfactory to good standard and there were very few scripts in which the expression was so limited that meaning was not conveyed. The most successful showed extremely well controlled use of language with a wide range of descriptive vocabulary to develop appropriate tone and register. The less successful contained a range of basic language errors, in particular, lack of sentence control shown through comma splicing, misuse or omission of apostrophes, incorrect capitalisation, omission of direct speech punctuation and uncertain use of the perfect tense.

In conclusion, by far the majority of candidates approached the examination seriously. The most important message to pass on to those taking this paper in future is the necessity to read each question carefully and to ensure that responses are clearly focused on the precise requirements of each task.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/12  
Reading Passage (Core)

## Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for reading (40 marks) although there were 10 marks available for writing in **Question 2**.

- Candidates should be **familiar with key words and phrases of Question Paper vocabulary** to ensure that they focus their answers clearly.
- Some questions require explanation of **explicit** meanings and it is important to respond to these precisely. Candidates should also be aware of the need to **read for inference** (especially in order to show understanding of figurative language such as imagery and the connotations implicit in the writer's choice of words). If possible, candidates should be prepared to **look at the language of a passage as a whole** and to consider the context in which individual words are used.
- **The summary question 1(h) carries 7 marks and is an important factor in the final grade achieved.** Candidates are advised to practise this task carefully in preparation for the examination and to acquire a sound summary-writing technique.
- **Question 2** tests both Reading and Writing Objectives and thus the content of a **response must be closely grounded in the stimulus passage**. The skills of imaginative and creative writing are tested in Paper 3 or Component 4.

## General comments

Overall, the reading material in this paper was accessible to candidates and they engaged well with it. The most successful responses showed a clear appreciation of the requirements of the questions and a secure understanding of the passage on which they were based. Candidates responded well to **Question 2** and there were many lively attempts to create an authentic sense of the relationship between mother and son. It was important that this did not lead to a loss of focus on the precise nature of the task and that a piece of writing showing understanding of the reading passage rather than creative writing was produced. It is important that Centres emphasise to candidates that it is necessary to observe the conventions of this type of writing when responding to similar tasks in future examinations in order to achieve higher mark ranges.

The writing and presentation on the majority of scripts were of an acceptable standard. Responses should be written legibly.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

- (a) Most candidates responded well to this question with many achieving at least two of the full three marks available. Many candidates identified that the consul's flat was in an area where there was a 'maze of alleyways' or that it was in the 'old quarter'. Responses that said only that it was in the centre of town were not rewarded as this was not specific enough. Many candidates also identified that it was the 'top flat' in a 'rickety building' or that it 'leaned over/overlooked a tiny square'. Again, it was not enough just to put that the flat was in a tall building. These points could be achieved by quoting the appropriate phrase from the text, although some candidates missed a mark by not quoting enough of a particular phrase. A significant number of candidates, for example, put that the flat was in 'a maze of narrow' which was not awarded a mark.

- (b) This language question had six marks available; three marks for the choice of three phrases and three marks for an explanation of how they convey a sense of the atmosphere of the area. In general, this question proved challenging. It is important for candidates to bear in mind that this, and similar questions in future papers, are intended to test the understanding of the Reading Assessment Objective R4 concerned with how writers achieve effects and for this reason it is essential here to explain how the writer's use of language communicates to the reader the sense of the area being 'rich and colourful'. It is also important to emphasise that candidates need to do more than explain what the chosen phrase means; the key is to identify how it conveys the writer's intended effect. Many candidates gained 3 marks for correctly identifying three appropriate phrases; a small number achieved more than one of the further three marks for showing appreciation of the effects of the language used.
- (c) The two key points to identify in this two-mark question were that the consul gave Gerald a French dictionary and that Gerald was asked to read from it. It was not sufficient just to say that he was given a dictionary. The question asks for candidates to answer in their own words and it is important that candidates made an effort not to simply repeat phrases from the passage.
- (d) The essential feature of this question is that it requires a one word answer. Many candidates correctly chose the word 'amicably' to indicate that the consul was friendly.
- (e) (i) Candidates found this two-mark question quite challenging; the most successful responses to this two-mark question gave an explanation of the consul's reaction by saying that he drew himself up straight ('stiffened' in the passage) and that he made an unclear expression ('suppressed') or expressed excitement ('exclamation'). This is another question in which it is essential for candidates to use their own words to paraphrase rather than to repeat phrases from the passage.
- (ii) Many candidates correctly identified that Gerald's thoughts immediately after the consul's reaction were: thinking the consul was angry because of Gerald's accent and then realising that was not the case. The key to this question was in the word 'immediately'. Candidates who did not get the full marks on this question tended to get the first point, but then to identify thoughts Gerald had later in the passage.
- (f) To gain the one mark available for this question candidates needed to identify that Gerald's initial thought when the consul fired his gun was either: the consul had committed a murder or that he was engaged in a feud with a neighbour.
- (g) Unlike 1(b), the other six-mark language question, this required an explanation of the writer's vocabulary and not an appreciation of its effects. It is important to note that in all the quoted phrases there are two words (one mark for each) that require explanation. For example, a correct response to 'frantic haste' would be 'desperate hurry'; an appropriate definition of 'incessant fusillade' would be 'continuous volley/firing of shots' and for 'humane service' a definition such as 'action for the good of others' would gain both marks. Many responses focused on *why* or *how* the characters performed their actions; only a very few candidates were able correctly to explain 'incessant fusillade'.
- (h) There were mixed responses to the summary question; some responses were tightly focused on the exact requirements of the task and the relevant section of the passage so that they identified at least seven relevant details about the what Gerald observed about the Belgian consul and gained all the 7 marks available for the question. Less successful responses gave irrelevant detail about the apartment and the area in which it was located or focused only on the matter of the cats and his reasons for shooting them. It should be emphasised that this question carries the highest single mark of all of the sub-questions in **Question 1** and it is, therefore, vital that future candidates practise preparing for it by acquiring a suitable technique. The points noted in the mark scheme that could be made in answer to this question are as follow:

Gerald's thoughts and feelings about the Belgian consul:

- 1 Gerald thought the consul was sweet/welcoming/friendly.
- 2 He noticed his moustache and beard/that he had a striking appearance.
- 3 Thought the consul was conceited.
- 4 Thought the consul was shocked by his French accent.
- 5 Was afraid that the consul was going to shoot him.

- 6 The consul was committing a murder.
- 7 The consul was involved in a feud.
- 8 Surprise at seeing tears in the consul's eyes.
- 9 Realised that the consul had a sensitive nature.
- 10 The consul's actions were humane/those of an animal or cat lover.

## Question 2

The most successful responses were focused tightly on the passage and on the specific requirements of the question. They gave a lively account of the area in which the flat was located and skilfully adapted the writer's description of the Belgian consul to create a humorous and sympathetic account of Gerald's initial impression of the character and how it developed, which also showed that the writer's intentions had been securely understood. Such responses also recreated convincingly the amazement felt by the narrator at seeing the consul reach for his rifle and of Gerald's mother's natural concern at hearing about her son's experience. These candidates often showed sound understanding of the passage by stating that there was obviously more to the new teacher than appeared on first sight and that future lessons were likely to be both interesting and enjoyable. The most successful responses also were written in a tone that was fully appropriate to an account of a conversation between mother and son and demonstrated control of English prose. A scripted dialogue or a narrative account containing direct speech were both equally acceptable and each was marked on the appropriateness of the tone used and the accuracy of the written expression.

Less successful responses tended to be over-reliant on lifting from the passage which resulted in there being insufficient focus on the requirement to give *impressions* of the Belgian consul and contained only a limited sense of Gerald's experience and of his opinion of the consul and of his mother's response to Gerald's explanation of his behaviour. These needed to be convincing to show a clear understanding of the passage. The least successful responses showed little understanding of the passage as a whole and, in particular, relied on an overly factual explanation of the events. A further feature of responses that were less than fully successful was an attempt to create a convincing conversation between mother and son without retaining a focus on the content of the question.

Written expression was generally of a satisfactory to good standard and there were very few scripts in which the expression was so limited that meaning was not conveyed. The most successful showed extremely well controlled use of language with a wide range of descriptive vocabulary to develop appropriate tone and register. The less successful contained a range of basic language errors, in particular, lack of sentence control shown through comma splicing, misuse or omission of apostrophes, incorrect capitalisation, omission of direct speech punctuation and uncertain use of the perfect tense.

In conclusion, by far the majority of candidates approached the examination seriously. The most important message to pass on to those taking this paper in future is the necessity to read each question carefully and to ensure that responses are clearly focused on the precise requirements of each task.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/13  
Reading Passage (Core)

## Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for reading (40 marks) although there were 10 marks available for writing in **Question 2**.

- Candidates should be **familiar with key words and phrases of Question Paper vocabulary** to ensure that they focus their answers clearly.
- Some questions require explanation of **explicit** meanings and it is important to respond to these precisely. Candidates should also be aware of the need to **read for inference** (especially in order to show understanding of figurative language such as imagery and the connotations implicit in the writer's choice of words). If possible, candidates should be prepared to **look at the language of a passage as a whole** and to consider the context in which individual words are used.
- **The summary question 1(h) carries 7 marks and is an important factor in the final grade achieved.** Candidates are advised to practise this task carefully in preparation for the examination and to acquire a sound summary-writing technique.
- **Question 2** tests both Reading and Writing Objectives and thus the content of a **response must be closely grounded in the stimulus passage**. The skills of imaginative and creative writing are tested in Paper 3 or Component 4.

## General comments

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The writing and presentation on the majority of scripts were of an acceptable standard. Responses should be written legibly.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

- (a) Most candidates responded well to this question with many achieving at least two of the full three marks available. Many candidates identified that the consul's flat was in an area where there was a 'maze of alleyways' or that it was in the 'old quarter'. Responses that said only that it was in the centre of town were not rewarded as this was not specific enough. Many candidates also identified that it was the 'top flat' in a 'rickety building' or that it 'leaned over/overlooked a tiny square'. Again, it was not enough just to put that the flat was in a tall building. These points could be achieved by quoting the appropriate phrase from the text, although some candidates missed a mark by not quoting enough of a particular phrase. A significant number of candidates, for example, put that the flat was in 'a maze of narrow' which was not awarded a mark.

- (b) This language question had six marks available; three marks for the choice of three phrases and three marks for an explanation of how they convey a sense of the atmosphere of the area. In general, this question proved challenging. It is important for candidates to bear in mind that this, and similar questions in future papers, are intended to test the understanding of the Reading Assessment Objective R4 concerned with how writers achieve effects and for this reason it is essential here to explain how the writer's use of language communicates to the reader the sense of the area being 'rich and colourful'. It is also important to emphasise that candidates need to do more than explain what the chosen phrase means; the key is to identify how it conveys the writer's intended effect. Many candidates gained 3 marks for correctly identifying three appropriate phrases; a small number achieved more than one of the further three marks for showing appreciation of the effects of the language used.
- (c) The two key points to identify in this two-mark question were that the consul gave Gerald a French dictionary and that Gerald was asked to read from it. It was not sufficient just to say that he was given a dictionary. The question asks for candidates to answer in their own words and it is important that candidates made an effort not to simply repeat phrases from the passage.
- (d) The essential feature of this question is that it requires a one word answer. Many candidates correctly chose the word 'amicably' to indicate that the consul was friendly.
- (e) (i) Candidates found this two-mark question quite challenging; the most successful responses to this two-mark question gave an explanation of the consul's reaction by saying that he drew himself up straight ('stiffened' in the passage) and that he made an unclear expression ('suppressed') or expressed excitement ('exclamation'). This is another question in which it is essential for candidates to use their own words to paraphrase rather than to repeat phrases from the passage.
- (ii) Many candidates correctly identified that Gerald's thoughts immediately after the consul's reaction were: thinking the consul was angry because of Gerald's accent and then realising that was not the case. The key to this question was in the word 'immediately'. Candidates who did not get the full marks on this question tended to get the first point, but then to identify thoughts Gerald had later in the passage.
- (f) To gain the one mark available for this question candidates needed to identify that Gerald's initial thought when the consul fired his gun was either: the consul had committed a murder or that he was engaged in a feud with a neighbour.
- (g) Unlike 1(b), the other six-mark language question, this required an explanation of the writer's vocabulary and not an appreciation of its effects. It is important to note that in all the quoted phrases there are two words (one mark for each) that require explanation. For example, a correct response to 'frantic haste' would be 'desperate hurry'; an appropriate definition of 'incessant fusillade' would be 'continuous volley/firing of shots' and for 'humane service' a definition such as 'action for the good of others' would gain both marks. Many responses focused on *why* or *how* the characters performed their actions; only a very few candidates were able correctly to explain 'incessant fusillade'.
- (h) There were mixed responses to the summary question; some responses were tightly focused on the exact requirements of the task and the relevant section of the passage so that they identified at least seven relevant details about the what Gerald observed about the Belgian consul and gained all the 7 marks available for the question. Less successful responses gave irrelevant detail about the apartment and the area in which it was located or focused only on the matter of the cats and his reasons for shooting them. It should be emphasised that this question carries the highest single mark of all of the sub-questions in **Question 1** and it is, therefore, vital that future candidates practise preparing for it by acquiring a suitable technique. The points noted in the mark scheme that could be made in answer to this question are as follow:

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- 6 The consul was committing a murder.
- 7 The consul was involved in a feud.
- 8 Surprise at seeing tears in the consul's eyes.
- 9 Realised that the consul had a sensitive nature.
- 10 The consul's actions were humane/those of an animal or cat lover.

## Question 2

The most successful responses were focused tightly on the passage and on the specific requirements of the question. They gave a lively account of the area in which the flat was located and effectively adapted the writer's description of the Belgian consul to create a humorous and sympathetic account of Gerald's initial impression of the character and how it developed, which also showed that the writer's intentions had been securely understood. Such responses also recreated convincingly the amazement felt by the narrator at seeing the consul reach for his rifle and of Gerald's mother's natural concern at hearing about her son's experience. These candidates often showed sound understanding of the passage by stating that there was obviously more to the new teacher than appeared on first sight and that future lessons were likely to be both interesting and enjoyable. The most successful responses also were written in a tone that was fully appropriate to an account of a conversation between mother and son and demonstrated control of English prose. A scripted dialogue or a narrative account containing direct speech were both equally acceptable and each was marked on the appropriateness of the tone used and the accuracy of the written expression.

Less successful responses tended to be over-reliant on lifting from the passage which resulted in there being insufficient focus on the requirement to give *impressions* of the Belgian consul and contained only a limited sense of Gerald's experience and of his opinion of the consul and of his mother's response to Gerald's explanation of his behaviour. These needed to be convincing to show a clear understanding of the passage. The least successful responses showed little understanding of the passage as a whole and, in particular, relied on an overly factual explanation of the events. A further feature of responses that were less than fully successful was an attempt to create a convincing conversation between mother and son without retaining a focus on the content of the question.

Written expression was generally of a satisfactory to good standard and there were very few scripts in which the expression was so limited that meaning was not conveyed. The most successful showed extremely well controlled use of language with a wide range of descriptive vocabulary to develop appropriate tone and register. The less successful contained a range of basic language errors, in particular, lack of sentence control shown through comma splicing, misuse or omission of apostrophes, incorrect capitalisation, omission of direct speech punctuation and uncertain use of the perfect tense.

In conclusion, by far the majority of candidates approached the examination seriously. The most important message to pass on to those taking this paper in future is the necessity to read each question carefully and to ensure that responses are clearly focused on the precise requirements of each task.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/21

Reading Passages (Extended)

## Key messages

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

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

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

## General comments

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

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

There did not seem to be any common misunderstandings of the passages. To achieve well, responses were required to develop and assimilate the material in Passage A for **Question 1**, to understand the time scheme of the passage and to convert the structure of it into a report of the storm which occurred just before.

While quality is more important than quantity on this paper, there needs to be enough of a response to meet the top band descriptors and for all parts of the question to be covered. It is essential that the skills of selection and modification are demonstrated in all three questions. In addition, there needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions. The importance of planning cannot therefore be overemphasised. Checking is also advisable, as marks may be lost through slips of the pen which suggest basic misunderstanding, e.g. Adam's 'dairy', and the confusion between a 'spit' and a 'strip' of land. There was evidence that many Centres now expect their candidates to plan first, with a corresponding improvement in the structure of responses and the coverage of **Question 3**, where the two halves of the question were better balanced this session.

Most candidates answered their questions in appropriate English. There were no marks given for accuracy in this paper, although some responses were affected by unclear or limited style, or over-reliance on the language of the passages. The majority of responses were within the recommended length guidelines and thus were focused and without repetition, which can come with excessive length.

### **Comments on specific questions**

**Question 1: Imagine you are a newspaper reporter working in the nearby town. Write a report using this headline: Lone fisherman survives storm of the century. In your report you should include the following: what happened to the fisherman and his surroundings; why he refused to leave his home; how this will affect his way of life in the future.**

**[20 marks]**

Most candidates wrote recognisable news reports and showed that they understood the need to adopt an objective viewpoint. The character of Adam, and the attitude of his family and ex-neighbours, were conveyed in the best responses by the use of short quotations revealing his passion and their admiration or belief that Adam was 'mad'. Better responses were able to explore the idea of his 'addiction' to the place and his lifestyle, to nature and the scenery, rather than just state these as facts. Terror and fascination are not incompatible, and this idea was ripe for exploration. It is worth noting that information given in the introduction to passages should be read, and utilised where relevant, for instance Adam had a name and the geographical location was a village. Those who entered into the spirit of the task gave Adam an age and full name, and named the village. Some were overenthusiastic and referred to severe loss of life in the storm(s), which was moving away from the passage into creative territory.

Less confident responses made little attempt to adapt the material. In such cases the first and second sections needed to contain more than plain facts about the distant and/or recent past, or needed to provide more detail about the context. It was helpful to distinguish Adam's views before and after the storm, though it was up to the candidate to infer whether or not it was likely that he would have changed his position. Weaker responses needed to address the third bullet to work towards achieving the award of a mark higher than the middle of band 3. Some first sections needed to be structured and sequenced, and random details at least needed to convey a clear picture of what happened to the village in this or previous storms. Some second sections were contradictory, unable to reconcile Adam's love and fear, his desire to be a hero and his willingness to die romantically. Responses could have picked up on and made use of the fact that Adam's children were elsewhere and that this revealed his character and priorities.

Most of the marks for this question were given for showing understanding of the passage and for using ideas within the framework of the response. It was not possible to use all the details from the passage in the space available, but good responses managed to include all the main ones, to do with appearance and history of the village and behaviour of the weather. In good responses, references to what had already happened and had been said were the basis of expectations and views about the future. Points for the first two bullets were sometimes effectively interwoven in the best responses, although it was logical to leave the third bullet to the end. Effective planning ensured that there was no repetition between sections and that they were all given equal attention and coverage. The use of ideas demonstrates explicit understanding, whereas the use of detail is necessary to show close reading, and development proves implicit understanding. Responses need to convey all three levels of reading comprehension to attain higher band marks.

References to past storms and the decline of the village were relevant background for the present storm and were rewarded. The build of the village houses was relevant in section one, and many responses mentioned it, though some spoiled the effect by describing them as being made of 'wood and plastic', or claiming that his children had been put into a sanctuary. References to Adam's behaviour during the storm were also credited, such as his sitting in his raised corner or shouting at the storm in King Lear fashion. Responses which had Adam rescued and taken to hospital by helicopter often made less use of the passage material.

In less good answers there were examples of copying whole phrases and sentences from the passage, not as quotations from characters, and sometimes several lines were lifted with virtually no changes in the wording. The more the content of the passage was adapted to the genre and focus of the question, the more likely it was that the mark for reading would be high. Responses were most prone to lifting in section two, without exploration and expansion upon Adam's extreme and unusual views in desiring to live uncomfortably and dangerously. Better responses referred to his diary keeping, his fishing, his damp house, and his way of dealing with floods by leaving his doors open. They made something of his relationship with

his father and the traditions he was brought up with, and his enjoyment of solitude and the 'power of the elements', and related these to his present determination. Credit was also given to details of previous storms and how he had survived them. Short quotations attributed to Adam when interviewed were an admissible device for conveying his character and for giving authenticity to a news report style. Excessive use of direct speech was less effective and became indistinguishable from a lack of modification of the language of the passage.

Where the third section was attempted, weaker responses re-iterated material from the previous section, about his desire to continue to live peacefully and go out fishing, or displayed a lack of understanding of Adam's situation and character in suggesting some inappropriate decisions. Better responses developed the implicit ideas that his house or boat or the linking road had been destroyed, and what this would mean for his future; or they allowed Adam to agree that it was time to give in, having proved his heroic credentials, and move to somewhere safer and with a community.

The writing mark reflected the clarity and fluency of the report, and how well it used vivid language to capture the sense of the drama of the storm and the strength of character of the protagonist. Rhetorical questions were neither plausible in the linguistic context nor an effective means of conveying information. The better written responses had a lively, engaging and convincing style, and the personality and views of the reporter did not overwhelm the informative content or detract from the central focus.

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

- Answer all parts of the question.
- Answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to the type of response you are writing.
- Be aware of the main issues and themes in the passage and use plenty of detail to support your ideas.
- Create a suitable voice and tone to show your understanding of what you have read.

**Question 2: Re-read the descriptions of (a) the appearance of the cloud and the atmosphere before the storm in paragraph 4, and (b) the rain and the wind in paragraph 7. Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.**

**[10 marks]**

Marks in the top band require precise focus at word level. The two parts of the question were mostly answered equally well, and responses were able to provide plenty of relevant choices, including imagery, in both paragraphs. There was some evidence that candidates stopped when they thought they had written enough, without considering the balance of their response. Nearly all responses said something about the 'heavy bank of cloud' in paragraph 4 and the 'demented hail of shrapnel' in paragraph 7. Comparatively few showed understanding of what 'shrapnel' is, and the majority believed that 'demented' is related to 'demonic' and so talked irrelevantly about evil. Many responses gave 'full of menace' as a choice, but few realised that it means something stronger than mischief or teasing. A few responses confused the sea and the sky in paragraph 4, claiming that it was the sea which was about to 'roll steadily ashore', and in paragraph 7 there was confusion between the waves and the rain in commenting on 'smashes itself'. There was also some vague understanding about what a 'tempest' is, and the influence of Shakespeare's play showed itself in the inclusion of comment about gods and magicians.

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

The first level of approach is to identify words that have an extra layer of meaning, and the second level is to be able to explain why the writer used them. An example from paragraph 4 was the 'terrible bowl of blackness': weaker responses simply quoted it or said vaguely that it meant darkness, possibly with fearful or fatal consequences, but few examined the implications of the use of the word 'bowl' in terms of shape or ability to encompass or to empty its contents.

It was a noticeable feature of the responses to this question that they were often longer than **Question 1** responses, which should not be the case given the relative weighting of marks. Writing at length does not improve the quality of the response if much of it is repetitive, and there is a danger of there not being enough time left to do justice to **Question 3**. On the other hand, less than a full page of writing is unlikely to produce

a range of choices, with their explanatory meanings and effects, for each half of the question. One or two choices from each paragraph are not sufficient; the response would be considered to be 'thin' and therefore given a mark in Band 5 or below. Many candidates seemed to have limited themselves to only three choices for each section, though there were many possible appropriate choices from each paragraph. Some responses to this question were still provided in grid form; this meant some undeveloped and mechanical comments, often not even expressed in sentences.

Most responses selected individual words and short phrases and treated them separately, but some gave choices which were restricted to only one word when the effectiveness depended on two or three words being used in combination, e.g. 'smashes itself' has a different and more subtle connotation than just 'smashes'. Overviews were given that showed an understanding of the threatening nature of the gathering storm in paragraph 4 and the violent attack of the rain in paragraph 7, but these needed to be supported by a range of individual examples and comments for the full dramatic effect to be conveyed. Many responses contained, in both sections, lists of choices or overlong quotations containing several choices, followed by general comments. Large chunks of quotation from one short paragraph do not demonstrate the skill of selection, and they can only be credited as one choice regardless of how many they contain.

There was a dependence on the idea of personification, re-iterated in both sections, which did not contribute helpfully to the explanation of specific effects. Some examples offered were not actually personifications, as in the case of 'swirling mass', or 'roll steadily ashore' without the 'waiting'. 'Smashes' was routinely described as an example of onomatopoeia, but this was not convincing in the context of the noise heavy rain makes against a building. Alliteration was often commented on, mostly with regard to the 'bowl of blackness', but this needs exploration, including comment on the build-up effect of a heavy and repetitive sound in this context, rather than just a statement of recognition.

The key to paragraph 4 (**section (a)**) is the idea of absence and unnaturalness. The best explanations tended to be about the failing of the light and its connotations of the losing battle with forces of darkness and chaos, and of the end of the world or the apocalypse. General references to tension were not highly rewarded because of 'tense stillness' being a phrase used in the passage, and often the idea of tension was not sustained. Vague references to the calm before the storm were unconvincing in the literal context.

In **section (b)**, based on paragraph 7, 'most magnificent', 'drown me out' and 'frenzied' were often quoted but not well explained as being ironic, predictive or violent respectively. The theme of battle was commented on, but not its different aspects, mental and physical, and the role of the elements in adopting both of these forms of attack, weapons and madness. The idea of wild animals conveyed by 'unleashed' and 'rearing their heads' was usually recognised but not always fully explored or equated with 'frenzied' and 'monstrous'. A weakness of **section (b)** responses was the need to focus on the wind and the rain rather than Adam, and also to make such comments as 'It made him/me feel scared' or 'It makes the reader feel sympathy for Adam' which could not be credited.

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

**(a) The appearance of the cloud and the atmosphere in paragraph 4**

*The writer conveys the idea of the impending danger by making the cloud a 'heavy bank', a thick and solid line whose weight can only be suspended for so long. The inevitability of the storm is shown by the image of it 'waiting' and use of the word 'yet' in relation to 'no anger'. The word 'menace' creates the idea of a deliberate, threatening, bullying stance. The personification of the storm in these phrases suggests nature's personal vengeful attack against the village and its lone occupant, who is insignificant in comparison to its might and only a tiny speck on 'the great canvas of nature'. The sky is like a huge painting, dark and dramatic, with little light and where humanity is barely featured. When the cloud is ready to 'roll steadily ashore' it will be with a relentless and continuous motion which will crush everything below it. 'Tense stillness' and 'No breeze, no sound', as if nature is holding its breath, convey an unnatural quietness and absence of movement which can only lead to the breaking of the spell of false calm with huge noise. The 'terrible bowl of blackness' is shutting out the light, which begins to 'fail' and signify defeat, as it takes on a frightening, all-enveloping shape, as if full of a dangerous liquid to be poured out or capable of swallowing everything into itself.*

**(b) The rain and the wind in paragraph 7**

*There is vicious and wind-driven water everywhere. The 'most magnificent' storm is ironically awe-inspiring and enjoyable as well as destructive. It 'unleashed a swirling mass'; this turbulent and spiralling movement of a huge volume of water conjures up the idea of whirlwinds and whirlpools, as well as that of a pack of wild and dangerous animals being set free to cause havoc. The storm is no ordinary storm but a 'tempest', involving multiple elements of air and water capable of extreme damage to life and property. It 'beats' Adam into a 'crouching apology of a man', making clear its physical and psychological dominance and ability to hurt and humiliate. With the rain 'smashes itself', there is the suggestion of a crazed creature intent on destruction at whatever personal cost – a big monster attacking a tiny house which repeats the earlier bullying idea. This extreme violence is continued with the 'demented hail of shrapnel' image, which conjures up a vision of iced balls of water capable of inflicting a similar degree of pain and damage to weapons used in trench warfare, being catapulted with insane ferocity. The rain's ability to 'drown out' and silence Adam's voice parallels its ability to literally drown his house and possibly himself. The 'sheets of rain' are as solid and as continuous as layers of fabric, cutting off sight as well as all other sound. The 'frenzied' waves have caught the general fit of madness, and by 'rearing their heads' like a line of cavalry or sea monsters they indicate an intention to charge against their enemy and whatever stands in their way. The sea is 'monstrous' both in the size of its towering waves and in its animated behaviour, that of unnatural, terrifying and all-powerful creatures of the deep.*

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

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

**Question 3: Summarise (a) the facts about the sea, and its amazing features, according to Passage B; and (b) what the fisherman enjoys about living in such a desolate place, according to Passage A.**  
**[20 marks]**

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

The two sections were generally equally well done in terms of giving relevant points and adopting an appropriate writing style. Good responses were the result of a methodical reading of both the passages. Better summaries avoided repetition, for instance of the fact that Adam enjoyed feeling peaceful. While it was acceptable to give the points in the order in which they appeared in the passage, more able responses changed the sequence so that related points could be grouped together. For example, in Passage B the depth of the oceans goes logically with what can be found on the sea bed, i.e. the coral reefs and the Roman cities, and in Passage A the music of the sea belongs with its peaceful effect. Candidates generally found it easy to identify relevant material in both passages and picked up a reasonable number of reading marks in both sections, although points 10, 18 and 21 were less commonly offered. Points 19 and 21, survival and heroism, were two separate points, although they were often not sufficiently distinguished for both to be awarded and some responses confused 'survivor' with 'saviour'. Point 9 was the speed of the change rather than the change itself.

Weaker responses needed to be expressed in complex sentences with different beginnings rather than presenting points in lists. Candidates also needed to avoid long explanations. In Passage B, the first two sentences in the second paragraph contain only one point and the rest is exemplification; all that needed to be said was that new species are being discovered, without reference to the spiders as big as dinner plates. Likewise, later references to Coleridge or the Beaufort scale were not necessary, as they are neither facts nor amazing features about the sea. Detailed explanations tended to not only reduce the amount of space available for dealing with other points, but also to make the summary as a whole longer than the permitted length.

Candidates should be advised that responses should follow the guidance for length as responses longer than the permitted length will achieve low writing marks for this question. The expectation is a side of A4 of average handwriting (8/9 words per line). Responses which are 'excessively long' (i.e. more than a page and a half of average handwriting) score 0 marks for writing. Some candidates with very small handwriting clearly wrote at too great a length, even though their answers fitted onto a page; small handwriting and word-processing can fit up to 18 words onto a line, and this must obviously be taken into account. Even where responses paid no attention to the length requirement, they rarely gained all 15 reading points, yet lost writing marks. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the amount of material included in a summary, as well as to the language in which it is expressed.

Attention should be paid to the amount of copying from the passages. From Passage B the information about the blue whale, the '30 elephants' and the amount of suspended gold was often given word for word; there was also much copying from Passage A of the water lying 'like a flat pond as far as the eye can see', of the fisherman being small 'on the great canvas of nature', and of his being 'monarch of all I survey'. These are all examples of wording that needed to be changed to show understanding. On the other hand, in Passage B 'gold' and 'coral reefs' have no synonym and in these cases are not expected to have been paraphrased. There is always a danger that substituted words are no longer factually accurate, and even that they change a positive to a negative connotation, for example when replacing 'solitude' with 'loneliness'.

**Section (b)** asked only about what Adam enjoyed, but some responses tried to mention all aspects of his life, for example that he went fishing or had a two-storey house, and therefore lost focus. This reduced the likelihood of scoring full marks not only for the reading but also for the writing. It was also important to be clear that the question asked for Adam's viewpoint to be adopted and not what we might enjoy in his place. Better responses were specific, making it clear that being alone in this context was beneficial, and that the reason why he enjoyed extreme weather was because it provided him with challenge and drama, and a chance to appreciate the power of the elements. This point needed to be secured by more than a reference to his being excited by watching storms. For **section (a)**, it was not necessary to mention the dumping of toxic waste, as this is not a feature of the sea but of human treatment of it. References to Bermuda or its triangle were also irrelevant, as these are examples and not facts, and it was not true to claim that the Mary Celeste is an example of a ship which suddenly disappeared.

Higher marks for writing are awarded where the candidate forms varied and fluent sentence structures, and gives just enough information about the points to convey each one clearly. Candidates who wrote summaries clearly, concisely and fluently, without long explanations or repetition, and in their own words, scored the whole five marks for aspects of writing.

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

### **Section (a)**

*The world's oceans cover most of the Earth's surface and are deeper than the highest mountain in places, so that new species are still being discovered, and Roman cities and coral reefs are hidden in their depths. The sea contains the planet's largest animal, the blue whale, and a large amount of natural gold. There are myths of fabulous sea creatures, and there have been cases of vessels disappearing without warning. Waves can reach an extraordinary height, yet suddenly the sea surface can change back to calm again. The sea could even hold the explanation of the origins of human existence.*

**Section (b)**

*He enjoys the view of the placid sea and the total tranquillity it brings him, represented by its musical sound and that of the seagulls. Being alone is a pleasure and it makes him feel that he is the ruler of his surroundings. He enjoys witnessing nature's power in the form of storms, and being reminded of his tiny place in the universe. An angry sea with enormous waves is another sight which pleases him, and makes him think that being stranded and swept away would be a romantic way to die. He aspires to be a survivor of extreme weather conditions, and also to see himself as a conquering hero of the storms.*

Here are some ways in which summaries could be improved:

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

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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<p><b>Paper 0500/22</b> <b>Reading Passages (Extended)</b></p>
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This paper was mainly assessed for reading (40 marks), although there were 10 marks available for writing: 5 marks in Question 1 and 5 marks in Question 3. The requirements for doing well were to:

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

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

## General comments

This paper was similar in difficulty level to last year's paper and produced a similar standard of response to all three questions, which covered a wide range. Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible and were able to finish the paper within the time allowed. For **Question 1** and **Question 2**, to achieve marks in the top band, candidates were expected to demonstrate thorough use of the passage and a wide range of discussion on language. Ideas and comments should be specific and related to the passages. Candidates wishing to score high marks should have a wide, appropriate vocabulary, both to express themselves and to understand the use of language in the reading passages. Responses were sometimes less strong because of the misunderstanding of an individual important word, such as 'forlorn' or 'shudder'.

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

There did not appear to be common misunderstandings of the passages. To achieve well, responses were required to develop and assimilate the material in Passage A for **Question 1**. They were also expected to convert the structure of it into an interview format with focus on the three questions given. Extra or other questions would elicit unnecessary and irrelevant material and interfere with the focus, fluency and cohesion of the response. Some responses were in the form of a formal report or a narrative account, and using these forms meant that it was challenging to address the bullet points fully and evenly.

While quality is more important than quantity on this paper, there needs to be enough of a response to meet the top band descriptors and for all parts of the question to be covered. It is essential that the skills of selection and modification are demonstrated in all three questions. In addition, there needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions. The importance of planning cannot therefore be overemphasised. Checking is also advisable, as marks may be lost through slips of the pen which suggest basic misunderstanding. There was evidence that many Centres now expect their candidates to plan first, with a corresponding improvement in the structure of responses and the coverage of **Question 3**, where the two halves of the question were better balanced this session.

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

### **Comments on specific questions**

**Question 1: A senior officer asks Muller to give an account of his meeting with the criminal the previous day. He asks Muller the following three questions only: Why did you take the reckless decision to go alone to meet Sorensen? What was your physical and mental state before the meeting? What happened in the next few minutes after the door opened? Write the words of the interview.**

**[20 marks]**

Most candidates wrote recognisable interviews and showed that they understood the need to adopt the detective's viewpoint and attitudes. Higher scoring responses were able to explore the idea that Muller wanted to make up for the past and do his job professionally and effectively. Muller's reasons for going alone were all to do with his knowledge of the criminal and the necessity of following his instructions, though these could be contained within the presentation of his character as a rule-bending maverick. Some responses had unnecessarily long introductions, and some gave the answers to the three questions as an uninterrupted monologue. The interview was conducted by a 'senior officer', and a chatty dialogue between equals was not the most appropriate register for an official interrogation.

Details of the previous occasion when Sorensen was involved with the police provided necessary background material, and could be skilfully woven into an explanation of Muller's curiosity and decision to meet the criminal on this occasion. It is worth noting that information given in the introduction to passages should be read, and utilised where relevant. Some responses had not understood that Sorensen had broken into a summer house, and therefore as it was not his house, no conclusions about him could be drawn from the appearance or state of it. It also made it hard to explain Muller's difficulty in finding his way there. Other responses wrongly assumed it was the setting of the armed robbery with hostages ten years previously, and went on to claim that the property had a secret passage or exit. Several responses showed a misreading of the significance of 4 pm, the deadline by which Muller had to be there because Sorensen intended to leave, not arrive, at that time.

Less confident responses made little attempt to adapt the material. In such cases the first and second sections contained plain facts about the distant and/or recent past. They needed to include information about the context and move beyond the ideas of fear and danger. Muller's complex and changing feelings in the lead up to the opening of the door were not always appreciated, and this section in particular would have benefitted from using own words rather than lifting key phrases from the passage, or the presenting of events in an order other than chronological. Some first sections required structure and cohesion of details to convey a clear picture of Muller's decision to go alone. On occasions, Muller gave his reason as the need to rescue hostages, often his own children; this idea was not convincingly tethered to the known facts and distorted the real focus, sometimes giving Muller an inappropriately maniacal and vengeful voice. Some second sections would have benefitted from reconciling Muller's nervousness with his determination. The 'spinning of wheels' was sometimes misinterpreted as Muller's bad driving rather than being attributed to the mud and weather conditions. Some responses needed to be able to select and make use of the fact that Muller deliberately exposed himself to Sorensen's view from the window of the house, knowing he could be seen.

Weaker responses did not address the third bullet at all, typically preventing the award of a mark higher than the middle of Band 3. The obvious inference to be made was that Sorensen would once again perform a disappearing act as part of his continuing desire to prove himself cleverer than the police. In good responses, references to what had already happened and had been said were the basis of expectations for the future. While the suicide, surrender or arrest of Sorensen were plausible outcomes, an abject apology and desire to tell all and be forgiven was rather less so.

Most of the marks for this question were given for showing understanding of the passage and for using ideas within the framework of the response, which was provided in the sequence of questions. It was not possible to use all the details from the passage in the space available, but good responses included all the main ones, to do with the landscape and weather conditions, the known history of the criminal, and the ill omens around the house. Effective planning ensured that there was no repetition between sections and that they were all given equal attention and coverage. The use of ideas demonstrates explicit understanding, whereas

the use of detail is necessary to show close reading, and development proves implicit understanding. Responses need to convey all three levels of reading comprehension to attain the higher band marks.

In less good answers there were examples of copying whole phrases and sentences from the passage, and sometimes several lines were lifted with virtually no changes in the wording. The more the content of the passage was adapted to the genre and focus of the question, the more likely it was that the mark for reading would be high. Responses were most prone to lifting in section two, without exploration and expansion upon Muller's complex state of mind. Better responses referred to his tension, his apprehension, his vulnerability, his distrust, his desire to ensure that Sorensen remained in control, and his realisation that no help was available in such a bleak and remote place.

Where the third section was attempted, weaker responses re-iterated material from the previous section, about his fear of what Sorensen might do, or introduced other characters in the form of henchmen and hostages, for which there was no expectation in the passage, or constructed a series of events involving guns and killings, or the hospitalisation of Muller. A more subtle drama was added to the third section by the use of convincing direct speech uttered by Sorensen, particularly when related to known previous facts, such as that he had been ordered to come alone. Better responses developed the implicit ideas that the Skoda, the trees or the weather would play a role in the outcome, or that Sorensen would, on past showing, be likely to be armed. Most of the responses which addressed the third question followed the instruction to limit the events to the next few minutes, although some allowed Muller and Sorensen to have a tour of the house, or a drink and a meal together, which went beyond this time frame.

The writing mark reflected the clarity and fluency of the interview, and how well it used vivid language to capture the sense of the drama of the experience and the character of the protagonist. Rhetorical questions were neither plausible in the linguistic context nor an effective means of conveying information. The better written responses had a lively, engaging and convincing style, and the personality and views of the interviewer did not overwhelm the informative content or detract from the central focus.

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

- Answer all parts of the question.
- Answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to the type of response you are writing.
- Be aware of the main issues and themes in the passage and use plenty of detail to support your ideas.
- Create a suitable voice and tone to show your understanding of what you have read.

**Question 2: Re-read the descriptions of (a) the landscape in paragraph 2, and (b) the house and surroundings in paragraph 4. Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.**

**[10 marks]**

It was necessary for marks in the top two bands to focus on the chosen language at word level. Most responses included some relevant choices, including imagery, in both paragraphs. **Section (b)** was less well answered because the choices and effects were a little less obvious. The bright paint and homely furniture could be interpreted as an ironic contrast to the general surroundings and situation, as being sinisterly misleading, or as a mixture of the pleasant and unpleasant, summer and winter, good and evil. It was important not to give a general description of the landscape and venue. There was some evidence that candidates stopped when they thought they had written enough, without considering the balance of their response.

Nearly all responses said something about the 'dead country towns' in paragraph 2 (sometimes trying to equate them with the wild west or horror movies, or to claim them as a foreshadowing of death) and the 'red-yellow ochre' colour in paragraph 4. Few selected the 'black stripes of earth' or 'blades rotating synchronously' in paragraph 2, though these lent themselves to exploration of other avenues of the colourless or intimidating landscape and atmosphere. In paragraph 4, 'near-withered hollyhocks' was not chosen as a possible choice in most responses, though it is clear that plants are being referred to and their withering could have been linked to the end of Sorensen's criminal career, the threat of death possibly hanging over Muller, or simply to the season of autumn and what it evokes. A frequent choice was 'clumps of weather-worn' which was limited for comment, and the choice or explanation of 'gnawed' was a frequent misreading or misunderstanding of 'gnarled'. There was a tendency to over-read paragraph 2: although it was just about convincing that 'blurred' could link to the mysteriousness of the meeting, it was too much of a stretch to associate the 'pale gleam' of the landscape with an impending stabbing, although the recurring

imagery of metal blades contributed to the hostile atmosphere of the landscape and the ominous sense of Muller's vulnerability and exposure to danger and violence.

Many responses relied on general statements including the words 'dead', 'abandoned', 'depressing', 'deserted', 'lonely', 'empty' or 'eerie', many of which were from the passage. Often responses needed to distinguish between their different meanings, or between the two paragraphs. More could have been made of 'a breeding ground for loneliness' and the words were often repeated in the attempted explanations. In **section (b)**, there was often a discussion of 'rain-soaked chairs', missing the opportunity to discuss more evocative language choices and images, such as 'looking forlorn'. The 'muddy, rutted' drive was often blamed on the owner of the cottage rather than interpreted as being part of the picture of the difficulties of the weather and terrain in the area.

A wide and precise vocabulary is essential for scoring highly on this question in particular. 'Isolated' and 'deserted' do not mean the same thing, nor 'deserted' and 'desert'. Several responses claimed that the 'deserted grass stretches' had become yellow, dry and sandy, though this made no sense in the rainy context. Close reading is necessary in order for misunderstanding to be avoided. Weaker responses gave a commentary with quotations incorporated in it, and needed to examine the writer's use of vocabulary and imagery. Repeating language of the passage can gain no credit, as understanding is not thereby demonstrated. Naming literary or linguistic devices, even when accurately identified, attracts credit only when accompanied by an explanation of how it is working in this particular context. Explaining an image in the form of another image is not helpful.

The first level of approach is to identify words that have an extra layer of meaning, and the second level is to be able to explain why the writer used them. An example from paragraph 2 was 'wide fallow fields'. Weaker responses quoted it or said vaguely that it meant suggested emptiness. More competent responses examined the implications of the use of the word 'fallow' in terms of growth and vegetation, and how the lack of it reinforced the recurring theme of absence and barrenness, conducive to an atmosphere of having arrived at the end of the earth, where nothing could be bred but loneliness. It was important that the response included only choices which related to the actual question; there were responses which quoted the description of the shutting of the van door, which had nothing to do with the house or surroundings and could not therefore be credited.

It was a noticeable feature of the responses to this question that they were often longer than **Question 1** responses, which should not be the case given the relative weighting of marks. Writing at length does not improve the quality of the response if much of it is repetitive, and there is a danger of there not being enough time left to do justice to **Question 3**. On the other hand, less than a full page of writing is unlikely to produce a range of choices, with their explanatory meanings and effects, for each half of the question. One or two choices from each paragraph are not sufficient; the response would be considered to be 'thin' and therefore given a mark in Band 5 or below. Many candidates seemed to have limited themselves to only three choices for each section, though there were many possible appropriate choices from each paragraph. Some responses to this question were still provided in grid form; this meant some undeveloped and mechanical comments, often not even expressed in sentences.

Most responses provided individual words and short phrases and treated them separately, but some gave choices which were restricted to only one word when the effectiveness depended on two or three words being used in combination, e.g. the full phrase 'half hidden behind high elms' is stronger than its parts. Overviews were given that showed an understanding of the deserted and depressing landscape in paragraph 2 and the oddly inconsistent or misleading vision of the house in paragraph 4. These overviews needed to be supported by a range of individual examples and comments for the full effect to be conveyed. Many responses contained, in both sections, lists of choices or overlong quotations containing several choices, followed by general and repeated comments about dullness and loneliness. Large chunks of quotation from one short paragraph do not demonstrate the skill of selection, and they can only be credited as one choice regardless of how many they contain.

There was a dependence on the idea of personification in **section (a)**, which did not contribute helpfully to the explanation of effects in a paragraph conveying lack of human presence. Some examples offered were not actually personifications, as in the case of 'abandoned houses' or the movement of the wind turbines. The thin line of the woods was given as evidence that the place was dominated by trees, the opposite of the effect the paragraph is creating. The key to this paragraph is the idea of flatness and emptiness, and its domination by bad weather. Even the 'shining meadows' are evidence of wetness and not meant to be taken as a cheerful characteristic of the landscape.

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

**(a) The landscape in paragraph 2**

*The paragraph conveys the idea that the remoteness, bleakness and barrenness of the area are symptomatic of its indifference, or even hostility. The 'blurred' rainy landscape, even when 'flattened down', conveys Muller's feeling of alienation in a place where the prevailing forces of wind and rain reduce everything to the horizontal. The 'pale gleam on all sides' signifies that the wet drabness has him surrounded. The 'dead country towns' and 'abandoned houses' remind him how far he is from activity and humanity, and suggest that the reason they are deserted is that the area and its climate are too hostile for people to be able to bear to live there. No one is practising agriculture any more, as conveyed by the 'wide fallow fields' and 'deserted grass stretches', and the 'shining meadows' containing only water. There is an emphasis on the size and scale of the flat features to be seen in every direction, further reinforced by the woods being so distant and reduced in height that they only 'drew a thin dark line' on the horizon. Nearer trees, of which there are only a couple, are 'gnarled', deformed and unnatural, victims of the wind, like Muller. This place is adjacent to the sea and it is both actually and metaphorically 'the end of the earth'. Where there is colour in the paragraph it is stark black or white, which only emphasises a lack of colour in what is reminiscent of a painting of an empty landscape in pale watercolours with an occasional dark line or 'black stripes' to make a stark contrast. The only thing a 'breeding ground for loneliness' can produce is more emptiness and nothingness, making the concept of reproduction an ironic one. The only movement and vertical feature, again ironically, is that of 'blades rotating synchronously'; mechanical and sinister. The turbines are a striking symbol of the power of the wind in the area, and sustain the recurring image of metal blades.*

**(b) The house and surroundings in paragraph 4**

*Sorensen has chosen and invaded this summer house, whose garden and outdoor furniture indicate the coming of winter, which does not bode well for the outcome of the rendezvous. The chairs are personified as 'forlorn', sad and abandoned, pathetic in their wet and lonely state, the same as Muller. The 'near-withered hollyhocks in faded colours' confirm the feeling of death and decay that seems to hang over the whole area, in which nothing natural flourishes or has colour. That the house is 'half hidden behind high elms', a memorable phrase because of its alliteration, also contributes to a horror-genre atmosphere of a spooky house in a forest, and seems to mirror Sorensen's ambiguous position of being both in hiding and yet having declared his presence. The 'muddy, rutted...narrow path' shows that the trees and the bad weather have determined the surroundings, to the point of preventing an approach and making entrance difficult. These descriptions are contrasted with the man-made attempts to make the house attractive by it being 'freshly painted' in 'vivid red-yellow ochre'. These attempts seem futile because of what we know about the power of the weather to wear everything away, and indeed there is a suggestion that paint will need to be applied frequently in the battle against the elements. The owners are probably naïve in thinking they can win, perhaps suggesting a similar naïvety in Muller, and the brightness of the paint in childish primary colours is testament to that false optimism. The 'peaceful country idyll' is only an illusion, a 'nostalgic dream' of life in the country for those who live in town. Certainly the fact that it now contains a dangerous and possibly murderous criminal suggests that a recently replaced roof and lick of paint have not countered the reality, for most of the year, of this being a wet and unattractive house in a wet and unattractive setting.*

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

- Avoid general comments such as 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there' or 'this is a very descriptive phrase'. Such comments will not earn any marks at all.
- Your first task is to choose some words and phrases that seem powerful to you. Do not write out whole sentences but use single words or phrases of two or three words. Do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle.
- Treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them.
- If you are not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning, in the context, for each of your choices. That can give you up to half marks for the question if the meaning is accurate.
- When you explain effects, think of what the reader sees and feels when reading the word or phrase. It may suggest more than one thing.

- Learn to recognise images and explain them (but you do not need to know or give their technical names). Say what they convey within the paragraph, and how they reinforce each other, if this is the case.

**Question 3: Summarise (a) how detectives are portrayed in fiction, as described in Passage B; and (b) the detective's observations and feelings during his journey and arrival, as described in Passage A.**

[Total: 20]

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

The two sections were generally equally well done in terms of giving relevant points and adopting an appropriate writing style. Good responses were the result of a methodical reading of both the passages. Better summaries avoided repetition, for instance of the fact that fictional detectives are successful or that Muller felt nervous. While it was acceptable to give the points in the order in which they appeared in the passage, more able responses changed the sequence so that related points could be grouped together. For example, in Passage B the strong personality of the detective goes logically with his/her bravery, and in Passage A the worry about being late belongs with the fear that Sorensen might escape again. The focus of **section (a)** needed to be on fictional detectives and not on the genre of the detective novel generally, and it was not required or successful when responses to the two sections were linked, contrasted or inevitably generalised. Candidates generally found it easy to identify relevant material in both passages and picked up a reasonable number of Reading marks in both sections, although in **section (b)** points 16, 17 and 21 were less commonly offered. Point 13 was routinely thought to be that the detective wins a lover ('get their man - or woman'), though a moment's thought would have made it clear that this wouldn't make much sense gender-wise, and that this is a common expression meaning to find the culprit. Where offered, point 9 had been universally misunderstood as the opposite of the meaning of the passage, i.e. that fictional detectives do not use modern technology.

Weaker responses consisted of a list of everything Muller passed on his journey or of all his physical symptoms, or gave a series of quotations from the passages. Points needed to be expressed in complex sentences with different beginnings rather than in a list-like manner. However, responses needed to avoid long explanations. In Passage B, the third paragraph contains only two points – that there is a sidekick and that many interviews are conducted – and the rest is elaboration and irrelevant to the question. Detailed explanations tended to not only reduce the amount of space available for dealing with other points, but also to make the summary as a whole longer than the permitted length.

Candidates should be advised that responses should follow the guidance for length as responses longer than the permitted length will achieve low writing marks for this question. The expectation is a side of A4 of average handwriting (8/9 words per line). Responses which are 'excessively long' (i.e. more than a page and a half of average handwriting) score 0 marks for writing. Some candidates with very small handwriting clearly wrote at too great a length, even though their answers fitted onto a page; small handwriting and word-processing can fit up to 18 words onto a line, and this must obviously be taken into account. Even where responses paid no attention to the length requirement, they rarely gained all 15 reading points, yet lost writing marks. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the amount of material included in a summary, as well as to the language in which it is expressed.

Attention should be paid to the amount of copying from the passages. From Passage B the information in paragraph 2 about detectives' habits and ignoring of previous evidence was often given word for word; there was also much copying from Passage A of Muller's stiff back, tension and how 'sweat crawled in his armpits'. These are examples of wording that needed to be changed to show understanding. On the other hand, in Passage B 'logic' and 'confession' have no exact synonyms and in these cases are not expected to have been paraphrased. There is always a danger that substituted words are no longer factually accurate, and even that they change the connotation, for example, when replacing 'wisdom' with 'wit'. The American usage 'smart', meaning 'clever', was often offered as a replacement for 'ingenuity' and was accepted, although the word carries a very different meaning in British English.

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

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

### **Section (a)**

*Fictional detectives are always experienced, intelligent and perceptive, with a successful reputation and strong character, illustrated by unusual tastes and interests and a lack of fear. They are never first on the crime scene, so that they can ignore previous evidence, collect their own, and do things their own way. They use the help of a colleague to interview extensively everyone who might be involved, relying on personal enquiry, luck and confessions, and not on modern technology, for acquiring the necessary evidence. They are always successful in solving the crime and never die in the process.*

### **Section (b)**

*Muller is in a race against the clock and gets physically distressed by the fear of being late because of the delay caused by the wind and the rain and his getting lost and stuck on the roads. The empty landscape and deserted buildings make him feel anxious and alone. As darkness approaches he starts to worry about the likelihood of Sorensen being able to disappear and escape again. He takes a bird of prey to be a bad omen, and a group of pheasants startle him and evoke a panicked reaction. He was aware of a figure in the house watching him as he placed himself in the view from the window. Because he had no idea what to expect from Sorensen, he felt nervous when approaching the house.*

Here are some ways in which summaries could be improved:

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

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/23  
Reading Passages (Extended)

## Key messages

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

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

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

## General comments

This paper was similar in difficulty to last year's paper and produced a similar standard of response to all three questions, which covered a wide range. Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible. For **Question 1** and **Question 2**, to achieve marks in the top band, candidates were expected to demonstrate thorough use of the passage and a wide range of discussion on language. For **Question 1**, candidates were also required to modify the language and structure, as well as both develop and assimilate the material. Candidates wishing to score high marks should have a wide, appropriate vocabulary, both to express themselves and to understand the use of language in the reading passages. Responses were sometimes less strong because of the misunderstanding of an individual important word or phrase, such as in Passage A believing 'climbing steeply through... trees' referred to climbing of the trees.

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

While quality is more important than quantity on this paper, there needs to be enough of a response in **Question 1** to meet the top band descriptors and for all parts of the question to be covered. It is essential that the skills of selection and modification are demonstrated in all three questions. In addition, there needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions. The importance of planning cannot therefore be overemphasised. Checking is also advisable, as marks may be lost through slips of the pen which suggest basic misunderstanding, for example that the narrator had walked for hours rather than three days to get to the village of Ludhi. Some candidates, on the other hand, wrote out a complete draft – sometimes of all three answers.

There was some evidence that candidates did not complete the paper in the time given as some only attempted either **section 3(a)** or **3(b)**. For **Question 3**, the second half of the question was often noticeably shorter than the first and there was evidence of copying from the passage in both halves. Again this year the evidence from the quality of the answers indicates that candidates who started **Question 3** first did not gain any advantage.

Most candidates answered their questions in appropriate English. There were no marks given for accuracy in this paper, although some candidates' work was affected by unclear or limited style.

### Comments on specific questions

**Question 1: Imagine that you are Gabriella Le Breton. You have been invited to speak to a group of young travellers planning to trek in the same area of Nepal and hoping to witness the honey hunt. Write the words of the talk to the travellers. In your talk you should explain the challenges of going to see the honey hunt, outline what these young travellers may find interesting about the hunt and discuss your own feelings about the honey hunters and what they do.**

[20 marks]

The more competent responses were convincing talks which maintained an enthusiastic yet authoritative voice, selecting from Le Breton's personal experience the features relevant to future plans. They understood the need to develop the details with advice, for example that the 'uncertain weather' necessitated appropriate clothing being taken. Such responses did not exaggerate the challenges, or were able to offset them by positive recommendations about what would be enjoyed in witnessing the hunt. They displayed a variety of feelings about the hunters, with admiration for their bravery, patience and consideration for the natural world, for example. These responses demonstrated clear awareness of the focus of the second and third bullets and did not stray into relating the deliciousness of the honey. It is worth noting that information given in the introduction to passages should be read, and utilised where relevant.

Less confident responses focused less on the task or demonstrated weaker adaptation of the material. In such cases the first section often contained descriptions of the terrain, sometimes using copied phrases from the passage and written in a narrative style. Some of these responses showed a mechanical progression through the passage, picking out potential problems, for example to do with walking. They needed to connect and synthesise these problems. When considering what young travellers may find interesting about the hunt, less good responses needed to rephrase and reorder the passage, and integrate detail within the comments, for example regarding the skill with which the ropes were braided. Content covering the third bullet needed to go beyond general comments to do with admiration for the pride the hunters take, and for their courage. They also included a short section drifting away from the focus of the task to include the enjoyment of the honey.

Where there was mechanical use of the passage, this resulted in a reading mark up to Band 3. Weak answers focused on the passage but not on the task, so relied on repeating the material with little or no modification, especially in the outline of what these young travellers may find interesting about the hunt. Some of these answers showed serious misunderstanding, for example that the trekkers were going to make the ropes, climb the ladders and get the honey, or there was confusion about the two fires lit for different purposes. Such responses often needed to develop the actions taken by the honey hunters rather than list them, and to maintain focus on the essence of the prompts. It is important that the third section is developed and more than a passing reference in a concluding paragraph. There was a tendency to adopt a narrative style, as if re-telling Gabriella le Breton's experience in its entirety to a listener, when a specific voice could have been created.

Many candidates attempted to use an appropriate voice, which was more in evidence in the opening and concluding paragraphs, and in dealing with the first two prompts, when, for example, referring to the breathtaking scenery that was a backdrop to the hunt. Most responses were organised appropriately, but sometimes feelings about the hunters and what they do were incorporated into the middle section with some loss of clarity. A reflection at the end would have been more effective. Weaker responses would have benefitted from changing the order of the passage.

There were responses that turned Gabriella's talk into a conversation or a question and answer session. Some of these managed to adopt a convincing voice for Gabriella, but often these approaches removed the focus from the content of the question.

In less good answers there were examples of copying whole phrases and sentences from the passage, and sometimes several lines were lifted with virtually no changes in the wording. The more the content of the passage was adapted to the genre and focus of the question, the more likely it was that the mark for writing would be awarded the mark for Band 3 at least.

In responding to explaining the challenges of going to see the honey hunt, most responses covered the necessity to walk for a long time, and that the going would be steep, although some thought the trekkers needed to climb up the cardamom plants, rather than through them. Many commented on the unpredictability of the weather, although many used the word 'uncertain' from the passage, and clearly did not appreciate the implications of this. A good proportion of the responses indicated that some physical fitness would be necessary, some suggesting a training programme before embarking on the trip. The difficulty of returning through the forest in the dark was well utilised in some responses. The risk of being stung was noted by many, although for weaker candidates this was related as being only a risk to the hunters (which it was) rather than as a projection that it could affect the trekkers, too. Some candidates commented on how distressing it might be to have a chicken wafted over the trekkers' heads and then made into a sacrifice. Weaker responses wrongly included the challenge for the trekkers of having to carry bamboo ladders.

Responses about what these young travellers may find interesting about the hunt often concentrated on the preparation of the ropes, the arrangement of these ropes into ladders, the sacrificial chicken, the sight of the bee hives, and the fire to smoke them out. Such a response here could constitute competent coverage if dealt with appropriately. It is important that the information is not mechanically reproduced, and that clear points are made without using the words of the passage, for example, what it was about the use of fire to smoke out the bees that would interest young travellers. There was sometimes confusion between three sets of people – the villagers of Ludhi, the guide who took them to the hunt, and the Nai Chi hunters themselves. Better answers included comments on the rarity of the bees, on the fact that it is a privilege to see the hunt as it only occurs twice a year, on the incredible size of the hives, and on the skill with which the hunters use basic commodities to make structures upon which their lives will depend.

Candidates need to attempt all three sections, and in some detail, for a mark in Band 1 or Band 2 to be awarded. Better responses describing Gabriella's feelings about the honey hunters and what they do commented on her admiration for a range of attributes and actions, for example their bravery and teamwork. Here would have been the most suitable place to refer to the treasure the men brought back and how they proudly showed off their stings as evidence to back up the writer's own feelings. Most able responses commented on the fascination experienced by Gabriella when first seeing the hives which could extend to how the men went about their task. Other good answers interpreted the material to suggest that the men were rather foolhardy, that they were damaging the environment and harming the bees, despite acknowledging that this activity only takes place twice a year.

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

- Answer all parts of the question.
- Answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to the type of response you are writing.
- Be aware of the main issues and themes in the passage and use plenty of detail to support your ideas.
- Create a suitable voice and tone to show your understanding of what you have read.

**Question 2: Re-read the descriptions of (a) the forest and the beehives in paragraph 4, and (b) the honey and the eating of it in paragraph 7. Select words and phrases from these descriptions and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.**

**[10 marks]**

Marks in the top band require precise focus at word level and careful selection of powerful words which address the focus of the question. Choices which referred to actions of the group rather than to the forest and the beehives in paragraph 2, and to the kitchen in paragraph 7, could not be credited. Most responses included 'beat our way' and 'dense forest', and these were best treated separately with a detailed comment. Similarly, many responses featured 'dark orange, brown-speckled treasure', and would have benefitted from separating it from 'explode in a potent, floral blend – mango and lychee blossom'. One general comment about this was often the result, rather than three potentially separate ones.

The first level of approach was to identify words that had an extra layer of meaning, and the second level was to be able to explain why the writer used them. An example from paragraph 2 was the phrase 'like

ripples across water'. Weaker responses quoted it or noted vaguely that it meant the hives moved in a particular way, often repeating the word 'ripples'. Repeating language of the passage can gain no credit as understanding is not demonstrated. The best responses realised that the image evoked a continuous, rhythmical movement usually associated with largish bodies of water, and that it is frightening to think that relatively small insects like bees can join together into a unit to produce such an effect. The primary effect of the paragraph is one of a quest to a mythical land where ordinary objects have been almost magically transformed, and where further changes are possible, perhaps with disastrous consequences. Some candidates gave words from the passage which were merely informational, which were not appropriate as they did not have the extra layer of meaning required for the close analysis expected in this part of the question paper.

This question is worth 10 marks and it is expected that candidates write at sufficient length to produce a range of choices, with their explanatory meanings and effects, for each half of the question. The mark scheme refers to 'a number of words and phrases...in both parts' in Band 2, and there is a requirement to comment on images for the higher band. Where one or two choices from each paragraph are appropriately selected, the response would be considered to be 'thin' and therefore given a mark in Band 5. Some candidates limited themselves to only three choices for each section, though there are more than twice as many possible appropriate choices from each paragraph. It is useful when candidates offer a summary overview of the combined effect of the language of the paragraph, but this is not a substitute for analysis at word level.

Answers should aim to avoid lists of choices or long quotations followed by general comments and instead feature individual words and short phrases which are treated separately. Meanings were usually attempted by candidates, but they are encouraged to provide specific explanations of effects to achieve higher marks. There were some attempted overviews that showed an understanding of the density of the forest and the special nature of the honey. Good responses selected the word 'pulsate' in paragraph 4, defined it as throbbing, and then linked it to the beating of a heart, and thus saw the hive as central to a living organism that sends power to its outer reaches. They also identified the word 'treasure' in paragraph 7 as indicating something valuable, but also saw the connotation, especially when seen in conjunction with 'haul', of something which did not belong to these people and which had been plundered.

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

**(a) The forest and the beehives in paragraph 4**

*The writer creates the impression of a daring quest undertaken to arrive at a magical site. 'Beat our way' indicates the repeated heavy blows needed to make progress through the 'dense forest'. A forest is much bigger than a wood and this is close-packed with the possibility of getting lost. It will also be hard going to squeeze between the trees, with the likelihood of being scratched. The 'gnarled rhododendrons' give the impression of aged trees with twisted, knobbly, thick trunks and stems which would hinder progress. Together with the 'red-stemmed cardamom' there is an exotic and fairy-tale feel. The first sighting of the hives is of 'three darkened discs', the noun sounding other-worldly, whilst 'darkened' brings a feeling of apprehension and danger. This eeriness is reinforced by the use of 'shimmer and pulsate eerily', words which stress the shiny, alien, space-ship appearance and rhythmic beating of the hive, as a single organism, like a giant heartbeat. The pulses gradually move outward across the giant discs like 'ripples across water', a continuous movement that here brings menacing power. There are so many bees to produce this effect and they are all on the move, creating a 'mesmerising and frightening sight'. The viewers are fearful yet entranced by the unusual and powerful beauty.*

**(b) The honey and the eating of it in paragraph 7**

*The impression created in this paragraph is of unrestrained childish glee and of the highly regarded booty brought back by warriors. A 'large slab of thick honeycomb' shows in two dimensions the huge size of the honeycomb with three single syllable words with harsh consonant and long vowel sounds lending an aural emphasis. It is a 'dark orange, brown-speckled treasure', indicating something precious and stolen, reinforced by the phrase 'gooey haul', which also conveys its stickiness. Whilst the colour is one associated with honey, it is also the warm colour of pure gold. 'Gooey' is another effective aural choice with its deep, thick sound mirroring the thickness of the honey. That the combs have many small bodies stuck to them is conveyed by both 'brown-speckled' and the alliterative 'dotted with dazed bees' – they are stunned by being taken away from their natural environment. 'Bursting into the gloom' and 'thrusting a hand' are violent*

*actions indicating desperation to get at the honey. The hunters 'flicking them off casually' is another action showing single-minded focus on the honey and lack of concern for the bees or their ability to sting. Later the men 'tuck in' to the honey and 'wolf down vast chunks', phrases associated with an appetite, greed and lack of manners reminiscent of fairy-tale animals. The flavours 'explode' in the mouth, a word usually associated with the detonation of a bomb, and ensuing quantity of debris, gas and dust. This metaphor indicates the way the taste – made up of several elements – fills the mouth completely and suddenly. The eater is overcome by the 'potent floral blend', suggesting the powerful taste of the unique combination of different flowers from which the bees have harvested nectar (here mango and lychee which we know of as sweet, juicy fruits). The writer is surprised by its 'tangy rather than sugary sweetness', because we associate honey with an extreme sweet rather than a sharp citrus taste.*

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

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

**Question 3: Summarise (a) the benefits of allowing trophy hunting, according to Passage B; and (b) the landscape and features of the area described in Passage A.**

**[Total: 20]**

To answer this question successfully candidates needed to identify 15 points that were relevant to the question and to present them succinctly in their own words. They are reminded that this is an exercise in informative writing, which should be clear and to the point. There were 23 possible answers in the mark scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. This was the highest-scoring question for many of the candidates. Most candidates were aware of the appropriate form, style and tone for a summary.

Good answers were the result of a methodical reading of both the passages. There was evidence that some candidates had made notes, although sometimes these contained items that were so similar to each other that the points could not score twice. Good summaries avoided repetition, for instance of the fact (from Passage B) that the landscape is preserved and the natural habitat is protected. While it was perfectly in order to give the points in the sequence in which they appeared in the passage, good responses changed the sequence so that related points could be grouped together. For example, from Passage B three points that would logically go together are that some areas are preserved whilst others are rehabilitated resulting in an immense area that is now wildlife-friendly.

Candidates generally found it easy to identify relevant material in both passages, and picked up a reasonable number of marks in both sections, although points 12, 14, 16, and 21 were less likely to be offered. Weaker responses tended to be list-like and needed to use own words more often. It is important to focus on the specific requirements of the summary in question. Thus, features of the landscape and the area (Passage A) were expected; description of the night sky or facts about the hunt could not be credited. Detailed explanations, for example naming the rare species saved from extinction, tended not only to reduce the amount of space available for dealing with other points, but also to make the summary as a whole longer than the permitted length of one side.

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

Consideration therefore needs to be given to the material included and to the language in which it is expressed: concision, clarity, focus, fluency and own words are descriptors for the higher writing bands. Grouping together of some of the features of the landscape would have aided concision and could have contributed to a high mark for writing. Better responses did not have introductory statements nor comments, and concentrated on giving an informative summary.

Higher marks for writing are awarded where the candidate forms varied and fluent sentence structures and gives just enough information about the points to convey each one clearly. Those candidates who wrote summaries concisely and without long explanations or repetition, and in their own words, scored the whole five marks for aspects of writing.

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

### **Section (a)**

*Trophy hunting is a significant part of the economy of many African countries with hunters paying huge sums to shoot certain species whilst visiting different parts of the continent from other tourists. Jobs are therefore created. Land is retained in its natural state and land previously used as farmland or for other uses is restored. Now the land protected for wildlife is a massive 1,400,000 square kilometres. All wildlife populations have increased, with those of rare species particularly notable. Interestingly, the population growth of trophy species is not affected by the sport, partly due to the anti-poaching measures local people are encouraged to introduce.*

### **Section (b)**

*Thick forests clothe the hills and mountains of this part of Nepal. Bamboo is commonly seen, and tropical fruit trees alongside cardamom, banyan and rhododendrons, are also often found. Deep gorges slice through the landscape, creating enormous lichen and moss-covered cliffs, on some of which are situated huge hives of Himalayan honey bees. Steep paths wind between terraced fields and through the forests to clearings and huts or villages.*

Here are some ways in which summaries could be improved:

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

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/31

Directed Writing and Composition

## Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for writing, although there were ten marks available for reading in **Question 1**. The requirements for doing well were to:

- write with a specific audience in mind and adapt content and style to that audience
- structure each answer overall and sequence sentences in well-formed, individual paragraphs
- create cogent and effective arguments and present descriptions and stories that were credible, original and engaging in their content
- write in a variety of well-formed sentence types, including complex sentences
- use a wide range of effective and appropriate vocabulary.

## General comments

This paper was frequently well answered. The writing was often lively, varied and original, and there was an awareness of the requirements set by the mark scheme, which remains the same from session to session with the exception of content for the Reading mark scheme. The general standard was high and the following general comments are designed to show where improvements for subsequent sessions can be made.

While **Question 1** was well answered, there were responses that needed to move beyond competently summarising the arguments from the passage. It is important that candidates understand how to develop and evaluate ideas and opinions from the reading material. This aspect of the question is dealt with later in this report.

Most responses were competently written in paragraphs. This was essential to the answers to **Questions 1, 2 and 4** and highly advisable for the answers to **Question 3**. While there was a case for writing static descriptions in one paragraph, most of the writing involved different stages or aspects of the topic and because of the length of the writing, it was necessary to demonstrate the structure of the response. There were also some unequal paragraphs. Frequently there was a need to divide one that was very long, for example just short of a side of writing.

Much of the writing showed evidence of thought and planning. It was advisable to think carefully and to plan at least simply before writing a response to the composition questions. Both the narratives required a structure, with some sense of climax and a convincing ending, and the first of the descriptions also indicated a pattern. The two topics for argumentative/discursive writing required candidates to plan a series of varied ideas and arguments before writing. **Question 3(b)** needed planning to avoid repetition and running out of sufficient material.

The best writing used a wide range of appropriate vocabulary. 'Appropriate' meant that the language, particularly in descriptions, had to be precise enough to communicate pictures and feelings convincingly from the writer to the reader. The language enlightened the reader rather than showed off vocabulary and images conveyed the unusual in terms that were suitable or helpful.

The best of the writing included few or no mistakes, but some otherwise good writers made a number of errors. Many of these were spelling mistakes of common words such as 'immediately', 'completely', 'tomorrow', 'accommodation', 'safety' and 'environment'. There was still much confusion over 'there', 'their' and 'they're' and especially, 'your' and 'you're'. Many sentences started with 'also'. 'And' was overused to start sentences rather than used for special effect. There was much merging of words such as 'alot' and 'atleast'.

Many scripts had few or no punctuation errors but some punctuation was inaccurate, particularly sentence separation (or 'comma splicing'). Short sentences were sometimes joined together because there was a relationship between them, but not a grammatical one. While there appeared to be less joining together of sentences with 'then' and 'also', pronouns were used as conjunctions. It was important to correctly use commas, especially in longer sentences, to aid clarity of meaning. Greater care is required over the accurate use of apostrophes.

The commonest grammatical error appeared to be the confusion of 'amount' or 'less' (of quantity) and 'few/er' (of number). In the writing of descriptions some responses needed to main control over present and past tenses and all 'sentences' required finite verbs.

The paper asked for one composition only. There were no common rubric errors, but some scripts contained brief answers to **Questions 2, 3 and 4**.

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

**Question 1: Read the following transcript of a radio interview with two candidates who discuss their views on taking a year out between school and university. Write an article for your school or college publication in which you consider the value of taking a gap year. In your article you should identify and evaluate the different views expressed by Mali and Teri about gap years and use your own ideas to support your comments. Base your ideas on what you have read in the transcript. Be careful to use your own words.**

**[25 marks]**

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

This transcript was accessible since the topic of taking a year out between school and university was one that was of specific or general concern. It also offered many possibilities for an evaluation of the ideas and opinions that were put forward by both speakers.

Some of the answers indicated a personal preference, but many responses made it clear that the issue was one where the advantages and disadvantages had to be weighed against each other. As usual, no credit was given for a notional 'right' answer, and the marks for reading indicated how well the different views were explained and evaluated.

### **The marks for reading**

The first bullet required responses to 'identify and evaluate' the different views expressed about gap years. The word 'evaluate' refers to ideas and opinions, whether they were worth considering and, in this case, for whom they were most applicable.

Good evaluations started with the premise that both twins were concerned with their future careers in university and the world of work, and that both of them made the right decision. The best answers took the experiences of the twins and then generalised them for the readers of the article. Some did not even mention the twins and in doing so made an automatic evaluation and not a summary.

Some took the view that if you had a good university place and were undertaking a long and difficult course (such as medicine), there was no point in losing the rhythm of learning and a year out of your life, putting the world of work one year farther off. However, these responses did tackle issues such as finding the course heavy going and not being able to gain work experience while at university – the answers to both these problems were in the passage.

Good responses also considered the problem of learning fatigue after years of examinations and what to do if your results were a little disappointing. A gap year could allow you (with proper planning) to concentrate on what your career might be, and there were several advantages that added up to increased maturity.

Some answers dwelt on the idea of maturity and tried to show how a gap year could effectively add to this. It was at this point that the dangers of a misspent gap year were considered.

An answer that isolated at least some of the issues and discussed them easily met the requirement at Band 1 'to give a thorough, perceptive, convincing evaluation'. It was understood that in a passage that contained so much material, it was not possible to include every bit, so credit was given to those who selected intelligently and who were able to present and discuss the overall theme of the passage.

Marks of 5 and 6 were given to responses that summarised the ideas of the passage without evaluating or explaining. Some painstakingly reproduced what Mali and Teri said, so that the summary was very factual and mechanical, and these tended to receive 5 marks for reading.

Responses which did not cover much of the passage consequently did not demonstrate that it had been read from beginning to end. There was also evidence of superficial reading that slightly misinterpreted the detail of the passage. Where little material was reproduced the mark for reading was no more than 4.

### The marks for writing

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

Credit was given for a good introduction, which established a link with the likely readership of the article and contained one or two ideas that were relevant to what was to follow. An example of such an introduction was:

*Do you love learning and examinations? Or are you already feeling fed up with the endless cycle of homework and testing and just want a break? Just cast your mind forward two years when you will be leaving the school and taking up that treasured university place. What will you be thinking then? There has been a lot of talk lately about the pros and cons of taking a year off – a so-called gap year. It may seem attractive to many of you but this article will look into some of the things you ought to think about.*

Many responses started with a much more straightforward introduction that was appropriate, but which missed some opportunities to write effectively:

*This week there was an interesting programme in which the twins Teri and Mali were interviewed about their opinions about gap years. Teri went on a gap year before taking up a teaching course and Mali went straight to university to learn how to become a doctor.*

### Style and audience

Many responses were written in an appropriate style for an article. Most of them were in formal English, but some were less formal, given that the readers were fellow candidates. Because the passage was a transcript of an interview there was less likelihood of copying whole sentences and phrases, but some articles did contain lifting, and a reminder is given that all work should be as far as possible in original language. Not all responses were written in a style that acknowledged the readers, but some had a strong voice that was most commonly evident in the introductory paragraph. The best responses were written in confident, fluent sentences and with a wide range of language. Some less good answers were accurately written, but in short, unvaried sentences with a narrow range of language. The least good answers did not give evidence of a sufficient amount of language to write in an acceptable version of standard English.

### Structure

Articles should be written with paragraphs. Lack of paragraphs made reading difficult and was sometimes an indication of ideas which required sequencing. Other answers consisted of an introduction, a paragraph about Mali's view, a longer one about Teri, and a final discussion and evaluation. The best structures were those that reconstructed the reading material. For example, after an effective introduction there might be a paragraph about university courses, another about knowing what you wanted as a career and a third about maturity and learning for life. These answers were more effective because they established a strong overview of the reading material and selected detail to illustrate their thoughts.

## Accuracy

Some answers were so well written stylistically that a mark in Band 1 could still be given as a best fit even if there were occasional minor errors. Nevertheless, good writers should be aiming for accurate spelling and use of commas and apostrophes in the right places. It was noted that good writers did not start sentences with 'also' and 'and', although they did occasionally use 'therefore' and 'however' inappropriately when joining sentences. Less good answers were characterised by frequent errors, some of them serious, and there were examples of double errors made in the use of a single word.

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

- Make sure that you select ideas and opinions from the reading material and evaluate them in relation to the context of the task.
- Especially look for arguments that are inconsistent and be aware of the difference between fact and opinion.
- Always use your own words. Never copy whole phrases and sentences from the passage.
- Be aware of the genre you are using for your answer. Think carefully of how you present an article or a letter, for example.
- Write with a voice. Think of who your reader is and express your point of view firmly.
- As always, end sentences with full stops, put commas in the right places and remember apostrophes.

## Section 2: Composition

### Question 2: Argumentative/discursive writing

(a) Does music divide or unite people? Give your views.

[25]

OR

(b) 'People should give up their cars to save the earth'. Do you agree with this statement?

[25]

It is important to remind Centres that candidate who are able to provide a convincing structure and have sufficient content points to develop should attempt this type of question.

The best answers were those that contained a wide selection of ideas and developed each one at a satisfying length. They had an overall shape, so that the reader did not feel that content was arranged in a random order. Different parts of the whole were treated with similar importance. The arguments could be followed and the sequences avoided repetition.

Average responses contained some good ideas but were less consistent. Some started well but it is important that the quality of the content maintained consistency. Repetition, particularly towards the end or in the final paragraph, should be avoided.

The first of the two topics was answered fairly well. It was not particularly important that knowledge of music should be demonstrated, although the occasional illustration from all genres was helpful to the reader in explaining a point. Answers that gave arguments both for dividing and uniting were on the whole better because there was more that could be said. Some answers confined themselves to rather limited ideas such as friends enjoying the same type of music, while others discussed wider, social aspects such as national songs, football chants and music in church. Some showed how nationalism was connected with music and others discussed how rap music divided age groups and was sometimes associated with gangs and wrongdoing. The richest responses were those which dealt with music and society.

The second choice, about giving up cars, was very well done. There was plenty of material here and the best answers showed how our modern society was dependent on cars, how there were other causes of global warming and how technology might save us all. The consequences of giving up cars were too awkward to countenance. Some responses gave a neat summary of the scope of the writing to come in a

well-phrased introduction, and this set out a good structure for the essay. Arguments for the abolition of cars were not always so strong, but there was no 'right' answer and freedom of expression and ideas was as ever expected. Some responses covered both sides of the argument to good effect. The only weakness was where the issue was sidetracked by a long piece on the nature of global warming.

For style and accuracy, the highest marks were given for clarity of expression, and this was helped by the judicious use of a wide range of specific vocabulary. Nevertheless it was wise not to use too advanced a vocabulary since this type of writing involved complex argument, and sometimes the more abstract arguments about music became lost in a plethora of words. Some answers contained several examples of comma splicing, which made following arguments more difficult.

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

- Make sure you have a variety of ideas at your disposal.
- Build them into a linked structure with convincing connectives.
- Develop each idea at sufficient length and sequence sentences within paragraphs.
- Try to avoid writing abstractly and use specific examples to engage your reader's attention.
- Use clear and precise English.

### **Question 3: Descriptive writing**

(a) **You are in a crowd of people waiting to see a total eclipse of the sun. Describe what you witness from the moment the moon starts to move across the sun to the point when it is light again. Include your thoughts and feelings throughout and the reactions of the crowd.** [25]

OR

(b) **Describe the character of someone who has had an effect on your life.** [25]

The first option was excellently done. Much has been said about the importance of writing descriptions where there is some variety of focus, for example of describing what happens in a short time scale and from different angles. This topic provided a structure and variety. The structure was the progression of the eclipse and the variety was the description of the crowd, the eclipse itself and the feelings of the writer. The challenge for candidates was to get it all into a short space. The occasional answer spent too much time describing individuals in the crowd so that there was little time left for the all-important eclipse. The descriptions of the eclipse were nearly all remarkably accurate and often effectively conveyed. The context provided much variety. Some answers were written in time past so that superstition was evident amongst the crowd. In others, the crowd was described as ignorant sightseers who were temporarily silenced when all was dark and who melted away after the event as if they did not care – leaving the writer alone and greatly moved by the occasion. Some responses were ineffective because the picture of the eclipse was muddled and confused through over-ambitious use of language. Some of the imagery was inappropriate so that the picture was lost and not enhanced.

The second option generated some excellent answers when the notion of 'character' was considered. This was important so that the description was not only of the appearance of the person, which meant that there was little new to say by the end of the writing. This option needed careful thought and planning. It was important to be clear in conveying who the person was and exactly what the effect on the writer's life was. Another part of the plan was to describe the person's character, and this was sometimes best extended by the occasional anecdote. With the description of appearance, this made a good structure. Some responses consisted of the story of how the writers met their boy/girlfriends, which was not a description and had very little descriptive content.

Some care was necessary in writing descriptions. Many of the style marks were for the use of language, but there were errors where the present tense was correctly used but not sustained. There were still some cases of writing sentences that had no finite verb and there were more sentence separation errors than in the answers to **Question 2**.

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

- Allow for a change of focus, a little movement and a short time span. Do not write a static description.

- However, do not confuse a description with a story.
- Try to make your description as real as possible. You should be able to see and hear what you write.
- It is good practice to write in the present tense, but do not change tense once you have started your writing.
- Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.
- Be especially careful to use full stops at the ends of sentences.

#### Question 4: Narrative writing

- (a) **You have travelled backwards or forwards in a time machine. Begin your story with the opening of the machine door after you have arrived in the past or the future.**

[25]

OR

- (b) **Write a story that starts with the opening of a door to a room you are not supposed to enter.**

[25]

Neither of these options was likely to be based on events from the writers' lives, and the first was a potential science fiction story. Hence it was important that the storyline for both narratives should be credibly presented. This was best done when realistic description was added to the events, and it was this that made the difference between convincing and incredible narratives. Both questions gave ample opportunity for engaging stories.

Answers to the first option were often about the future and were stories of what might happen to the earth if various forms of destruction took place. The best of these described the scene as the door opened and gradually drip-fed the story of what had happened to cause it. In one story no people were to be seen until a boy took the protagonist underground to protect him from the soldiers who had turned into killing machines. The story was convincing because no attempt was made to crowd the plot out with event after event. Stories from the past sometimes made use of the Ray Bradbury theme where a small change caused by the visitor could have disastrous effects. The best of these stories slowly unravelled as they went on rather than providing the reader with lists of events.

The second question was also well done. Again, most started with a description of the door and the difficulty of turning the handle, with the added feelings of the protagonist as his/her determination was mixed with guilt. This carefully measured opening needed to be maintained beyond the sight of the room beyond, and the climax also needed to be well managed. There was a good deal of variety of plot, the most common being the discovery of a secret laboratory or documents that revealed the true identity of the protagonist. In one case it all had to do with the wrapping of birthday presents. If handled carefully so that the events did not follow on too hastily, these answers made a good read. Some responses were less realistic and included unnecessary violence, violent characters and various shootings. The best stories were the most subtle and, indeed, those that had a positive ending.

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

- Remember that stories do not consist of events alone.
- Try to present imaginative content credibly, as if it were real.
- Include realistic details, description and the thoughts and feelings of characters in the story.
- Write a story with a reasonable time span (not one that is too long).
- You can improve a story by using devices such as time lapses, flashbacks and two narrators.
- Make sure you use a wide range of appropriate language.
- Originality is important. Try to think of unusual approaches to your topic.
- If you write more than you expected, make sure you maintain accuracy at the end of the story.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/32

Directed Writing and Composition

## Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for writing, although there were ten marks available for reading in **Question 1**. The requirements for doing well were to:

- write with a specific audience in mind and adapt content and style to that audience
- structure each answer overall and sequence sentences in well-formed, individual paragraphs
- create cogent and effective arguments and present descriptions and stories that were credible, original and engaging in their content
- write in a variety of well-formed sentence types, including complex sentences
- use a wide range of effective and appropriate vocabulary.

## General comments

This paper was frequently well answered. The writing was often fluent, engaging and varied and there was an awareness of the requirements set by the mark scheme, which remains the same from session to session with the exception of content for the Reading mark scheme. The general standard was high and the following general comments are designed to show where improvements for subsequent sessions can be made.

While **Question 1** was often well answered, there were responses that needed to move beyond summarising the arguments. These responses tended to begin with a focused introduction that showed general understanding of the debate and a closing rallying call for the readers of the article to 'do their part'. Less successful summaries gathered a group of basic points for one group and then did exactly the same with the other group. This prevented candidates being able to effectively organise, link, develop or evaluate opinions from the reading material. This aspect of the question is dealt with later in the report.

Most responses were competently written in paragraphs. This was essential to the answers to all questions, but it was often disregarded in the responses to **Question 3**, the descriptive essays. Most of the writing involved different stages or aspects of the topic. Therefore a sense of structure was necessary to show how descriptive details and ideas were linked. Occasionally there were long or unequal paragraphs in descriptions that panned across a scene, although short paragraphs could have been used to help focus on particular ideas that were reflective or most pertinent.

Much of the writing showed evidence of thought and planning. It was advisable to think carefully and to provide at least a basic plan before writing responses to the composition questions. Both the narratives required a structure, with some sense of climax and a convincing ending, especially the second topic where it was important to consider the quotation and position it relevantly to highlight its significance. The two topics for argumentative/discursive writing required candidates to plan a series of varied ideas and arguments before writing. **Question 3(b)** in particular needed planning to avoid repetition and running out of relevant material.

The best writing gave evidence of a wide range of appropriate vocabulary. 'Appropriate' meant that the language, particularly in descriptions, had to be precise enough to communicate pictures and feelings convincingly from the writer to the reader. Some of the answers contained language that was designed to show off vocabulary but it sometimes confused rather than enlightened the reader. Images were sometimes used that did not convey the unusual in terms that were either suitable or helpful.

The best of the writing included few or no mistakes, but some otherwise good writers made a number of errors. Many of these were spelling mistakes of words such as 'emissions', 'congestion', 'pollution', 'aeroplane', 'government' and 'environment', words provided in the passage. There was still much confusion over 'there', 'their' and 'they're' and especially, 'your' and 'you're'. Many sentences started with 'also'. 'And' was overused to start sentences rather than used for special effect. There was much merging of words such as 'alot' and 'atleast'.

Many scripts had few or no punctuation errors, but some punctuation was inaccurate, particularly sentence separation (or 'comma splicing'). Short sentences were frequently joined together because there was a relationship between them, but not a grammatical one. While there appeared to be less joining together of sentences with 'then', pronouns were used as conjunctions. It was important to correctly use commas, especially in longer sentences, to aid clarity of meaning. Greater care is required over the accurate use of apostrophes.

The commonest grammatical error appeared to be the confusion of 'amount' or 'less' (of quantity) and 'fewer' (of number), particularly in **Question 1**. In the writing of descriptions some responses needed to maintain control over present and past tenses and all 'sentences' required finite verbs. Those candidates who opted for the discursive essays, found the range of more complex tenses required in both these responses a challenge.

Most of the handwriting was pleasingly legible, but some was very difficult to follow, leading to some words that were not decipherable.

The paper asked for one composition only. There were no common rubric errors, but occasional scripts contained brief answers to one each from **Questions 2, 3 and 4**.

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

**Question 1: Read the claims of an environmental organisation and the press statement from an airline pilots' association. Write a school magazine article with the title 'What is the *real* truth about air travel?' In your article you should identify and evaluate the different views on global warming and air travel and use your own ideas to support your comments. Base your ideas on what you have read. Be careful to use your own words. [25]**

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

The bullet 'facts' in the first text, and the prose style of the other, made accessible the most pertinent ideas put forward by each organisation. Most candidates seemed to understand the dangers of pollution and the 'greenhouse effect' and understood that the case here was specifically about air travel. Armed with the claims and counter claims regarding air travel, candidates had a plethora of arguments to consider and it was this evaluative process that made the difference between a balanced article and a summary of separate points. Many candidates initially gave some thought to the title of the article they were about to write, 'What is the *real* truth about air travel?' They understood immediately that it was up to them to navigate their way through possibly false or exaggerated 'facts' or opinions in an attempt to write a clear article for their school magazine.

Some of the answers made it clear that it was wrong just to blame one particular mode of transport for the evils of global pollution and used this stance to construct their own argument and evaluation by picking up the necessary information from both texts. Other responses, detached from any views they had on the topic, used the arguments of one organisation against the other and the result was a summary, albeit a dovetailed one.

### **The marks for reading**

The first bullet required responses to 'identify and evaluate' the different views expressed on global warming and air travel. It was clear that identifying the views from both texts was not as high order a skill as considering what they both had to say and deciding what points might be spurious, what points to agree with and what to dismiss. Both texts had valid points, but responses which picked up on the 'blame game' of the environmentalists and, in turn, the 'scapegoat' position of the airline pilots' association did well to start. There were some good writers who having embarked on an overview such as this needed to use the detail of the texts, rather than move towards their own discursive essay on global warming.

After a lively introduction, good evaluations started by interrogating the bullet points of the environmentalists. The best candidates managed to steer a middle way between the two texts, suggesting that some care should be taken when deciding to fly or drive or sail. They often suggested that everyone should take responsibility for reducing their personal carbon footprint, with some suggestions of how this might be done. The strongest pieces saw little point in wagging a finger at particular industries, and some good candidates properly evaluated the two views, concluding that all modes of transport cause pollution and that blaming one over the other made people feel helpless or less willing to take responsibility themselves.

Better responses also argued with some of the points in the texts. Some said that people living near airports made their choice and should therefore expect noise, or that the same level of noise could be heard if one lived beside a motorway or next to a railway station or port. Some grasp of the bias in each text, and the ability to make an argument that did not depend on a mechanical reading of facts could gain marks in Band 1.

A mark of 7 was generally given in cases where there was a strong introduction, showing a good overview of the situation, a very competent summary of both organisations' views, and a conclusive ending that sealed the debate with a little evaluation.

Marks of 5 and 6 tended to be given to responses that reproduced arguments without comment. It was occasionally clear that understanding was not secure when some of the details were misread, such as the figures on rail travel or the figures regarding the amount of carbon dioxide produced. For average candidates, a reliance on reiterating the details and simply agreeing with one side, almost always that of the airline industry, was prevalent. An acceptance of the facts at face value characterised these middle range responses.

Some responses did not use much content from the texts and there were serious gaps in understanding. Marks of 4 and below were given for a few simple, reproduced points without links or where the response was only to one of the texts.

### **The marks for writing**

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

Credit was given for a good introduction, which established a link with the likely readership of the article and contained one or two ideas that were relevant to what was to follow. An example of such an introduction was:

*The subject of air travel in relation to the well being of the environment has always been quite controversial. We, at school, often ignore the down sides of air travel as they are our fastest route home to family and friends and, let's face it, who does not like the idea of being pampered and fed a few thousand feet above the earth? However, the popularity of travelling by air has boomed since 1960, with most people finding it a quicker and more convenient alternative compared to travel by rail, road or sea. Estimates suggest that the number of people choosing air travel to get around will be expected to double in the following fifteen years. What should we, as a community and as a school, do to prevent air travel from stamping a permanent footprint on Planet Earth? Should we actually feel guilt when choosing air travel? Is travel by air even that harmful to the environment as perceived?*

Many responses started with a much more straightforward introduction that was appropriate, but which missed some opportunities to write effectively:

*Air travel has been used as an important transportation by many people. It's easy to travel far distances in a short time. Some people are saying that air travel is really harmful for the environment. Air travel companies gave some opposite opinions.*

### **Style and audience**

Many responses were written in an appropriate style for an article. Most of them were in formal English, but some were less formal, given that the readers were fellow candidates. The question 'What is the *real* truth about air travel?' required that candidates took a stance and delivered an engaging article that other candidates would find interesting. Those who managed to do this successfully considered bringing the topic into the realm of sixteen year olds who used air travel to go on holidays, family visits and, most importantly,

home, especially when they were at school far from home. Others, who tried to establish a sense of audience, often included too many rhetorical questions without sufficient evidence to satisfy the reader.

### Structure

Most articles were written in paragraphs, sometimes in four paragraphs: an introduction, an outline of the environmentalists' 'facts', an outline of the airline pilots' association views and a conclusion. Others structured their responses less mechanically, when they wrote about the arguments and counter arguments in each text. However, this too could be mechanical, if a quotation from one text matched a quotation from another. Paragraphs that contained elements of evaluation, contrast and development, showed assimilation of both texts, and created articles that sounded authentic and real, not a combination of three different voices, achieved well. These articles were cohesive, engaging pieces of journalism.

### Accuracy

Some answers were so well written stylistically that a mark in Band 1 could still be given as a best fit even if there were occasional minor errors. Nevertheless, good writers should be aiming for accurate spelling and use of commas and apostrophes in the right places. It was noted that good writers did not start sentences with 'also', 'but' and 'and'. The very useful 'however' and 'therefore' could have been better exploited. Less good answers were characterised by frequent errors, some of them serious, and there were examples of double errors made in the use of a single word.

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

- Make sure that you select ideas and opinions from the reading material and evaluate them in relation to the context of the task.
- Especially look for arguments that are inconsistent and be aware of the difference between fact and opinion.
- Always use your own words. Never copy whole phrases and sentences from the passage.
- Be aware of the genre you are using for your answer. Think carefully of how you present an article or a letter, for example.
- Write with a voice. Think of who your reader is and express your point of view firmly.
- As always, end sentences with full stops, put commas in the right places and remember apostrophes.

### Section 2: Composition

#### Question 2: Argumentative/discursive writing

- (a) **If you were offered the chance to learn everything about your future, would you take it? Argue why you would or would not want to know what was going to happen to you.** [25]

OR

- (b) **Do you believe that individuals who are wealthy enough should be expected to fund good causes?** [25]

It is important to remind Centres that only candidates who are able to provide a convincing structure and have sufficient content points to develop should attempt this type of question.

The best answers were those that contained a wide selection of ideas and developed each one of them at a satisfying length. They were characterised by a personal voice and secure organisation of ideas. There was fluidity and a sense of overall shape that came from careful planning. The same ideas were not revisited; instead contrary views were considered. Different parts of the whole were treated with similar importance.

Average responses contained some good ideas but were less consistent. Some started well but it is important that the quality of the content maintained consistency. Repetition, particularly towards the end or in the final paragraph, should be avoided.

The first of the two topics, the possibility of knowing about one's future, was very popular, and the marks given covered the whole range. However, too many candidates thought perhaps that this was an easy task and went straight into contradiction or paradox that was repetitive rather than a progressive discussion. Better candidates wrote about the temptation to find out about future academic or professional success.

Once they had interrogated how knowing about these things in advance would change their entire experience of life (and supplied different instances in their own lives), many sage aphorisms such as 'losing the excitement of life' or 'life is a journey, not a destination' were voiced.

Responses of average quality tended to list situations in a 'what if' structure, discussing their reactions to various discoveries about the future. Whilst these were relevant responses, they tended to be a bit less rounded in their views and more mechanical in their approach, often written in a list like and pedestrian style.

Many candidates did not consider how knowledge of major future events would affect their present day lives. There were weaker responses that dwelt on whether the future could be changed, with most not realising the flaw in their logic until half way through. 'My future self looking at my present self would have learned all the lessons from the future so I would not make the same mistakes' was typical of the comments in these responses.

The second choice, regarding distribution of the wealth of the very rich, was also popular. Some took an approach that focused on the impact wealthy people's money could have on other's lives, though some assumed that wealthy people wasted their money on too many cars they never used or on multiple homes. Whilst this high moral ground was interesting, it became predictable. Better responses talked about the benefits to wealthy people themselves of being generous and mentioned reality television programmes such as 'The Secret Millionaire'. Others considered that they would get their reward in the afterlife. Those who looked at the sense of obligation implied in the question, and whether it was justified or not, generally got higher marks because the discussion was more complex and carefully argued. On the other hand, there were quite a few responses that, in essence, showed no understanding why the wealthy should give up well-deserved monies that they had worked so hard to obtain.

For style and accuracy, the highest marks were given for clarity of expression, and this was helped by the judicious use of a wide range of specific vocabulary. Nevertheless it was wise not to use too advanced a vocabulary since this type of writing involved complex argument, and sometimes the more abstract arguments about life and the future became lost in a plethora of words. Some answers contained several examples of comma splicing, which made following arguments more difficult.

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

- Make sure you have a variety of ideas at your disposal.
- Build them into a linked structure with convincing connectives.
- Develop each idea at sufficient length and sequence sentences within paragraphs.
- Try to avoid writing abstractly and use specific examples to engage your reader's attention.
- Use clear and precise English.

### **Question 3: Descriptive writing**

**(a) Describe children playing with a grandparent. [25]**

**OR**

**(b) Describe a time when you felt homesick. Where were you at the time, and what were your thoughts and feelings? [25]**

The first option was often extremely well done. The best responses were detailed and evocative rather than general and sentimental. Although these presented rather stereotypical portraits of older people, the details brought to life the contrast between exuberant grandchildren who bounced, screamed with delight and generally wrecked living rooms whilst an out-of-breath grandfather or grandmother, dishevelled and exhausted, mustered up just enough energy to satisfy another game demanded of them. Many of the responses were written in stages. They covered the 'look who's here!' element of surprise and the initial pristine condition of the children and the grandparent, a tentative exploration of a game or a quiet reading and on to the raucous play of an uninhibited grandparent following the directions of increasingly wild children.

The best were the fly-on-the-wall accounts that clearly conjured up candidates' early memories or dreams of the ideal grandparent. Colours were specific; primary colours of grandparents' clothes that stood out amidst the hurly-burly of play, hair was 'silver-white', cheeks were red to match the over-excited children, and the white nose hair and tributaries of blue veins all created larger than life portraits. There were also unusual accounts of seemingly colourless grandparents or elegant fashion conscious grandmothers who initially put

up some resistance, but who ended up engrossed in more quiet play. These included storytelling, sharing and reliving some past childhood secrets or, in one case, a grandfather with a mysterious past showing magic tricks whilst the children were rapt in silence. One response described a grandfather meeting his toddler grandson for the first time and taking him into a vegetable patch to explore, taste and name each item there. The bright colours stained on the boy's new clothes, and on the lapels of the grandfather's suit provided a subtle reflection of the time spent in the garden.

Weaker responses often named and described the games being played, rather than concentrating on the play aspect between the two, and they also relied too heavily on stereotypes with insufficient vocabulary to breathe life into them.

The second option was also quite popular and generally candidates achieved well. Better responses used the candidates' experience of staying with relatives, a holiday away from the family or, often very productively, starting in a new boarding school. The best really captured the misery and loneliness of homesickness, sometimes offering quite mature and thoughtful contrasts between the home they loved and the place they were in. One very strong response began in the cacophony of a large city where every aspect offended the senses. Cooking smells were sharp and foreign, peoples' faces were ugly and contorted, hearing was assaulted by the sound of traffic and tastes were sharp and bitter compared to the original island home of the candidate, which was remembered as a jewel in a sea of turquoise. These contrasting descriptions painted homesickness as the absence of all things familiar and comforting, and made excellent reading.

Weaker responses described the kind of physical effects taught to describe fear, although homesickness is not entirely about being afraid, and some wrote narratives, outlining a school trip from packing to setting off to coming home, with a paragraph of description of feelings in the middle.

Some care was necessary in writing descriptions. Many of the style marks were for the use of language, but there were errors where the present tense was appropriately used but not sustained. There were still some cases of writing sentences that had no finite verb and there were more sentence separation errors than in the answers to **Question 2**.

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

- Allow for a change of focus, a little movement and a short time span. Do not write a static description.
- However, do not confuse a description with a story.
- Try to make your description as real as possible. You should be able to see and hear what you write.
- It is good practice to write in the present tense, but do not change tense once you have started your writing.
- Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.
- Be especially careful to use full stops at the ends of sentences.

#### **Question 4: Narrative writing**

**(a) Write a story called 'The Rock'. [25]**

**OR**

**(b) 'The lady, her face barely visible through the thick lace veil, turned the card over to reveal...'. Begin or end a story with these words. [25]**

Answers to the first question were extremely varied and there was a wide range of ideas, at all levels of ability. There were places and people described as rocks; the best places were realistic, often based on memories of childhood, which had once seemed impenetrable or could not be climbed, but upon return they had lost their power and proved to be much tamer. The people tended to be embedded in the past as tall, intimidating forces; heroic fathers and war hero uncles. The main aspect of the better essays involved a change in perspective or focus. One effective use of a place consisted of a very convincing internal monologue of a soldier running from fast approaching enemy soldiers to a rock from which a helicopter could rescue him. By the time he was shot, the reader was very involved in his fate, and was both shocked and relieved at the soldier's reflection that it was a serious enough injury to get him out of the army for good.

There were many rocks which had come from outer space or those with magical powers, and although there was potential in these narratives in the build up and description of the rocks, the narration tended to be weaker once they had been found or secured, highlighting a lack of planning. Weaker stories of this type, in

which rocks glowed or exploded, were less believable and cohesive from the outset and failed to secure the reader's interest. Many became a 'series of events', which struggled to present a credible protagonist.

The second question was popular and provided scope for vivid imagination and an exciting ending for more subtle, credible narratives. The task often appealed to candidates who envisaged the traditional fortune-teller image and imagined a great narrative behind this figure, without planning in advance elements such as links and cohesion. Some of the responses were weakened as the back story was vast; they contained too many characters who did not fit into the rushed denouement; or the narrative prompt from the question was often placed at the end as an after thought.

However, there were some effective stories, which avoided the fairground fortune-teller scenario, with ladies in veils turning out to be grieving widows at their husbands' gravesides. Sometimes more adult themes, of gambling men or the search for a lost love, started out with great potential. It is important that responses do not become derivative of popular films or books, where candidates do not have sufficient life experience on such matters.

The cards often revealed horrible future events, which came true in a variety of ways. One of the most engaging narratives used the sinister fairground scene in Ray Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes* to tell the story of different characters that were so desperate to change aspects of their lives that they took risks on different rides, collecting a card afterwards. The lady who turned over each of their cards displayed a new future for them that contained a macabre twist.

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

- Remember that stories do not consist of events alone.
- Try to present imaginative content credibly, as if it were real.
- Include realistic details, description and the thoughts and feelings of characters in the story.
- Write a story with a reasonable time span (not one that is too long).
- You can improve a story by using devices such as time lapses, flashbacks and two narrators.
- Make sure you use a wide range of appropriate language.
- Originality is important. Try to think of unusual approaches to your topic.
- If you write more than you expected, make sure you maintain accuracy at the end of the story.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/33

Directed Writing and Composition

## Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for writing, although there were ten marks available for reading in **Question 1**. The requirements for doing well were to:

- write with a specific audience in mind and adapt content and style to that audience
- structure each answer overall and sequence sentences in well-formed, individual paragraphs
- create cogent and effective arguments and present descriptions and stories that were credible, original and engaging in their content
- write in a variety of well-formed sentence types, including complex sentences
- use a wide range of effective and appropriate vocabulary.

## General comments

This paper was frequently well answered. The writing was often lively, varied and original, and there was an awareness of the requirements set by the mark scheme, which remains the same from session to session with the exception of content for the Reading mark scheme. The general standard was high and the following general comments are designed to show where improvements for subsequent sessions can be made.

While **Question 1** was well answered, there were responses that needed to move beyond competently summarising the arguments from the passage. It is important that candidates understand how to develop and evaluate ideas and opinions from the reading material. This aspect of the question is dealt with later in this report.

Most responses were competently written in paragraphs. This was essential to the answers to **Question 1**, **2** and **4** and highly advisable for the answers to **Question 3**. While there was a case for writing static descriptions in one paragraph, most of the writing involved different stages or aspects of the topic and because of the length of the writing, it was necessary to demonstrate the structure of the response. There were also some unequal paragraphs. Frequently there was a need to divide one that was very long, for example just short of a side of writing.

Much of the writing showed evidence of thought and planning. It was advisable to think carefully and to plan at least simply before writing a response to the composition questions. Both the narratives required a structure, with some sense of climax and a convincing ending. The two topics for argumentative/discursive writing were virtually impossible to answer without having planned a series of varied ideas and arguments before writing.

The best writing used a wide range of appropriate vocabulary. 'Appropriate' meant that the language, particularly in descriptions, had to be precise enough to communicate pictures and feelings convincingly from the writer to the reader. There were few examples of language that attempted to impress the reader too much or of imagery that did not convey descriptive pictures accurately. Effective images in **Question 3(b)** gave a clear picture of the expression on the warrior's face.

The best of the writing included few or no mistakes, but some otherwise good writers made a number of errors. Many of these were spelling mistakes of common words. There was still much confusion over 'there', 'their' and 'they're' and especially, 'your' and 'you're'. Many sentences started with 'also'. 'And' was overused to start sentences rather than used for special effect. There was much merging of words such as

'alot' and 'atleast'. There were also errors of agreement such as 'sports is', and confusion between 'one', 'they', 'you' and 'we'.

Many scripts had few or no punctuation errors, but some punctuation was inaccurate, particularly sentence separation (or 'comma splicing'). Short sentences were sometimes joined together because there was a relationship between them, but not a grammatical one. While there appeared to be less joining together of sentences with 'then' and 'also', pronouns were used as conjunctions. It was important to correctly use commas, especially in longer sentences, to aid clarity of meaning. Greater care is required over the accurate use of apostrophes.

The commonest grammatical error appeared to be the confusion of 'amount' or 'less' (of quantity) and 'few/er' (of number). In the writing of descriptions some responses needed to main control over present and past tenses and all 'sentences' required finite verbs.

The paper asked for one composition only. There were no common rubric errors, but some scripts contained brief answers to **Questions 2, 3 and 4**.

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

**Question 1: Read the article on sport by Charity Williams. Write a letter to Charity Williams expressing your views on what you have read. You may agree or disagree with the writer's arguments. In your letter you should identify and evaluate the writer's views about sport and use your own ideas to support your comments. Base your ideas on what you have read in the article. Be careful to use your own words.**

[25]

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

This article was accessible since the topic was one that everyone could appreciate and which meant something even to those who were not keen on sport. The article was a rather one-sided evaluation of arguments that were not always consistent. These included comments about footballers who were paid large sums for 'kicking a ball about' and the premise that amateur sport was somehow superior because it held on to some perhaps outdated values.

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

Most of the answers claimed that they agreed '100%' with Charity Williams' views and while this was perfectly within the terms of the question, it remained the duty of the writer of the letter to develop some of her arguments. The best of these answers used examples from local sport, such as matches that had been 'fixed' and particular sports personalities that had 'let their country down' or who had been injured.

The best of the answers agreed generally with Charity Williams but questioned the detail of some of her assertions. For example, many pointed out that injuries came with the professional game and that sports personalities knew the risks before entering the 'big time'. When commenting about money they pointed out that you needed plenty of money because of the commitment, the exposure to the media, insurance and the training. Above all, this was their job and they deserved to be paid well. While agreeing with the point about the atmosphere of a school swimming competition, it was said that these swimmers needed the example of top class athletes to encourage them. There was also some useful development of the concept of nationalism through sport, and the arguments about tourism and trade were developed.

The examples given above all help to explain what was meant in the question by 'evaluate'. It was not enough merely to reproduce the content of the article to meet the requirement at Band 1 'to give a thorough, perceptive, convincing evaluation'.

Less good answers summarised the passage and if this was done well in own words, it was generally worth a reading mark of 6. Where the passage was frequently loosely paraphrased or where sentences and phrases were copied, the mark was no more than 5. There was evidence that some candidates had not read the whole passage as no reference was made to the final paragraph, about amateur sports. This summed up what Charity Williams was saying and was essential to an overview of her article. Some answers only dealt with the first two paragraphs and made very brief references to the next two. Sometimes there was confusion between seat prices and the cost of staging professional events and between gambling and match

fixing. This was due to superficial reading. Where little material was used from the passage and there was evidence of incomplete reading, the mark was typically 3 or 4.

On the other hand it was not possible to include every point made in what was a dense article. Letters that developed and discussed three main points thoroughly often scored high marks for reading. For example responses could discuss the staging of the Olympics, the payment of large sums of money to players and corruption within the sport and the place of amateur events.

### **The marks for writing**

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

Credit was given for a good introduction, which established a link with the writer of the article and contained one or two ideas that were relevant to what was to follow. Here is an example of such an introduction, which established the right sort of style for a fruitful discussion:

*I read your article in yesterday's New York Times, which I found really interesting. Like you, I think we are reaching a turning point in sport where we have to consider the huge amounts of money that are poured into it. Generally speaking I agree with what you are saying, but there are one or two issues such as the place of amateurism that I would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you.*

Many responses started with a much more straightforward introduction that was appropriate, but which missed some opportunities to write effectively:

*Yesterday I read your article about the price of sport. There were some things that I agreed with and others that I disagreed with. I am writing you a letter to make my views clear.*

### **Style and audience**

Many responses were written in an appropriate style for a letter to someone who was not an established friend. Most of them were in formal English, but some were less formal, sometimes too much so. Expressions such as 'Hi man' and 'I'm gonna' were unsuitable in this context and seemed more typical of writing dialogue. This language style was often linked to poorly constructed sentences.

Most letters were written in original language, although there were a few expressions that were inappropriately copied. These included 'spirit of international friendliness', 'pay increasingly ridiculous sums' and 'turned from heroes into villains'. A reminder needs to be given that all work should be as far as possible in original language.

Not all responses were written in a style that acknowledged Charity Williams, but some had a strong voice that was most commonly evident in the introductory paragraph. The best responses were written in confident, fluent sentences and with a wide range of language. Some less good answers were accurately written, but in short, unvaried sentences with a narrow range of language. The least good answers were not always written in clear prose that conveyed meaning successfully.

### **Structure**

Articles should be written with paragraphs. Lack of paragraphs made reading difficult and was sometimes an indication of ideas which required sequencing. Other answers consisted of an introduction, paragraphs about various points from the passage (not always in any evident order of priority) and a final paragraph that tended to repeat the most important points already made. The best structures were those that presented three or four main arguments and established a strong overview of the reading material, selecting detail to illustrate the writers' thoughts.

### **Accuracy**

Some answers were so well written stylistically that a mark in Band 1 could still be given as a best fit even if there were occasional minor errors. Nevertheless, good writers should be aiming for accurate spelling and use of commas and apostrophes in the right places. It was noted that good writers did not start sentences with 'also' and 'and', although they did occasionally use 'therefore' and 'however' inappropriately when joining sentences. Less good answers were characterised by frequent errors, some of them serious, and there were examples of double errors made in the use of a single word.

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

- Make sure that you select ideas and opinions from the reading material and evaluate them in relation to the context of the task.
- Be sure to read the whole of the reading material, which may contain important information at the end.
- Especially, look for arguments that are inconsistent and be aware of the difference between fact and opinion.
- Always use your own words. Never copy whole phrases and sentences from the passage.
- Be aware of the genre you are using for your answer. Think carefully of how you present an article or a letter, for example.
- Write with a voice. Think of who your reader is and express your point of view firmly.
- As always, end sentences with full stops, put commas in the right places and remember apostrophes.

### Section 2: Composition

#### Question 2: Argumentative/discursive writing

(a) What do you think real friendship is?

[25]

OR

(b) 'You should be proud of your country'. Discuss this statement.

[25]

It is important to remind Centres that candidate who are able to provide a convincing structure and have sufficient content points to develop should attempt this type of question. Both of the topics required careful planning since they tended to be abstract.

The best answers were those that contained a wide selection of ideas and developed each one of them at a satisfying length. They had an overall shape, so that the reader did not feel that content was arranged in a random order. Different parts of the whole were treated with similar importance. The arguments could be followed and the sequences avoided repetition.

Average responses contained some good ideas but were less consistent. Some started well but it is important that the quality of the content maintained consistency. Repetition, particularly towards the end or in the final paragraph, should be avoided.

The first of the two topics was only sometimes answered well with a different paragraph for each varied aspect of friendship. There was an opportunity to start by writing about 'unreal' friendships such as those on Facebook, and then to think about whether 'real' friendships were formed in school or elsewhere. A third paragraph might discuss whether real friendships could be with members of your family, a fourth about what you looked for in a friend and finally what you thought you could give to a friendship in return. This would have given a good varied discussion of the topic.

Many of the responses wrote a long list of attributes of friendship, often without effective explanation and with frequent repetitions. Very few of these wrote about reciprocal friendship but the writing was enhanced slightly by examples of friendly acts, although many of these were unremarkable. These essays showed little sign of planning.

The second option was quite well written. There proved to be a good deal one could say about being proud of one's country. For example, you were proud because it provided you with a language, favourite food, national music and so on, and this made a good plan of varied ideas. Some responses took up the idea from the passage in **Question 1** and wrote at length about the pride one had for one's country when one was an athlete and how athletes contributed to the good name of their country. One original piece of writing gave a series of reasons why he was not proud of his country, a piece of writing that was rather moving. Some essays contrasted the music and sport of their country that inspired them when their economic situation forced them down. These were examples of original writing that avoided vague ideas and language.

For style and accuracy, the highest marks were given for clarity of expression, and this was helped by the judicious use of a wide range of specific vocabulary. Nevertheless it was wise not to use too advanced a vocabulary since this type of writing involved complex argument, and sometimes the more abstract arguments about friendship became unclear because of expression.

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

- Make sure you plan in order to have a variety of ideas at your disposal.
- Build them into a linked structure with convincing connectives.
- Develop each idea at sufficient length and sequence sentences within paragraphs.
- Try to avoid writing abstractly and use specific examples to engage your reader's attention.
- Use clear and precise English.

### Question 3: Descriptive writing

(a) From your imagination, describe a warrior or a hero at the moment of victory.

[25]

OR

(b) Describe the last moments before you leave a place forever.

[25]

The first option was well answered and there were comparatively few examples of responses that mistakenly gave a narrative of a battle (although sometimes memories of a recent battle were included). The wording of the question was specifically concerned with the moment of victory and there were opportunities not only to describe the warrior or hero but also the people surrounding him and the landscape.

In this session there appeared to be more originality of thought and even some risk taking in developing the content of descriptive writing, and there was a good deal of variety here. For the most part the description was set in the past, perhaps because of the word 'warrior', or the time was kept vague, probably on purpose. There was much effective description of the physical and emotional effects of the battle on the central figure and there was frequently a satisfactory ending, either a shout of triumph, a spectacular collapse, a ceremonial leading away or a lonely exit. Sometimes the warrior was surrounded by troops and sometimes, dead bodies. Heroes were often sporting heroes and these descriptions were sometimes presented in the first person.

Not only were these responses careful to avoid a narrative, but they were engaging because writers fixed their imaginative eye firmly on the central figure of the description and used language to make the situation seem credible to the reader.

Most responses to the second topic were about leaving home or a school with a host of memories and emotions that could be described. While many of these experiences may have been real, even where they were imaginary, it seemed as if the places were actual ones. These very moving descriptions consisted of a brief journey round the building and an account of the memories that came to the mind. For example, one writer described a very plain room with four small windows that had been her playroom and a place where all sorts of childhood activities had taken place. The sound of the vehicle ready to depart, or the shout of a parent interrupted nearly all these daydreams and made good endings. Such descriptions were exceptionally well done.

Other themes, such as the end of a seaside holiday or leaving a hiding place or a shelter after a storm, were not as strong, and gave the impression that they may have been re-creations of some work done in a practice session.

For style and accuracy, these descriptions gave opportunities for the use of a wide and varied vocabulary. Some care had to be taken not to use language for effect rather than for meaning, but most of the scripts used appropriate words. There was some carelessness over tense, where the present changed into the past and vice versa. Some sentences lacked finite verbs.

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

- Allow for a change of focus, a little movement and a short time span. Do not write a static description.
- However, do not confuse a description with a story.
- Try to make your description as real as possible. You should be able to see and hear what you write.
- It is good practice to write in the present tense, but do not change tense once you have started your writing.
- Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.
- Be especially careful to use full stops at the ends of sentences.

### Question 4: Narrative writing

(a) Write a story entitled 'Into the Wilderness'.

[25]

OR

(b) Write a story about someone who unintentionally did something which made headline news for one day.

[25]

Neither of these options was likely to be based on events from the writers' lives; hence it was important that the storyline of each option should be presented credibly. This was done the best when realistic description was added to the events, and it was this that made the difference between convincing and incredible narratives. Both questions gave ample opportunity for engaging stories.

The first option was a popular choice, and much of the writing built up a sense of tension and adventure, although it was sometimes difficult to present an effective climax and interesting ending. There was a good deal of variety of locale and event even where the setting was a common one, such as bear country. There were plane crashes, car breakdowns and a whole variety of isolated places. Many started off on a planned trip and something frightening happened en route. A few took it as a dare and gave up before the end. There were a number of camping holidays with strange noises at night, which still incorporated descriptions of places, feelings and reactions.

Less successful narratives were full of events and little else, and some used too much dialogue that contributed little to the plot, the characters in the narrative, or the range of language in the writing.

The second option was less commonly attempted, and many adopted the idea of the hero and rescued children from fires and so on, perhaps leaning on practice stories. In one response, it was not clear what the protagonist had done, and the vagueness was partially successful because the narrative was able to dwell on her feelings of fear and guilt. Although she was convinced that the story would only be current for one day, when she got back to work a note appeared on her work station that told her only too clearly that the results of her actions would not be forgotten. This was an effective ending. While a number of these stories were predictable, they were often competently written.

For style and accuracy, it is worth noting that dialogue should be punctuated accurately and thought given to making the dialogue sound interesting. Where the story was a series of events, the language often became very plain.

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

- Remember that stories do not consist of events alone.
- Try to present imaginative content credibly, as if it were real.
- Include realistic details, description and the thoughts and feelings of characters in the story.
- Write a story with a reasonable time span (not one that is too long).
- You can improve a story by using devices such as time lapses, flashbacks and two narrators.
- Make sure you use a wide range of appropriate language.
- Originality is important. Try to think of unusual approaches to your topic.
- If you write more than you expected, make sure you maintain accuracy at the end of the story.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/04  
Coursework Portfolio

## Key messages

Candidates should:

- ensure that the three assignments are written as different genres and in different styles appropriate to audience
- only include assignments that reach the highest standard of which they are capable
- reflect in writing their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them
- write in fluent and varied sentences separated by full stops
- proof read their work carefully – marks may be affected by typing errors.

## General comments

Centres should be congratulated for the work that they undertook in planning the courses satisfactorily, following the requirements of the syllabus and for the process of internal moderation, where there was more than one teacher.

Much of the work gave opportunities to candidates to develop their skills as writers over the period of time available and to express their personal thoughts and feelings. There was ample evidence that they were encouraged to write their own ideas and arguments and to use their imagination rather than reproducing ideas that had been taught in the classroom. The best writing was, as always, that in which the writers presented themselves as real, individual people with ideas of their own.

The range of topics chosen for Assignment 1 seemed to indicate personal choices of topics that were of interest to the writers. They were able to write from personal knowledge rather than from second-hand ideas gleaned from the internet.

It was important to remember the implications of awarding the marks for writing according to the standard achieved over all three assignments. Those candidates who succeeded in writing consistently in three different styles, for different audiences and in different genres, demonstrated a wide range of ability and more easily accessed the highest mark band. Those who wrote similar responses for Assignments 1 and 3 demonstrated a narrower range of ability.

Most Centres demonstrated skill in setting tasks of appropriate difficulty.

In Assignment 1 the tasks which were appropriate for the average writers were not necessarily challenging enough for the best candidates.

Many Centres set descriptive tasks for Assignment 2 and these were good to read. Some of the responses, however, were written in language that was designed to impress the reader rather than to convey pictures, atmospheres and emotions clearly. The best writing varied the focus, describing from different viewpoints and in a limited time frame.

Some thought should be given to setting appropriate texts for Assignment 3. It was important that the language and ideas were not too complex for the candidate's ability. Some of the witty journalistic texts were too subtly written and humorous ideas were taken perhaps too literally. Texts which are not effective for this task consist only of information rather than ideas, arguments and opinions and those that are so sensible and well thought out that there are no inconsistencies or issues raised by the confusion of fact and opinion.

Much of the work was accurate and well expressed. The commonest errors were of punctuation, particularly sentence separation, and these were not always corrected on the page. Candidates are advised to proof read their work, including typed scripts.

### Administration

The marks for each candidate need to be the same on each of three documents, the Centre Assessment Summary Form, the MS1 and the folder itself. The CASF is the most important of these because it is a record of the final marks agreed by the Centre at internal moderation. The final mark needs to be the one that appears on the MS1 or its electronic counterpart. It was also important that the final mark was written on the folder itself so that no mistakes are made at external moderation.

Most Centres were careful to avoid errors. As a result of checks that were carried out, several omissions were discovered.

### Assessment

The quality of assessment was good. The adjustments that were made were generally of one or two marks. There were a few occasions on which larger adjustments were made. More cases of slight generosity were found than of slight severity.

Marks were sometimes increased because of the accuracy of the writing but more often because of style and fluency and sometimes because of the consistency of the writing across all three assignments.

The most common reasons for slightly reducing the marks were:

- The amount of error, usually of punctuation and less often of grammar. Centres are reminded that it is important to annotate error in the final drafts, since it must be evident whether the accuracy of the work has been taken into account.
- While most of the internal moderation was correctly carried out, there were occasional variations in the standards of different sets, and this usually contributed to an overall reduction.
- The mark scheme for reading was not always correctly applied and some responses were given high marks when there was little more than a summary of the ideas from the text.

Where there were small adjustments made for both reading and writing, these added up to more substantial final adjustments to the total marks.

### Drafts

Only one early draft per folder was required. It was comparatively rare to see drafts that showed evidence of substantial change. The best drafts had comments, perhaps with bullets, by the teacher at the end, indicating the improvements that might be made. There was then evidence either in pen or another coloured font that changes had been made to the language (editing) or whole sections such as the ending (revising). This process showed critical awareness and the capacity to make progress in perfecting a piece of writing, which is one of the aims of coursework.

There were cases, not often repeated through all the sets in a Centre, where a teacher had corrected the draft. This was not allowed. The advice given by the teacher must not constitute the correction.

## **Comments on individual assignments**

### **Assignment 1**

The improvement in the suitability of tasks set for this assignment was maintained. There were fewer essays on subjects such as euthanasia, capital punishment and anorexia. While these can be done well, they tended to repeat the same arguments and facts as many others on the same topics and there was little vigour and enthusiasm in the writing. There were also fewer assignments based on material gathered from various websites. The challenge of this approach was to be confident that the writing was original rather than copied from the website or at best, a close paraphrase. It was sometimes obvious that the quality of writing in Assignments 2 and 3 was different from that in Assignment 1, and this was occasionally acknowledged in the marks awarded by the teacher.

The work for this assignment did not have to be argument, although it was sometimes difficult to write informatively at the highest levels. For writers choosing 'A Day in the Life of...', for instance, the information and ideas have to be sufficiently complex to be appropriate to the highest mark band. The choice of persona, including Olympic divers, soldiers, stunt pilots and Usain Bolt, often raised the performance on this task. It is recommended to avoid listed details such as getting up in the morning and having breakfast.

There was some good analytical work based on experiences in school. Some of the best responses were about candidates' own experiences. This led to some exceptionally thoughtful, personal writing, as did a companion piece about candidates' experiences as freshmen at the college. Sometimes the assignment was effective because it dealt with matters close to the writers' experience, such as proposals to end homework or school uniform. These assignments could be presented as arguments, the words of speeches, articles for school publications or as letters to the principal / headteacher. A similar task was to write about *My Ideal Teacher*, which provoked some original thoughts, including a heartfelt attack on 'boring' PowerPoint.

There were some good responses about visits to the theatre and a comparison between *Animal Farm*, the book and the cartoon film. Here it was important that the style should be that of the candidate and not of a stereotypical critic or writer of literary criticism. The same was true of anyone writing a guidebook entry; originality of expression and style was essential.

While it was not necessary to write in essay form, where the topic was interesting and accessible to the writer, the result was usually good. The following list of topics from this year's portfolios gives some idea of the scope:

*Video technology and football*  
*Women referees*  
*For and against a graffiti wall*  
*Should women with children work?*  
*Is everything built on lies?*  
*Voting for 16-year-olds*  
*My Dreams*  
*The dangers of the Internet*  
*The new station at Stuttgart*  
*Laptops or books?*  
*Public transport should be free*  
*The Paralympics*  
*How to scuba dive*  
*Skateboarding*

### **Assignment 2**

The choice was between fiction, description of places and autobiographical fragments, all of which were equally good options.

Teaching what makes a good narrative before letting any experimentation take place proved to be good practice. Stories were well developed and were rarely a series of events. There was plenty of description and a good deal of tension. Much attention was paid to the climax of the story and there were some effective endings. This was another advantage of coursework, since in the examination there is rarely enough time to work out all the constituent parts of an effective narrative. A number of these narratives were mystery or ghost stories, and here the challenge was to make them sound real and to avoid stereotypes.

Perhaps the secret of a good narrative was in choosing an imaginative title. Some of this year's included:

*Nothing lasts*  
*After the rain*  
*The box*  
*The house where time stood still*  
*Mother Nature always forgives*  
*Why me?*  
*Freckles*  
*The story of an hour*

There were a large number of interesting and effective autobiographical fragments, one of which was simply called *I remember*. Others included descriptive narratives of visits to places such as Dubai, Taiwan, London, Georgia, Cairo, and Jeju Island. Some of these were return visits to places where the writers had previously lived, and were all the better for it.

Much of the writing was descriptive, and two things are worthy of extra care. The first was focus. It was difficult to write at any length about something seen at a single moment and from one angle. Good descriptions often visited the topic from different angles so that there was movement on the part of the writer. Equally, a limited amount of time could pass without its becoming a narrative. This was not a problem in this component since description and narrative could be mixed, unlike Components 31-33 (Examined). Some tasks got round the problem by requiring description of a place at two times of the day or in winter and summer.

The second area for attention was language. Clever writers sometimes showed off their command of language but needed to enlighten rather than confuse the reader. The intention of description is to convey a picture clearly, not to blur it with excessive language. The same is true of imagery. Imagery explains the unusual in terms that the reader can appreciate.

Where descriptions avoided these difficulties, there was some excellent work. Perhaps the most interesting title this year was *My Grandfather's Porsche* but the most outstanding piece of writing was a monologue spoken by *The Lady of Shalott*.

Although only three assignments are required, it is worth remembering that if more are completed, then it is possible to make a choice and perhaps this will lead to higher marks for writing. There is some sense in practising fiction, autobiography and description to see which the most successful response is.

### Assignment 3

Key advice is as follows:

- Choose an article that contains ideas and opinions that can be argued with, evaluated and developed. For example the article may use inconsistent arguments or confuse fact and opinion.
- Choose a single article of no more than two sides and do not choose more than two articles if you are looking for contrasts. It becomes difficult to evaluate too much material and the responses can become general.
- Whole novels, newspaper reports or factual and undeveloped writing from websites are very difficult for candidates to respond to in a way that meets the requirements of the mark scheme.

Most Centres chose texts on behalf of their candidates. Sometimes everyone responded to one text and sometimes there were two or three. In some Centres, every response was to a different text, which caused difficulties where some were more suitable than others.

Some Centres rightly chose controversial articles by journalists such as Julie Burchill and Jeremy Clarkson. Care should be taken as it proved difficult for some candidates to appreciate that these journalists wrote for entertainment and tended to exaggerate their views. Some responses reacted as if everything was literal and hence became diatribes against the writers instead of an examination of the arguments (sometimes sensible) that were offered. The humour, often ironic, was quite sophisticated so that some candidates missed the point of what they read. Practice was required before attempting to counter such awkward articles.

Most Centres left it to individuals to respond to the text, which is the correct approach to avoid responses that looked remarkably the same and were difficult to assess.

Most Centres set a task that involved replying to the writer or the editor of the publication in which it appeared. An equally good task was an article for a named publication with a particular readership in mind.

The response involved identifying ideas, arguments and opinions, and commenting on them in such a way that understanding was demonstrated. Ideas could be developed or refuted, but what was written had to arise from the reading of the text.

The mark for reading was given in accordance with the mark scheme in the syllabus. This stated clearly that the award of nine or ten marks (Band 1) was for those who 'analyse and evaluate several ideas and details from the text(s) and develop lines of thought'. Band 2 (marks of seven and eight) required a response 'in detail to ideas from the text(s), explaining them and expressing views on them with varying degrees of effectiveness'. Band 3 (marks of five and six) was for those who 'show some response to the ideas in the text(s), summarising them and giving simple views on them'.

Marks were sometimes inflated in the top three bands, particularly giving marks of seven and eight to responses that only met the criteria for Band 3. In addition there was a mistaken understanding that marks could be given to responses that analysed literary devices and the effectiveness of words. This type of response is relevant to Paper 2, Question 2. This question is related to Question 1 of Papers 31-33 (Examination), which it follows closely.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/05  
Speaking and Listening

## Key messages

- Success in Part 1 is clearly linked to researching the chosen topic, planning for a confident and assured delivery, practising the delivery, but also preparing for a strong contribution in Part 2.
- Generally, candidates should try to make their Part 1 presentations lively, by perhaps incorporating more creative presentational styles, but certainly by relying less on reciting factual information. There is scope for further creativity in Part 1 – e.g. taking up a ‘voice’ or presenting a dramatic monologue. Where candidates speak about travel, for example, they could speak in the role of a tour guide.
- In Part 2, Moderators would like to hear stronger evidence that **candidates are aware of their role** in the discussion. The candidate’s role should be one which is proactive and seeks to engage with the listener in a collaborative manner.
- The criteria for Band 1 should be met before considering awarding 9 or 10 marks. If an individual presentation is of the standard, factually-based, reportage style, then a Band 2 mark is likely to be the highest available, although if the presentation is rather unimaginative, a Band 3 mark would be more appropriate.
- It is permissible in advance of the test for teachers to work with their candidates (once the candidate has decided upon a topic) to help enhance the content and to advise upon the approach taken for the delivery. **Differentiation by task setting** is therefore encouraged for this component. A more capable candidate is likely to attempt a more ambitious presentation and to engage with more sophisticated content – and such a candidate should be encouraged to do this.
- It is important to restrict Part 1 to between 3 and 4 minutes, and Part 2 to between 6 and 7 minutes, as specified in the syllabus.
- It is strongly recommended that all Centres **use digital recording equipment** to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or a USB drive. Please use recognised audio file formats that can be played by common computer software (e.g. mp3, wav, wma). There is no need to use the blue cassette inserts – a list of the candidates in the sample and their numbers either on the CD cover (but not on the CD itself, please) or on a separate sheet is fine. It would be appreciated if the final marks for the sample are also added. Most helpful to the moderator would be for individual tracks on the CD to be re-named to the candidate number, name and final mark (instead of track 1, track 2, etc.). Please, avoid using analogue recording and tapes/cassettes if at all possible.

## General comments

Many candidates who successfully complete this component clearly prepare very well in advance, conduct appropriate research, and are very adept at making presentations.

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

As a reminder to Centres, Cambridge requires three different items in the package sent to the Moderator: 1) the recorded sample on as few CDs as possible, 2) the Summary Forms for the entire entry, and 3) a copy of the Mark Sheet that has already been sent to Cambridge. In addition, any letters relating to the work being moderated can also be placed in the package for external moderation.

(1) Please note that without the recordings, CIE is unable to moderate the work from a Centre.

- (2) The Summary Form is the form that records the separate marks awarded to the two parts of the test, in addition to the total mark. The Examiner **who conducts the examination** is responsible for filling out the Summary Form. He or she should sign the form and date it – in effect; this is the form which is the working record of the test undertaken, and is therefore of most use to the external Moderator. Please identify the candidates in the sample by using asterisks on the Summary Form. It would also be very useful if the candidate numbers can be recorded on the Summary Form as they appear on the Mark Sheet.
- (3) The Moderator needs a copy of the Mark Sheet in order to verify the accuracy of the transcription of the marks from the Summary Forms.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### ***Part 1 - The Individual Task***

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

Personal experiences and interests are a common focus – for example, recent trips abroad, reading, sport, music. These kinds of presentations vary in their degree of success, with more successful tasks going beyond simply describing likes, dislikes and experiences, by adding further research, depth or insight.

Moderators encourage **topics with a narrower focus**, along with a greater range of presentational styles.

#### ***Some examples of productive Part 1 tasks from this session:***

- A fantasy dinner party, and which guests would be invited
- My favourite poem, why I like it, and why it should matter to others
- Cyber bullying
- Superheroes
- Graffiti – art or vandalism?
- A memory box – and the various items of significance that should be placed in it
- 'Where there's a will...'
- Nothing is 100%
- Are professional sportsmen and women over-rated and over-paid?
- Why science should be accountable.

Candidates sometimes attempt to use techniques such as addressing the listener and rhetorical devices; these approaches should be used consistently and be fully maintained.

#### ***Part 2 - Discussions***

Examiners were very much part of the discussions, entering into the spirit of the occasion, and the conversations were generally productive extensions of the Individual Tasks.

It was clear in many cases that candidates had planned for further discussion. The best way to do this is to **imagine being the Examiner** and to draw up a list of prompts or areas of interest that might be appropriate given the scope of the topic. It is not the responsibility of the Examiner to work hard to sustain discussion – the candidate needs to plan for this and this element of Part 2 has been built into the assessment criteria for both listening and speaking. It is of course the responsibility of the Examiner to move the discussion along and to try to ensure that a 6- to 7-minute conversation occurs. The aim of the Examiner is also to be supportive of the candidate – to share an interest in his/her topic, and to share views, ideas and **to work with the candidate** to develop the conversation.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/06  
Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

## Key messages

- Please remember to send in the **Individual Candidate Record Cards** – these are the only means by which the Moderator is made aware of all of the tasks and activities which have been undertaken at the Centre. It is very useful if full details relating to **each activity** are provided (rather than just ‘role play’ or ‘discussion’, for example) – indeed, it is permissible for the candidates to fill out these sections. Please note that Centres need only send in the Individual Record Cards relating to the candidates in the sample (so not for all of the cohort).
- Centres only need to record the individual and paired activities for all their candidates. It is not necessary to record the group activity. We hope this enables easier management of the coursework and reduces the pressures on candidates and teachers alike.
- For the moderation process to be completed efficiently, Centres need only submit the sample of **recordings of the Task 2 (paired) activity**. Centres need not send in recordings of group activities or the individual tasks, although if the moderator thinks it is necessary, CIE may request further samples of works.
- It is not necessary to conduct the same activities for every candidate. For example, different pairs can engage in different role-playing activities. Different small groups can take part in group-based debates on different topics to satisfy Task 3. **Differentiation by task setting** is therefore encouraged for this component. A more capable candidate is likely to attempt a more ambitious presentation in Task 1, for example, and to engage with more sophisticated content – and such a candidate should be encouraged to do this. The recommendation is that candidates paired in Task 2 should be with other candidates of a similar ability level.
- Please note that Component 6 **is coursework**, and as such can be completed at a time which is suitable for the Centre and its candidates. This will usually mean that the three tasks are spread out over a reasonable period of time and that ideally they will be integrated into regular teaching schemes. Centres are encouraged to attend to absenteeism by re-arranging activities where possible, rather than awarding zero to absent candidates. This is unlike Component 5, for example, which is based on a timetabled examination. In Component 6, there is a greater amount of flexibility.
- It is strongly recommended that all Centres **use digital recording equipment** to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or a USB drive. Please use recognised audio file formats that can be played by common computer software (e.g. mp3, wav, wma). There is no need to use the blue cassette inserts – a list of the candidates in the sample and their numbers either on the CD cover (but not on the CD itself, please) or on a separate sheet is fine. It would be appreciated if the final marks for the sample are also added. Most helpful to the moderator would be for individual tracks on the CD to be re-named to the candidate number, name and final mark (instead of track 1, track 2, etc.). Please, avoid using analogue recording and tapes/cassettes if at all possible.

## General comments

Centres are reminded that three specific tasks are required: an individual activity, a pair-based activity and group work. A wide variety of activities is encouraged – from role playing of real life situations, to activities drawn from literary texts, and group debates based on areas of contemporary interest. Teachers and candidates are encouraged to be as creative as possible in designing the activities undertaken for each task, ensuring of course that speaking **and** listening skills are demonstrated, and are able to be assessed using the given criteria.

As a reminder to Centres, CIE requires **four different items** in the package sent to the Moderator: 1) the recorded sample on CD, DVD or a USB drive, 2) the Summary Forms for the **entire entry**, 3) the Individual Candidate Record Cards, and 4) a copy of the marks that have already been sent to Cambridge. In addition,

any letters relating to the work being moderated can also be placed in the package for the attention of the external Moderator.

- (1) Please note that without the sample recordings, CIE is unable to moderate the work from a Centre. This will result potentially in candidates' grades being released late, while a sample is sought.
- (2) The Examiner **who collates the activities** is responsible for filling out the Summary Form(s), which records the marks given to the three Tasks, in addition to the total mark out of 30 for the Component. He or she should sign the form and date it. Please identify the candidates in the sample by using asterisks on the Summary Form(s). It would also be very useful if the candidate numbers can be recorded on the Summary Form(s) in the same order as on the Mark Sheet.
- (3) The Moderator needs a copy of the marks already sent to Cambridge in order to verify the accuracy of the transcription of those marks from the Summary Form(s).
- (4) Centres should offer full annotation on the Individual Candidate Record Cards, detailing and explaining each task and activity undertaken by each candidate. This helps to make the process of external moderation swift and efficient, and enables the Moderator to offer feedback on the range of activities undertaken.

### **Comments on specific tasks**

Moderators reported a very wide range of activities undertaken this session. More successful **Task 1s** tended to allow candidates to express strongly-held views on areas of personal interest.

#### ***Some examples of productive Task 1 activities from this session:***

- *Room 101* – the three things I would discard from daily life
- Business plan – my presentation to *Dragon's Den*
- A speech beginning with 'Don't get me started on...'
- 'I come to praise...not to bury him/her' – a monologue in character
- Why you should give your money and your time to my cause
- *Film 2012* – a weekly review of films to see and films to avoid.

Stronger **Task 2s** were those in which a theme was present. For this task it is preferable that two candidates work together (rather than the Examiner and a candidate) and spend about 5 minutes engaging with each other in either a role play or a discussion based on a topic **which has some depth**. Task 2s where the two candidates just have a general conversation or are rather short (i.e. only 2 or 3 minutes) are unlikely to satisfy the assessment criteria fully.

#### ***Some examples of productive Task 2 activities from this session:***

- A chance meeting – 10 years after graduation
- Role playing a customer service adviser dealing with someone with a complaint
- Plaintiff and defendant in a civil case (with the Examiner as the Judge)
- Two friends find out a third friend has done something wrong – what should they do?
- Two friends discuss which period of history they would have preferred to have lived in
- A dialogue that two of the main characters might have had from a novel.

**Task 3** is almost always a debate by a small group. This works well when each group member plays a role (e.g. a parole board) but can also be successful when the candidates are being themselves and discussing a topical issue. As in the paired activity, Task 2, it is advisable to form groups of candidates with similar ability levels, to avoid the situation where a weaker candidate might be less able to contribute fully. It is usually a good idea to appoint a team leader to manage the flow of discussion and also sensible for the teacher/Examiner to ensure that the group work assessment criteria are able to be met at both the planning and the implementation stages.

#### ***Some examples of productive Task 3 activities from this session:***

- Doctors' dilemma – which patient should receive the treatment?
- Balloon debate – which 3 people should be sacrificed (from a given list of 6 well-known people)
- A group of professional people discuss their different approaches to crime and punishment

- OK, we're stranded on this desert island, how are we going to survive?
- Taking it in turns to Hot Seat characters from a novel
- Create a 'deleted' scene from a play and perform it.

In cases where there was integration of literature into some of the activities, with candidates role-playing characters from novels or plays, these tended to be presented in an active and dramatic manner. There was evidence of candidates being involved in choosing their own activities; this was most apparent with Tasks 1 and 2. Candidate-centred tasks can be very rewarding but it is advised that teachers/Examiners monitor these so that they maintain focus, control and a purpose, and result in sustained presentations or exchanges.