

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/11  
Reading Passages (Core)

## Key Messages

Candidates are advised to note carefully that:

- **Question 1 g (i)** requires that they only explain the meaning of the italicised word or words as used in the context of the passage.
- **Question 1 g (ii)** requires that they comment on how the language of the complete phrase quoted in the question helps to convey a particular effect to the reader and to ensure that they focus their comments closely on how this effect is achieved.
- This paper tests reading and that it is important to read both the passages and the questions closely and carefully.

## General Comments

Overall, candidates had been well prepared for this paper. There were only very few who did not attempt at least most of the questions. There were very few rubric infringements, and handwriting and presentation were generally of a satisfactory to good standard.

### **Question 1**

The majority of candidates were able to answer most of the comprehension questions and their responses indicated a secure understanding of the main details of the passage. The question testing understanding and appreciation of the writer's use of language (1 g (i) and 1 g (ii)) was the least well answered overall. This point will be considered more fully later in this report.

### **Question 2**

Candidates responded well to this question and there was little evidence, across the whole range of marks, of any lack of understanding of the passage. The most successful responses showed good understanding of the requirements of the question and did their best to observe and elaborate on all three bullet points. Less successful responses tended to be those lacking detail from the passages and failing to develop the explanation of how the narrator survived the shipwreck. Many responses in this category achieved high marks for their Written Expression. Less successful candidates failed to obtain higher marks for both reading and writing because they depended too heavily on the wording of the original passage.

### **Question 3**

Some less successful candidates were distracted by the details about Gordon Lightfoot's song about the tragedy and the final paragraph about the anniversary. This meant that their notes and summary missed some key facts and, as a result, they were not able to gain as many marks for either content or writing as they might have. There is also an important point about the use of the answer box for **Question 3 (a)** which is covered in the more detailed commentary below.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

- (a) Most candidates understood clearly that the answer was the word ‘monstrous’ and gave either the appropriate one-word answer or used a phrase in which this word was very clearly indicated. Some candidates did not gain a mark as they answered with more than one word and the key word was not highlighted. Hence: “monstrous waves” would not gain the mark, but “ ‘monstrous’ waves” or “monstrous waves” would. As stated in the ‘Key Messages’ above it is important to identify exactly what the question is asking before attempting to answer it.
- (b) Candidates gained one mark for this question if they identified the lack of excitement/panic/fear of the sailors. They obtained two marks as this required some explanation of the writer’s use of repetition. The question asks for comment on the writer’s use of language which requires the answer to go some way beyond explaining the meaning of the phrase or sentence chosen.
- (c) Most candidates showed understanding of the narrator’s being too tired to be concerned with the prospect of dying or that he did not seem to be concerned. Some further comment, for example about the use of understatement, was required to obtain the second mark on this question.
- (d) As with both (b) and (c) this question required the candidate to go beyond literal explanation of a phrase or sentence to gain the two marks available. In this case good answers successfully explained that a great deal of water was entering the boat, coming from all around. However, fewer candidates gave much attention to the word ‘swarmed’ – those who did commented on the sense of hostility, of being surrounded or under attack and this successfully met the requirement of comment on the effect of the sentence.

- (e) This question was dealt with very successfully by the great majority of candidates who obtained both of the available marks. Details that were most frequently identified were:

- the sailors were struggling in the sea
- they were swimming strongly and rapidly
- the captain was holding on to the overturned boat.

The question clearly refers to paragraph 12 in the passage. Hence there was no mark awarded for reference to the narrator using a piece of life-belt.

- (f) Candidates gained one or two marks by referring to the sense of stability or safety the narrator observes in the shore while in the sea. Some commented successfully on the contrast between the sea and the land. Most of the unsuccessful responses to this question seemed to focus on writing about the state of the sea and this suggested that these candidates had not read the task carefully.
- (g)(i) Candidates generally answered g (i) better than g (ii). As stated in the ‘Key Messages’, it is important that candidates understand that g (i) focuses primarily on vocabulary (and the explanation of the meaning of one particular word) whereas g (ii) focuses on the whole phrase. The failure to appreciate this frequently resulted in responses in which the definitions given to g (i) were simply repeated in (g)(ii) which meant that no further marks could be awarded for the latter question.

- (1) ‘*Boiling*’ – good answers understood that use of this word was metaphorical and explained that it suggested a violent, bubbling sea. Some wrote about the boiling point of water which illustrates that words in this task cannot always be explained by literal translation or use of a synonym.
- (2) ‘*Whirled*’ – successful answers in explaining this word chose synonyms such as ‘spun’ or ‘turning’ abruptly or violently.
- (3) ‘*Snuggled*’ – in a number of cases this was understood to refer to the boat sinking. Good answers explained that it meant ‘shrank’ or ‘settled’ or moved down into the wave’.
- (4) ‘*Implacable*’ – virtually all responses clearly identified the word as meaning unstoppable. Less successful explanations tended to respond to the phrase as whole, hence to give a

response more appropriate to g (ii) and sometimes not making any specific reference to the word 'implacable'.

- (ii) The most obvious preparation which can be undertaken by candidates for this question, is to keep in mind that their explanation of the words and language within each phrase should be related to the wording of the question: in this instance, how the language used helps to convey the power of the sea. It is important that, as far as possible, candidates should attempt to express this understanding in their own words rather than by copying the words of the phrases that are to be explained. It is also important for candidates to be aware that their explanations in g (ii) need to go further than just repeating details given in g (i).

**(Phrase 1)** Weaker responses simply repeated the point they had made about water boiling in g (i). More successful responses were those that referred to the water seeming to be full of energy (like boiling water) or being angry or moving vigorously.

**(Phrase 2)** Good answers identified the sea as being powerful enough to lift and change the direction of a heavy boat full of people.

**(Phrase 3)** Good answers understood the idea that the boat was struggling to find security or stability in the sea. Some missed getting marks by suggesting that this phrase referred to the boat filling with water and sinking.

**(Phrase 4)** Good answers, having given a clear explanation of the word 'implacable' in g (i) went on to give a clear explanation of the phrase in terms of it suggesting the size, violence and brute force of the waves.

One final point to be made about responses to this question is that it is important that candidates write in the correct number of the phrase they have chosen to explain. For example, writing in '3' to identify the phrase and then proceeding to explain phrase 2 in the space immediately beneath this number will not be rewarded.

## Question 2

### READING

As stated earlier in this report there were many good responses to this question which were both linguistically well written and also effective and convincing creative pieces based on the material in the passage. Middle range responses tended to omit or only just about manage to refer to the third bullet point relating to survival. Of those responses which made little mention of 'survival' it was often the case that the Narrator passed out only to be washed up on the shore without having drowned or simply ended with the narrator being at the point when further movement was not possible. Less successful responses adopted the wrong narrative viewpoint and wrote the account from the perspective of the Captain of the ship or related only very few details of the situation and of the other members of the crew. A small number of candidates thought that the word 'narrator' was someone's name rather than a designation

Even though there were some less than convincing accounts most candidates made genuine attempts to write using their own ideas and interpretations of the passage, rather than being over-reliant on lifting material from it.

### B WRITING

In general, the standard of writing was of an, at least, satisfactory standard with most responses gaining marks in the Band 2/3 categories with a significant minority achieving a Band 1 mark. Incorrect sentence separation was the main cause of blurring of meaning, but overall the structure of accounts, together with the use of an appropriate register and thoughtfully chosen vocabulary, contributed to a large number of accounts that were enjoyable to read.

## Question 3

### (a) Notes

Marks were most frequently lost through imprecision with answers. It is worth stressing that, in preparing for this task, candidates should clearly understand that there are 10 spaces in the answer box and that only one point can be credited in each space. Some candidates identified a very good range of points, but did not get

10 marks because they had crammed too many points into one line and irrelevant detail into another. Other less successful responses included points which were irrelevant – such as details about Gordon Lightfoot’s song and about the anniversary of the sinking. A clear focus on the task and what information is required is essential. A minority of responses offered more than 10 answers and it should be noted that in such cases, only the first 10 points made will be marked - even if those that follow contain what would otherwise have been creditable points.

**(b) Summary**

The rubric for this question states that responses should use all the points made by candidates in their responses to 3a). Less successful responses, however, tended to go back to the original passage and summarise that, rather than expand their own points in their own words. More successful responses remained focused on relevant material from the passage and expressed appropriate points listed in 3a) in a concise and focused way, either using their own words or re-casting the words of the original in such a way as to show clear understanding of the passage and the demands of the question. The most successful responses focused very clearly on the two aspects required in the task: the details of what happened when the boat sank and the possible causes of the sinking. The least successful included much inappropriate information (as noted above) and a few were distracted by making personal comment or putting too much emphasis on trying to write the response as another article.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/12  
Reading Passage  
(Core)

## Key Messages

Candidates are advised to note carefully that:

- **Question 1(g)(i)** requires that they only explain the meaning of the italicised word or words as used in the context of the passage.
- **Question 1(g)(ii)** requires that they comment on how the language of *the complete phrase quoted in the question* helps to convey a particular effect to the reader and to ensure that they focus their comments closely on how this effect is achieved.
- This paper tests reading and it is important to read both the passages and the questions closely and carefully.

## General Comments

Overall, candidates managed the paper well, and nearly all found the passages and questions accessible. There were only very few who did not attempt at least most of the questions. There were very few rubric infringements and handwriting and presentation were generally of a satisfactory to good standard.

### **Question 1**

Most candidates were able to answer most of the comprehension questions and their responses indicated a secure understanding of the main details of the passage. The question testing understanding and appreciation of the writer's use of language (**1(g)(i)** and **1(g)(ii)**) was the least well answered overall. This point will be considered more fully later in this report.

### **Question 2**

Candidates responded well to this question. The most successful responses showed good understanding of the requirements of the question and did their best to observe and elaborate on all three bullet points. Less successful responses were often the result of only a partial understanding of the details of the passage, in particular, through confusing the functions and actions of the Captain, Mr Riach and the Narrator. Many responses in this category, despite their misunderstandings, nevertheless, achieved high marks for their Written Expression. There were also a small number of candidates whose responses could not be awarded any marks for Reading as they were based on the content of **Passage 2** and not **Passage 1**.

### **Question 3**

All candidates were able to pick up marks for both parts of this question, but a significant number were distracted by the conspiracy theories and the findings of the report as opposed to focusing their notes and summary on the facts of the account, and, as a result, were not able to gain as many marks for either content or writing as they might have.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

- (a) Most candidates showed that they had a good understanding of the simile 'as steady as steel' as applied to the captain although some attempted to explain either 'steady' or 'steel' rather than the phrase as a whole. The most successful responses referred to the captain's firmness (both mental and physical) as shown by his concentration or focus on his task. Less successful responses thought the phrase signified 'bravery' or 'alertness' or 'being prepared' none of which fully captured the point, although answers using these words were still rewarded if more appropriate comments were included (e.g. 'he was brave and concentrating on keeping the ship on course').
- (b) There are two points in the passage that make the Narrator realise the power of the tide. One is that the tide was throwing the boat about and the other is that it took three men to control the wheel. There was no requirement for candidates to use their own words when answering this question so those who simply lifted the phrase, 'threw the boat about' were rewarded. It was more difficult to make the alternative point by lifting directly from the passage as it was necessary to refer to the wheel in order to show clear understanding – 'it took two extra men to control the wheel' was a correct response but 'it needed more men' was insufficient.
- (c) Most candidates showed understanding of some of the effects the tide had on the boat and scored one or more marks for this question. Less successful responses were not able to express the key points clearly in their own words with the result that their responses were insufficiently precise to convey accurate understanding. For example, saying that the tide caused the boat to drift off course or simply turn does not suggest the full force of the passage's description of what happened; similarly, it was not enough simply to write that the boat crashed unless it was made clear that it smashed into the reef. Some responses stated that the tide knocked 'the crew over' on its own which, in fact, described the effect of the tide on the people in the boat but not on the boat itself, which was the focus of the question. As stated in the 'Key Messages' above it is important to identify exactly what the question is asking before attempting to answer it.
- (d) Many candidates successfully described the external conditions that caused the narrator to become terrified but sometimes their responses failed to explain precisely the nature of those conditions. For example, stating that the boat had struck the reef does not convey that the boat is breaking up. Similarly, reference to the strong waves or wind without explaining that the former break over the boat or that the noise of the latter is terrifying meant that such responses could not be fully rewarded. The mark for explaining the Narrator's state of mind (his sense of doom about the boat sinking and his fear of dying) was rarely awarded, mainly because responses simply reiterated 'terrified' which is in the question, used less intense synonyms such as 'nervous', or failed to address it at all. Responses that stated that the Narrator was confused and scarcely understood the things seen were incorrect because this reaction was the result of being terrified and not the cause.
- (e) Most candidates achieved at least one or two marks for this question and attempted to answer it using their own words. As with **Question 1(d)** some responses lacked the precise focus required to gain marks. For example, many stated that the Captain 'groaned out loud' without including the clinching detail which distinguished this point from his talking to himself, that this was in response to sharing the 'pain' felt by his boat. Others did not gain a mark as a result of simply lifting the word 'stunned' from the passage without attempting to express this in their own words. Overall, there were four distinct responses of the Captain that were credited:
- He physically does nothing to help/holds on to the mast
  - He is overwhelmed/paralysed/shocked/in shock, etc.
  - He talks to himself
  - He groans out loud/suffers when the boat hits the rocks

- (f) Most candidates gained the one mark available for this question. It was important, however, that responses made clear the precise phrase that conveyed the importance of his boat to the Captain which was (his) 'boat was like family to him'. Responses that lifted the complete sentence in which this phrase occurs were not rewarded unless the correct phrase had been identified by underlining or some other acceptable means. However, the vast majority knew which sentence contained the correct phrase.
- (g) (i) Candidates generally answered (g)(i) better than (g)(ii). As stated in the 'Key Messages', it is important that candidates understand that (g)(i) focuses primarily on vocabulary whereas (g)(ii) focuses on the whole phrase. The failure to appreciate this frequently resulted in responses in which the definitions given to (g)(i) were simply repeated in (g)(ii) which meant that no further marks could be awarded for the latter question.
- (1) In order to gain a mark for explaining '*singing of the wind*' it was necessary to focus on the nature of the sound of the wind such as 'shrieking', 'moaning' 'whistling' and so on. Responses that attempted to paraphrase with answers such as 'the wind sounded like a song' did not gain the mark as such explanations did not reflect the context of a violent storm.
  - (2) '*Scarcely*' – many candidates were successful in explaining this word, choosing synonyms such as 'barely', 'partially' and 'hardly'. Answers which identified the things being seen as 'not fully understood' also gained the mark. 'Not really' was not credited, however, because it suggested misunderstanding as opposed to 'little' understanding.
  - (3) '*Hampered*' – this word caused difficulty and in a small number of cases was confused with 'hammered' in **Phrase 4**, for the obvious reason of one letter being different. Although this was probably the least chosen option, the majority of candidates were able to understand that it 'made things worse/more difficult for the people on the boat.
  - (4) '*Hampered*' – virtually all responses clearly identified the word as 'hitting' but many failed to qualify the nature of the hit and the power/force conveyed by the word. As previously mentioned, candidates should be encouraged to think carefully about the word's meaning in the context of the passage.
- (g) (ii) The most obvious strategy which can be undertaken by candidates when preparing for this question, is to keep in mind that their explanation of the words and language within each phrase should be related to the wording of the question: in this instance, how the language used helps to convey the experiences of the people on the boat. It is important that, as far as possible, candidates should attempt to express this understanding in their own words rather than by copying the words of the phrases that are to be explained. A comment focusing on being 'terrified' is, however, perfectly acceptable when the language is being analysed rather than simply stated.
- (Phrase 1)** A large number of responses simply repeated the point about the wind singing, often conveying this in terms of loudness arising from 'the great noise' in the phrase. Only a small number attempted to relate this to the experience of the people on the boat who were terrified and overwhelmed by the strength of this sound. The most successful responses contained comments such as, 'taunting them with ghostly shrieking so they knew they were about to die', and suggestions that the wind sounded like the music for a horror movie.
- (Phrase 2)** Responses to this phrase were generally more successful with many candidates linking the fear and confusion implicit to the experience of the people on the boat. There were some convincing references to being 'blinded' by fear or being rendered helpless to discern what was happening around them.

- (3) Not many candidates realised the degree of difficulty and desperation of the crew's efforts to control the boat against the strong wind and heavy waves.
- (4) Candidates generally understood the significance of the boat being hammered on the rocks and were usually able to explain the brutality of the action and its effect on the crew.

One final point to be made about responses to this question is that it is important that candidates write in the correct number of the phrase they have chosen to explain. For example, writing in 3 to identify the phrase and then proceeding to explain **Phrase 2** in the space immediately beneath this number will not be rewarded.

## Question 2

### READING

As stated earlier in this report there were many good responses to this question which were both linguistically well written and also effective and convincing creative pieces based on the material in the passage. Middle range responses tended to omit or only just about manage to refer to the third bullet point relating to survival. Of those responses which skirted 'survival' it was often the case that the Narrator passed out only to be washed up on a desert island without having drowned. Driftwood from the boat was often a credible method of survival. Conversely, other responses wrote only about surviving and did not mention the context of the boat's dilemma and the crew's response. Less successful responses adopted the wrong narrative viewpoint and wrote the account from the perspective of the Captain of the ship or revealed some confusion about the fact that Mr Riach, the Captain, and the Narrator were three different people.

Even though there were some less than convincing anachronistic accounts (rescues by helicopters or nuclear submarines, for example), most candidates made genuine attempts to write using their own ideas and interpretations of the passage, rather than being over-reliant on lifting material from it.

### B WRITING

In general, the standard of writing was of an, at least, satisfactory standard. Incorrect sentence separation was the main cause of blurring of meaning, but overall the structure of accounts together with the use of an appropriate register and thoughtfully chosen vocabulary contributed to a large number of accounts that were enjoyable to read.

## Question 3

### (a) Notes

Most candidates identified at least 6 correct points but very few identified all 10. Marks were frequently lost marks through imprecision, with answers such as '635 crew' not referring to death or loss. Many responses included points which were either irrelevant – 'There was an 11-day delay' or simply wrong – the ship was sunk by a submarine'. A minority of responses offered more than 10 answers and it should be noted that in such cases, only the first 10 points made will be marked – even if those that follow contain what would otherwise have been creditable points.

### (b) Summary

The rubric for this question states that responses should use all the points made by candidates in their responses to **3(a)**. Less successful responses, however, tended to go back to the original passage and summarise that rather than expand their own points in their own words. More successful responses remained focused on relevant material from the passage and expressed appropriate points listed in **3(a)** in a concise and focused way either using their own words or recasting the words of the original in such a way as to show clear understanding of the passage and the demands of the question. The most successful responses introduced the battle, its date and where it took place; gave details of the ships and what took place; and ended with the consequences of the battle such as both ships sinking with the loss of so many lives. The least successful included much inappropriate personal comment and also became confused through including references to the theories as to what may have happened with references to the deaths of the crew being machine gunned in the water and their bodies subsequently hidden by the government.



Overall the paper elicited generally worthwhile responses from the majority of candidates. Nearly all candidates appear to have tried to do the best of which they were capable and most were well prepared for the paper. The main point for future candidates to keep in mind is to ensure that each question is read carefully and that answers are focused on the key phrases in the rubric.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/13  
Reading Passages (Core)

## Key Messages

Candidates are advised to note carefully that:

- **Question 1 g (i)** requires that they only explain the meaning of the italicised word or words as used in the context of the passage.
- **Question 1 g (ii)** requires that they comment on how the language of the complete phrase quoted in the question helps to convey a particular effect to the reader and to ensure that they focus their comments closely on how this effect is achieved.
- This paper tests reading and that it is important to read both the passages and the questions closely and carefully.

## General Comments

Overall, candidates had been well prepared for this paper. There were very few rubric infringements and handwriting and presentation were generally of a satisfactory to good standard.

### **Question 1**

Most responses indicated a secure understanding of the main details of the passage. The question testing understanding and appreciation of the writer's use of language (1 **g (i)** and 1 **g (ii)**) was the least well answered overall. This point will be considered more fully later in this report.

### **Question 2**

The most successful responses showed good understanding of the requirements of the question and did their best to observe and elaborate on all three bullet points. Less successful responses tended to be those lacking detail from the passages and failing to develop the explanation of how the narrator and the crew escaped from the situation they were in. Many responses in this category achieved high marks for their Written Expression. Some candidates failed to obtain higher marks for both reading and writing because they depended too heavily on the wording of the original passage.

### **Question 3**

Some candidates were distracted by irrelevant details such as the rescue by fishermen, or tended to repeat points especially those about the relationship between Stephen Callahan and the fish and, as a result, were not able to gain as many marks for either content or writing as they might have. There is also an important point about the use of the answer box for **Question 3 (a)** which is covered in the more detailed commentary below.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### **Question 1**

- (a) Most candidates showed a good understanding of what initially frightens the crew – the significant piece of information being that it is the sound of the wind.

- (b) (i) Good answers understood that the information required in this part of the question is that Ali tried to lower the sail. However, less successful responses included the point that the sail was jammed. This is the information required by part (ii) and candidates who included that in this part then went on to give incorrect information in response to part (ii). It is worth noting that there was only one mark available for each part of this question and that candidates should give no more than the amount of information required.
- (ii) The main error with this part of the question is as explained above. Nevertheless, a large number of candidates gained one mark for each part.
- (c) Good answers successfully explained that he was going to cut the tow rope. Fewer candidates identified that he was trying to prevent them being dragged down under water by the boat. In many of the less successful responses this was because they were overly dependent on lifting the wording of the passage (and thus telling what happened) rather than on giving an explanation.
- (d) Good answers successfully explained the narrator's feelings – of being distressed or in pain because of what had happened to Leo, sometimes adding that this was a result of the narrator's feeling of guilt. Less successful responses tended to be rather brief or to rely too much on lifting as opposed to explanation.
- (e) As with (d) the less successful responses tended to be those that were brief and lacking in sufficient detail. Most candidates achieved at least one mark by explaining that the narrator was hypnotised or astonished by the wave. Some were distracted by the use of 'curious' and took it to suggest that the narrator was perplexed by his feelings.
- (f) There were two essential pieces of information necessary for gaining both marks on this question:
- that identifying Leo was made possible by moonlight
  - and that it shone on Leo's face.

The less successful responses were those that relied too much on lifting large sections of text from paragraph eight without sufficiently close focus on the relevant detail.

- (g) (i) Candidates generally answered g (i) better than g (ii). As stated in the 'Key Messages', it is important that candidates understand that g (i) focuses primarily on vocabulary (and the explanation of one word or a short phrase) whereas g (ii) focuses on the whole phrase quoted from the passage. The failure to appreciate this frequently resulted in responses in which the definitions given to g (i) were simply repeated in (g)(ii) which meant that no further marks could be awarded for the latter question.
- (1) The '*fury*' of the storm was successfully explained by good answers as meaning anger.
- (2) '*Turmoil*' – in explaining this word, answers chose synonyms such as 'chaos' or 'confusion'.
- (3) '*Rush*' (of water) was successfully explained as a sudden movement or surge.
- (4) '*Jaws of death*' – in this case candidates were being asked to explain a short phrase (or a part of the chosen phrase). Successful candidates understood this as meaning something like 'at the very last moment' or 'just before being killed'. The less successful responses gave answers that were more appropriate for g (ii) focussing on the imagery of it conveying the power of the waves.
- (ii) The most obvious preparation which can be undertaken by candidates for this question, is to keep in mind that their explanation of the words and language within each phrase should be related to the wording of the question: in this instance, how the language used helps to convey the power of the storm. It is important that, as far as possible, candidates should attempt to express this understanding in their own words rather than by copying the words of the phrases that are to be explained. It is also important for candidates to be aware that their explanations in g (ii) need to go further than just repeating details given in g (i).

**Phrase 1)** Less good responses simply repeated the point about the anger and said little more than had been included in the answer to g (i) (1).

**(Phrase 2)** Good responses to this phrase linked the chaos created by the storm to the disturbances in the sea.

**(Phrase 3)** More successful responses were able to explain how the water moved and how it had the effect of quickly overwhelming the boat.

**(Phrase 4)** Candidates generally understood the significance of this phrase and of the proximity to death faced by the crew. The more successful responses were able to comment effectively on the imagery of the word 'jaws'.

One final point to be made about responses to this question is that it is important that candidates write in the correct number of the phrase they have chosen to explain. For example, writing in '3' to identify the phrase and then proceeding to explain phrase 2 in the space immediately beneath this number will not be rewarded.

## Question 2

### READING

As stated earlier in this report, good responses to this question were both linguistically well written and also effective and convincing creative pieces based on the material in the passage. There were many responses that made a successful attempt to write in a suitable style and register for a newspaper article. Middle range responses tended to omit or only just about manage to refer to the third bullet point relating to escaping the situation the crew were in. The less successful responses tended either to rely too heavily on lifting material, on over use of long quotations from the passage (as answers given to questions) or to be the result of lack of detail specific to the situation described in the passage. Less successful candidates did not write in the style of a newspaper and adopted the viewpoint of one of the crew. A large number assumed that Leo had died although this was not a reason for awarding a lower content mark as this interpretation was acceptable in terms of the information contained in the passage.

Overall, this task was attempted well with most candidates making genuine attempts to write using their own ideas and interpretations of the passage, rather than being over-reliant on lifting material from it.

### B WRITING

In general, the standard of writing was of an, at least, satisfactory standard. Incorrect sentence separation was the main cause of blurring of meaning, but overall the structure of accounts together with the use of an appropriate register and thoughtfully chosen vocabulary contributed to a large number of accounts that were enjoyable to read.

## Question 3

### (a) Notes

Marks were frequently lost through imprecision with answers. It is worth stressing that, in preparing for this task, candidates should clearly understand that there are 10 spaces in the answer box and that only one point can be credited in each space. A number of candidates identified a very good range of points, but did not get 10 marks because they had crammed too many points into one line and irrelevant detail into another. As noted above, there were many candidates who included a great deal of information about the fishermen who rescued Stephen Callahan. There was also the tendency to repeat points rather than to search for 10 different ones. A minority of responses offered more than 10 answers and it should be noted that in such cases, only the first 10 points made will be marked - even if those that follow contain what would otherwise have been creditable points.

### (b) Summary

The rubric for this question states that responses should use all the points made by candidates in their responses to 3a). Less successful responses, however, tended to go back to the original passage and summarise that rather than expand their own points in their own words. More successful responses remained focused on relevant material from the passage and expressed appropriate points listed in 3a) in a concise and focused way, either using their own words or re-casting the words of the original in such a way as to show clear understanding of the passage and the demands of the question. The most successful responses focused very clearly on the two aspects required in the task: the details of the situation Stephen Callahan was in and the way he reacted to it. The least successful included much inappropriate information (as noted above) and a few were distracted by making personal comment or in too much emphasis on trying to write the response as another article.

Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education  
0500 First Language English (Oral Endorsement) November 2015  
Principal Examiner Report for Teachers

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/21  
Reading Passages (Extended)

## Key Messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read the passages carefully, not forgetting any information at the top of each passage
- read all questions carefully, paying attention to the specific guidance offered
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- planned the structure and sequence of each answer, making each point once only in a response
- allowed time to address fully each section of each question
- avoided copying whole sentences or sections from either passage
- used their own words in **Questions 1** and **3b** and when explaining choices in **Question 2**
- ensured that ideas were developed and fully explained in **Question 1** and **Question 2**
- checked their responses carefully to correct errors of spelling and grammar affecting meaning
- used a range of appropriate vocabulary.

## General Comments

Candidates' responses to this paper indicated at least some familiarity with the basic demands of each task, along with an awareness of the need to select and use relevant material and ideas from the passages to answer the questions. There were some responses which were over-reliant on the wording and the sequence of the passages. Candidates are expected to adapt and modify the material in the passages for higher band marks, and copying from the text is to be avoided.

Many candidates were able to respond appropriately to the passages, some with real engagement. Responses covered a range of levels of achievement, often varying over the three tasks. Responses to the tasks suggested that candidates had found the passages equally accessible, had planned their use of time helpfully and had finished within the two hours. Instances where candidates had missed all or part of a question were rare. Most candidates had paid attention to the guidance offered with respect to the length of their answers and many appeared to find the numbering of the bullet points in the answer grid for 3a) a helpful reminder of the need to offer 15 points, one per line.

There were very few significant misunderstandings of the general content of the passages, though some candidates needed to read and interpret the detail of both texts and tasks more carefully. Careful attention to detail, including revisiting the passage to refine understanding, is essential if candidates are to offer convincing evidence of their reading skills at higher levels.

In **Question 1**, most responses were generally appropriate to the form of a journal written by Kaarlo Vatanen, the journalist, and most used the three bullets as a framework for their answer. In order to demonstrate the skills necessary for higher levels, candidates need to use and interpret the evidence in the text, both explicit and implicit. Revisiting the passage in the light of the question to look for useful hints and details which might then be used to inform and support their ideas, might have helped a number of candidates to provide more convincing evidence of understanding. Lifting phrases and sections word for word is to be avoided as this suggests incomplete understanding of both text and task. Similarly, repeating ideas mechanically and leaning on the language of the original can at best produce answers in band 3, missing opportunities to target higher marks. Candidates need to change the language of the passages in response to **Question 1** and **Question 3b** in order to demonstrate achievement in both Reading and Writing in the higher bands.

Answers to **Question 2** showed at least some awareness of the need to identify relevant choices, to consider and explain meaning and to suggest intended effect. Those who had taken careful note of the instruction to select four choices in each half appeared to have benefitted from that advice – taking time to consider which four choices they would offer in each half. Consequently, they were able both to offer a range of potentially interesting selections and to begin to discuss each of their choices at some length. For higher marks, candidates need to ensure that they are making appropriate choices of words and phrases in both parts of the question, exploring and explaining each choice in some detail to show understanding of how the writer is using language in the particular instance under consideration.

In **Question 3** responses, many candidates had understood the need to identify 15 distinct points from Passage B in part **3a)** and then organise these points into a fluent, concise prose response using their own words in **3b)**. There was evidence that the instruction that they did not need to use their own words in **3a)** had been understood. Candidates may choose to use their own words when it helps to clarify a point and select ideas in the language of the text for any other points. For higher marks, candidates need to capitalise on the opportunity when planning their prose response in **3b0** to revisit and refine as required their points in **3a)**, for example to avoid repetition of ideas and to correct any careless slips in spelling which might affect the meaning and accuracy of points such as writing ‘years’ rather than ‘ears’.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to keep in mind that 20% of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1 and 3**. Candidates did best when they planned and edited their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, imprecise meaning and awkward expression.

Whilst writing is not assessed in **Question 2**, candidates should ensure that they consider carefully their own choices of vocabulary when attempting to describe the effects and meanings of the selections they are discussing. In some instances, candidates might have been able to demonstrate more convincingly understanding of the language used by the author had they used vocabulary more precisely themselves. Likewise, checking and editing all three answers more thoroughly might help some candidates to ensure they are offering more secure evidence of their skills.

A clear focus on the instruction and wording of a question during the planning of an answer will allow candidates to work to identify relevant detail in the text, cover all aspects of the task and target marks at the higher levels. This aspect cannot be over-emphasised, in order to avoid errors such as giving insufficient attention to one of the bullet points in **Question 1** or selecting without consideration of the specific focus for each part of **Question 2**.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

Having read through the passage, candidates needed to understand that they must manipulate the viewpoint, so that Kaarlo Vatanen could recount and reflect in his journal the events of that day from his perspective. Occasionally a candidate failed to focus clearly on the need to write as Vatanen and replayed the events of the passage with little modification. Many were able to write as Kaarlo Vatanen, the disillusioned journalist, showing his disapproval of his colleague’s self-centred behaviour and going some way towards explaining his own subsequent ‘change of direction’ brought about by the encounter with the hare. A number missed opportunities to go further through uneven focus on the bullets – for example not detailing the experience with the hare sufficiently carefully in bullet two in order to explain how and why it had affected Vatanen and/or failing to identify details and hints in the text that might suggest relevant ideas for the third bullet. Where candidates had missed the accident with the hare in the first place, Vatanen’s reactions were less likely to be well developed. Where the third bullet had not been read carefully, answers suggested reasons for why Vatanen might not be able to go home – for example, lack of transport – rather than consider those reasons for him not wanting to go which were implicit in the narrative. Careful readers of both text and task were able to discover a more convincing range of ideas and pick up on hints in the passage for development and use in their ‘journal.’

In response to the first bullet point about the photographer’s behaviour, mid-range answers offered ideas in reaction to the initial argument and ensuing silence, as well as basic comment on the photographer’s impatience, cold-heartedness and disloyalty. Better answers developed some of these ideas and had often understood that the accident could have been avoided had it not been for the childish sulking and dull reactions of the driver. When outlining ideas in relation to the second bullet point, the encounter with the

hare, candidates were often able to mention finding the hare, picking it up and treating its wounds, sometimes developing the sense of responsibility felt for the animal's predicament. Better answers moved on to think about how Vatanen interpreted the hare's reaction, often as a show of trust, and how that affected him and his life view.

In third bullet point: why he could not face home or work, comparisons between the behaviour of the hare and that of his colleague provided a starting point for further ideas related to Vatanen's life-course. Candidates were able to mention for example the stress of his life in the city, work problems and health worries as well as 'the call of the wild.' Better answers offered development rooted in the text – for example suggesting that Vatanen might not want to return to the office to be laughed at by his workmates because of caring for the hare, rather than drifting into long recollections involving his lack of confidence due to an event in his early life. Candidates sometimes lost sight of the passage completely as they moved into the realms of creative writing. The most frequent examples of such pitfalls developed unsupported past histories of tragic events such as being abandoned as a child or the death of a loved one, at best only very tenuously linked to the suffering of the hare. Others used the failed 'hopes of their youth' the 'worldly worries' of the 'busy capital' or being 'dissatisfied' and 'cynical' to decry world events without firmly rooting these ideas in the passage. Words and time were sometimes wasted in such speculation at the expense of reference to those ideas and details in the reading material and required by the question.

The best answers balanced content over the three bullets. They could suggest something of the character of Kaarlo the journalist who had depended on and/or despised his colleague the photographer. They were able to offer sensible suggestions as to how and why the encounter with the hare had caused him to respond as he did, developing those as the basis for the third bullet point and using the cues in the text to interpret what Kaarlo might do next. Stronger responses were able to absorb the material and integrate the ideas into a fairly convincing journal entry with ideas of Kaarlo's new life-course.

Mid-range responses were able to use the passage reasonably well but missed opportunities for range and/or development; they relied more on the order and occasionally the wording of the passage. Here, it was not unusual for the second section to dominate, suggesting compassion for the injured hare, with typically fewer ideas presented for the first and third bullet points. Opportunities for development linked to details were rarely taken. For example, the argument and 'sulking' led to the photographer not concentrating on his driving (detail: 'motored mindlessly'); the collision shocked Kaarlo out of his sulky silence (detail: 'sickening thud') and the stress of working in the busy capital caused Kaarlo health problems (detail: stomach ulcers were on the way.)

The least successful answers retold some of the events unselectively or were thin in content; perhaps the third section was not addressed at all. Conversely, candidates might write their entire response about why Kaarlo cannot go back to his old life without explaining the events that caused the change. There could be confusion of events and details due to careless reading. For example, the collision of the car with the hare was omitted completely or the protagonists were introduced as husband and wife.

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

- read the passage carefully and return to check key details as you plan your answer
- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- plan ideas to deal with all aspects of each bullet
- adapt material from the passage to make it an appropriate response to the specific task set
- plan a route through your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- take account of the given persona, audience and purpose for your response
- answer in your own words
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response
- extend and develop relevantly a number of the ideas you include – do not just repeat them

#### **Question 2**

The response is written in continuous prose thus enabling the candidates to have sufficient opportunity to explore and explain their ideas about the words and phrases used. Marks are given for the relevance of the words and phrases selected for discussion and the quality of the overall analysis. Credit is given in **Question 2** for the ability to select with precision a range of interesting or unusual examples of words and phrases relevant to the focus of the question in each section. Responses that go on to explore and explain



meanings of the words are awarded further marks. Responses that explored the effects that the use of particular words and phrases have on the reader scored up to the highest mark of ten. Recognising devices such as metaphors or assonance only showed understanding at satisfactory level, higher level was reached where the candidate went on to explain their specific usefulness in context. The majority of candidates found this question the most demanding of the three, as it requires a wide vocabulary, close reading, and an ability to relate to subtleties of language beyond explicit meaning

Careful selection of appropriate phrases in both sections of **Question 2** is important. Lengthy quotations were usually not explained with precision and often resulted in general comment at best. Similarly, selecting single words divorced from the parent phrase led to incomplete or partial explanation. General comments not tied to specific choices earned little credit. For example, comments about the childish behaviour of the middle-aged men, tension in the car or the light-heartedness of the young hare needed to be accompanied by selected words or phrases to illustrate the point. Ideas beginning, 'This gives the impression that...' need to include how and why the impression is given in order to progress the answer further.

Mid-range responses gave a mainly suitable selection with a mixed range of explanation, touching on effects at times. The least successful answers offered a sparse selection often mixed with unsuitable phrases. This was caused by lack of focus on the question, so, for example, 'the lovely summer evening' was used in **(a)** and 'his dusty city shoe' in **(b)** was frequently cited. Explanations were often slight, sometimes repeating the words of the text such as, 'the men were stubborn and self-absorbed.' Some words were rarely explained convincingly, for example giddy, rehearsing, pranced and twirled. Spring was sometimes incorrectly referred to as the season and errors in copying from the text meant potentially relevant choices provided less convincing evidence of understanding – for example one candidate explained the hare 'refreshing its lips' rather than rehearsing its leaps.

#### Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- take time to revisit each of the two paragraphs to first identify the potential choices, then select the strongest four from each for your answer
- make sure your choices are precise – do not copy out whole sentences
- make sure your choices are complete – do not offer only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase or image
- do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle
- to explain effects, think of how the reader's understanding is enhanced by the use of language when reading the word or phrase, because of its connotations and associations.
- when offering a phrase as a choice, discuss how each of the words within it is working
- try to explain both how and why a particular word or image might have been used
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them
- avoid generalised, 'empty' comments, such as 'the words help us to imagine it more clearly'
- if you are unsure about effects, start by offering a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- do not just label choices, discuss them in some detail

#### Question 3

The majority of candidates had understood that in a question testing their ability to 'select for specific purpose' they needed to identify just 15 points in 3a) and that further answers added on after the 15 would not be credited unless replacing a crossed out answer earlier on. In **Question 3a)**, up to 15 marks are available from a possible 17 and most responses were able to identify a convincing number of those points, with many well into double figures. The vast majority were aware of the need to identify ideas clearly and chose various ways to communicate ideas effectively in note form. Some addressed the difference between rabbits and hares through explanations such as 'hares have larger ears' or rabbits' ears are generally smaller' and were careful to explain their ideas as differences between the two. Occasionally, points were less well focused and/or notes were incomplete – for example suggesting that rabbits hopped straight when faced with danger was a misreading, similarly suggesting that hares are independent at birth is not correct. Where ideas were not clearly linked to either rabbits or hares intended meaning at times was put into doubt – for example listing of 'larger ears' or 'reproduces underground' without indication of whether this was in relation to rabbits or hares could not be credited. Where candidates had not recognised the need for points to be made clearly in 3a), treating them as a form of shorthand only for their response in 3b), opportunity to secure marks was sometimes missed.

There are no marks to be scored for writing in 3a); however, checking responses for accuracy in spelling and grammar is clearly essential if candidates are to avoid the potential danger of negating points through careless slips and ambiguous answers. Candidates should pay particular attention for example to correct any errors that might change or cloud meaning. For example, spelling errors resulting in suggestions that 'hares years are longer', that 'hears are larger' or that hares ate 'bugs' could have been avoided.

Passage B contained plenty of information not required for the answer. Using underlining or highlighting in the text is a good way to focus on potentially useful information and discard distractors and repetitions. Some candidates detailed as fact that hares were tricksters and shape-shifters, and did not get on well with modern farming methods, neither of which are firm differences between rabbits and hares.

Precise selection of each point was required as passage B contained examples of the same point, hence candidates needed to focus on the central meaning without repeating the point in a slightly different form. Whilst the majority of the candidates scored well in 3a), duplication of hares being fully furred and being born with eyes open was common.

In **Question 3b)**, the majority of candidates demonstrated at least some awareness of an appropriate style for a summary, though a number were list-like and/or relied on the language and sequence of the original passage. The most successful responses re-ordered and re-grouped the relevant information from the text, with a clear focus throughout on how rabbits and hares were significantly different. The very best answers had considered carefully both content and organisation, writing in mostly fluent sentences and using own words as far as possible. They connected ideas with some care and avoided long explanation, repetition and/or comments.

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

- read the question carefully and underline the key words which identify the focus of the task
- re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify potential content points
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to establish and select 15 distinct points
- list your points – one complete idea per numbered line – using as few words as possible
- plan your response in 3b to organise and sequence content helpfully for your reader
- write informatively
- do not add details or examples to the content of the passage
- you can choose to use your own words in 3a and must use your own words in 3b
- do not add further numbered points in 3a past the 15 required
- pay attention to the guidance for length in 3b
- avoid repetition of points
- when checking and editing your answers to **Question 3**, consider whether each point you are making could be easily and precisely understood by someone who has not read the passage.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/22  
Reading Passages (Extended)

## Key Messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read the passages carefully, not forgetting any information at the top of each passage
- read all questions carefully, paying attention to the specific guidance offered
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- planned the structure and sequence of each answer, making each point once only in a response
- allowed time to address fully each section of each question
- avoided copying whole sentences or sections from either passage
- used their own words in **Questions 1** and **3b** and when explaining choices in **Question 2**
- ensured that ideas were developed and fully explained in **Question 1** and **Question 2**
- checked their responses carefully to correct errors of spelling and grammar affecting meaning
- used a range of appropriate vocabulary.

## General Comments

Candidates' responses to this paper indicated familiarity with the demands of each task and the format of the paper, along with some awareness of the need to use, rather than simply repeat, the material from the passages to answer the questions. There were a number of responses which were over-reliant on both the wording and/or sequence of the passages, providing less convincing evidence of skills and understanding as a result. Candidates are expected to adapt and modify the material in the passages for higher band marks, and copying from the text is to be avoided.

Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible and engaging, and were generally able to finish the paper within the time allowed. Very occasionally, achievement was limited by a failure to follow the rubric and/or complete all aspects of a task - for example, by not providing 15 answers in **Question 3a**) or only answering one part of **Question 2**. There did not seem to be many significant misunderstandings of the content of either passage, though careful, purposeful reading is essential to ensure that finer details are interpreted and used effectively. For example, close reading of Passage A would have revealed that a novice skydiver did not have to pull a cord to open their parachute – a fact which could then have been helpfully included in the jumpmaster's talk to reassure their nervous audience.

Copying was evident at times. For example, in responses to **Question 1** the narrator's description of crawling out of the open door of the aircraft and hanging from the wing strut was reproduced in some answers word for word, along with the sections relating to the jumpmaster's calculations, the rewards of skydiving and the woman who had jumped first. There is a significant difference between such reproduction of the text and the careful use and integration of textual detail in support of points which is required for higher marks. The perspective of the jumpmaster in **Question 1** demanded a different voice and tone from that of the original narrator describing their experience. The best answers recognised this, for example weaving into their advice key details related to drop zones and the need to hold on until receiving the signal to let go, rather than simply repeating the information as a narrative. Less successful responses in **Question 3b**) also tended to repeat the passage, writing from Vic's perspective instead of adapting and modifying the material appropriately for the purpose of the task. Candidates are reminded they must change the language of the passages in response to **Question 1** and **Question 3b**) in order to demonstrate achievement in Reading and Writing at higher levels. Similarly, in **Question 2** a tendency to rely on repeating the language of the original when attempting to explain choices limited some responses.

For **Question 2** candidates need to offer appropriate choices of words and phrases from each of the two paragraphs and make specific, detailed comments about these choices. To gain marks in the higher bands

candidates need to write detailed explanations of the effects of their choices in both parts of the question, demonstrating sound understanding of the writer's purpose. A number of candidates were not sufficiently precise in their choices. Some copied long phrases/sentences from the text, often resulting in vague comments that did not refer to specific words. Others offered incomplete images, limiting their explanation by only selecting part of the example. Many would have benefitted from offering more full and careful explanations of their chosen examples, drawing on the full range of their vocabulary to tease out precise meanings, make connections and suggest possible effects. Using a grid or table format to respond to this question is not advised, as it often results in repetition and can limit candidates' ability to explore and explain the choices they have selected.

In **Question 3a)** many candidates were able to find a reasonable number of points. Candidates do not need to use their own words in **Question 3a)** but should use short notes, rather than whole sentences taken from the passage. Copying chunks of the passage will not be rewarded. Each point offered needs to be precisely identified and clearly communicated. The majority of candidates did attempt to use their own words as appropriate in **Question 3b)** and some organised their ideas helpfully. However, candidates must be aware that when they are substituting their own words, the summary needs to remain factually accurate and the meaning of the original idea should not be blurred. For example, changing 'computer generated special effects' to technology misses the precise point. Candidates are not expected to change all key words and terms in 3b) and do not need to struggle to replace every word of the original. They should not though lift whole phrases and/or sentences from the passage and/or rely on simply listing ideas in the order of the passage. Inclusion of material outside the passage is potentially distracting and can lead to unnecessarily lengthy explanations which affect the Writing mark. Indiscriminate copying of the passage, repetition and comment should all be avoided.

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

Many responses were generally clear and/or showed some sense of audience in **Question 1** and most were aware of the need to adopt a more objective perspective and informative style in **Question 3**. Whilst writing is not assessed in **Question 2**, candidates should ensure that they consider carefully the precision and range of their own vocabulary when attempting to describe the effects and meanings of the selections they are discussing. In some instances, candidates might have been able to demonstrate more convincingly their understanding of the language used by the author had they used vocabulary more effectively themselves. Likewise, checking and editing all three answers more thoroughly might help some candidates to ensure they are offering secure evidence of their skills to Examiners.

### Comments on Specific Questions

#### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

The most convincing responses to **Question 1** took into careful account that this was a talk to novices – a 'new group' of candidates on their 'first jump'. Very few candidates had difficulties with presenting at least some of the main events and ideas in the passage as a talk to a group, though some missed opportunities to inject a measure of the surety of the expert speaker and/or shift perspective sufficiently from that of the narrator describing their own first jump in the original passage. Others occasionally became caught up in the drama of the moment, forgetting that the task was assessing their own Reading skills. Examples include failing to answer the first bullet fully as a consequence of informing their novice audience that instructions for the jump were 'on the sheet being handed out', and/or that the correct position to adopt was 'like this' without specifying any details.

Many recognised that the jumpmaster might want to balance the need for disciplined instruction and attention to detail with some reassurance ahead of the experience awaiting the new candidates. Better answers had considered how to use and develop ideas from the passage accordingly and demonstrated a clear sense of purpose. Most answers showed at least some awareness of audience and/or purpose, though often needed more effective planning to ensure that all aspects of the question were addressed and that focus across the bullets was even.

Many candidates were able to write using a suitable voice and some of the best responses were often politely informal, picking up on the tone of the opening line prompt and choosing to include some features typical of spoken language. Occasionally, attempts at humour detracted from the overall effect. For example, 'It is likely that you will die – only kidding!' given the nature and context of the speech was unlikely to be appropriate.

Some responses invented an entirely separate persona for the jumpmaster, occasionally to good effect. Many candidates assumed that the jumpmaster was the narrator of the passage years later. Where candidates kept audience and purpose in mind this also worked well, as they were able to use the memories of that initial experience sensitively within their talk, developing their advice and reassurance related to inferred ideas based on the experiences of the narrator in the passage. Where responses simply repeated the experience of the narrator mechanically, leaning on the language of the passage, the response was less convincing, even if the need to instruct had been remembered. For example, the assertion that new divers would 'need to obey with complete reluctance' was not uncommon. Similarly, the reminder to 'Run or you'll die' suggested details of the passage had not been fully understood and/or carefully used.

Many mid-range answers missed opportunities to extend and develop ideas in the second bullet particularly – some as a result of over-emphasising the possibility of imminent death or horrible injury from the outset. For example, 'Now take this seriously or a horrific, painful and traumatising experience awaits you' lacks the subtlety to encourage a more sensitive use of the text. Whilst it was necessary to address the possibility of injury or death when dealing with the fear of the first jump, more convincing answers sought to examine more closely the nature of the fear the new divers might face and the specific forms it might take, rather than seeking to add to their feelings of trepidation. There was some focus here on the need to focus on the positives and just get on with the jump, but the experience of fear was often not fully explored or explained.

Responses at higher levels were able to develop points effectively by offering careful reassurance and advice in relation to the experience of fear as it might unfold for the novices. Some explained that the reluctance to even let go of the plane was perfectly normal and to be expected. Others used the narrator's shock at the speed of initial descent and then evident relief when the woman's parachute opened to suggest that watching the person ahead of you jump successfully was one way to put your mind at rest. They agreed that the first freefall section would indeed be fast, but explained that the parachute opening would slow the diver down and allow their heart rate to settle again. The best answers addressed both the fear and the ways to overcome it in some detail through close reference to both explicit and implicit ideas in the passage. For example, recognising the expertise of a skilled and experienced jumpmaster as suggested by those calculations mentioned in paragraph one allowed better answers to develop the idea that everything had been done to minimise risk. Some capitalised on the detail of the static line triggering the parachute, suggesting it meant there would be less to worry about as this would ensure the parachute opened at the correct point in the descent.

Most candidates used the bullets in the order of the question to shape their response, occasionally to good effect. Often better answers were those which showed evidence of having planned the content of their answers using the bullets and then considered their route through the material carefully. These answers avoided unnecessary repetition of ideas and often were able to build a persuasive argument for the attractions of the sport, as well as informing and reassuring their audience in relation to their first jump. Some successful answers for example chose to allay the various fears of bullet two to begin with, then moved on to the attractions of the sport in the future as a persuasion that it would all be worth it, before 'reminding' their candidates of the procedure they must follow as a final round up. Less successful responses were often those which attempted to simply replay the passage in order and/or attempted to answer each bullet in turn without planning content beforehand.

Misinterpreting and/or neglecting key detail was a feature of the least successful answers. Some appeared to suggest that the parachute was an optional extra for the jump: 'You won't regret jumping even if you forget the parachute'. A number referred incorrectly to divers having to pull the cord to open the parachute, with some basing whole sections of advice around pulling the cord at the right time, and how to trigger reserve chutes – information not in line with the passage. Those who drifted from the text and task, for example talking in very general terms about why conquering any fear was important, or speculating about competitions and medals that might be won as 'rewards' of skydiving, might have improved their response by focussing more specifically on the details offered in the passage and guidance offered in the task itself.

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

- read the passage carefully and return to check key details as you plan your answer
- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points

- plan ideas to deal with all aspects of each bullet
- adapt material from the passage to make it an appropriate response to the specific task set
- plan a route through your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- take account of the given persona, audience and purpose for your response
- answer in your own words
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response
- extend and develop relevantly a number of the ideas you include – do not just repeat them

## Question 2

Responses to **Question 2** which take the form of continuous prose allow candidates to explore their choices fully and consider how language examples are working in context, making connections where appropriate. Using a grid or table format is not advised as this often results in the same material being duplicated in two of the three columns and also often forces responses to be expressed very briefly or in note form. Similarly, brief notes jotted under the choice as a sub-heading are unlikely to allow for full consideration of the subtleties and complexity of the language choice being discussed. Analysis in both halves of the question needs to be sufficiently developed and extended to allow candidates to unpick each word within a chosen phrase and consider how exactly the language is contributing to and affecting the reader's understanding and reactions.

Marks are given for the relevance of the words and phrases selected for discussion and the quality of the overall analysis. Credit is given in **Question 2** for the ability to select with precision a range of interesting or unusual examples of words and phrases relevant to the focus of the question in each section. Responses that go on to explore and explain meanings of the words are awarded further marks. Responses that also explore the effects that the use of particular words and phrases have on the reader can score up to the highest mark of ten.

The majority of candidates found this question the most demanding of the three, as it requires a wide vocabulary, close reading, and an ability to relate to subtleties of language beyond explicit meaning. At times, candidates in mid-range answers moved on too quickly to the next example, suggesting in passing that there may be layers of meaning/alternative interpretations to consider but offering incomplete explanation. It was not uncommon for answers in this range to offer uneven comment over a long list of choices, with ideas repeated for some selections and others hardly touched on. More careful consideration of choices ahead of writing might have allowed candidates to choose the strongest choices about which they felt most able to comment and to explain their ideas more efficiently.

The most successful responses to **Question 2** showed precise focus at word level. They were engaged and assured in their handling of their appropriate choices. They selected carefully, including images, put the choices in context, and answered both parts of the question equally well. Candidates were generally able to visualise something of the image they were dealing with, though less careful attention to the detail of it meant opportunities were often missed to achieve marks at higher levels. For example, many recognised the comparison to a falling sack of cement as relevant, describing it as being a heavy/bulky object but going no further or suggesting that meant the first diver was over-weight. Clearly not designed to float, and likely to drop straight down, this inanimate object falling suggested something of the movement of the human diver – often explained by better answers as reflecting the lack of control and grace in her initial freefall.

Many candidates lacked precision in their selection and opportunities to discuss effects specifically were missed as a result. Choices such as 'hurtle'... 'empty space' and 'sack of cement' were often written together – less of a concern if candidates then carefully unpacked each one. More often though imprecise selection of clumps of choices meant that the explanations which followed were too general, with comments not carefully attributed to any specific word/phrase. Other opportunities to evidence understanding were missed where words were misread/miscopied. 'Hurtle' was sometimes listed incorrectly as 'hurle' (resulting in comments about being thrown) or 'hurdle'.

Many responses touched on the essence of beauty in the 'flower-like' and might have gone further in explaining that in relation to the opening of the parachute. Some saw comedy in both the exaggerated belly flop and spread-eagled frog image, but missed opportunities to say how and why, often repeating the language of the original in attempts to explain. In part (b) 'splendidly' was often dealt with clearly by candidates recognising that this implied that the parachute opened as it should. Some candidates were able to go further indicating the sense of relief this conveyed. Linking it to 'floated slowly' also proved to be fruitful ground for comment in stronger answers, whilst moving on to then consider 'utter silence' allowed for further exploration of the sense of tranquillity and peace created. Glossing over these choices however meant

further opportunities to secure marks in higher bands were not fully exploited – for example ‘utter silence’ was often merged with ‘punctuated by the bass drumbeat of my heart’ with a general comment intended to cover both. Where candidates were going some way to explain images, they were often able to recognise the ‘drumbeat’ image as resonating the fear of the freefall with the steady rhythm of one now safe and assured.

Failure to consider words within a choice separately limited some explanations. For example, ‘giddy and ecstatic’ was a popular choice, though ‘giddy’ was rarely considered. Similarly, the ‘group of children getting off a roller coaster’ was often selected and was a potentially profitable choice – suggesting the shared and therefore intensified emotions implied by ‘group’ and the extremes of physical sensation or emotional ups and downs implied by the ‘rollercoaster’ reference. A few better responses did pick up on the return to a sense of child-like joy and bravado but many were content to just hint at ‘excitement’ or refer to childish behaviour and missed the chance to go further.

For the most part, candidates were able to show that they recognised potentially interesting examples of language use and could offer at least some sense of the meanings and/or effects of their selections, even if only in a generalised way at times. For marks in the top bands, candidates need to be careful to select and interpret choices accurately, considering examples in context and demonstrating that they understand some of the subtleties of how the language is working. Quality of analysis rather than feature spotting needs to be the emphasis.

### Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- take time to revisit each of the two paragraphs to first identify the potential choices, then select the strongest four from each for your answer
- make sure your choices are precise – do not copy out whole sentences
- make sure your choices are complete – do not offer only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase or image
- do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle
- to explain effects, think of how the reader’s understanding is enhanced by the use of language when reading the word or phrase, because of its connotations and associations.
- when offering a phrase as a choice, discuss how each of the words within it is working
- try to explain both how and why a particular word or image might have been used
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them
- avoid generalised, ‘empty’ comments, such as ‘the words help us to imagine it more clearly’
- if you are unsure about effects, begin by offering a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- do not just label literary devices you notice, consider how each example is working in context

### Question 3

The majority of candidates had understood that in a question testing their ability to ‘select for specific purpose’ they needed to identify just 15 points in 3a) and that further answers added on after the 15 would not be credited unless replacing a crossed-out answer earlier on. A few candidates however carried on well beyond 15 and missed the opportunity to maximise their score by reconsidering this list of ‘points’ to offer 15 clearly focused ideas. Selecting and identifying distinct points meant that candidates had to read and plan their answers carefully, both to avoid repetition and to organise their ideas sensibly. There was more than one way in which points could be logically grouped and these options were reflected in the mark scheme. There were a total of 20 potential points available from this one passage, allowing generous leeway for candidates looking for 15. Most were able to identify a good number, with the better, sharply-focused answers typically scoring two thirds or more of the available content marks. Candidates are reminded that the question instructions ask for short notes, one per line. Long copied sections of text and/or incomplete ideas running over several lines are unlikely to demonstrate the focus required to identify clearly the point to be credited.

**Question 3b)** responses scoring well had used their points from 3a) carefully, organising them purposefully into a concise, fluent prose response rather than relying on repeating points in the order or language of the passage. There was clear indication that candidates producing answers at the top end had revisited points in 3a) during the planning stages of 3b) in order to edit and refine points in this part of the question. This resulted in clearer, more distinct points in 3a) and an efficient and often well-focused response in 3b).

To answer this question successfully, candidates needed to first identify fifteen points that were relevant to the question, listing them clearly and discretely - one per numbered line. Candidates are reminded that they are only credited with a maximum of one mark per line. Candidates are not required to use their own words in this part of the question, though better answers had often chosen to do so for clarity, for example where points were implied and/or exemplified more than once in the original text. Those who relied on identifying points from the text simply by working through chronologically often repeated points – typically in relation to autonomy – or missed the point, for example by relating Vic’s personal experience rather than identifying more general points relevant to stuntmen/stunt work. Reflecting on potential answers during planning stage would have helped a number of these candidates to group examples usefully together under one umbrella point, identify implied points and/or avoid repetition of ideas.

There are no marks to be scored for writing in 3a), however checking responses for accuracy in spelling and grammar is clearly essential if candidates are to avoid the potential danger of negating points through careless slips. Candidates should pay particular attention for example to correct any errors that might change or cloud meaning. For example, imprecise use of tense such as ‘performers make their own devices’ or spelling errors resulting in suggestions that stunt performers ‘crushed buses’ or even ‘crushed bushes’ could have been avoided.

In **Question 3b**, the majority of candidates demonstrated at least some awareness of an appropriate style for a summary, though a number were list-like and/or relied on the order of the original passage. The most successful responses re-ordered and re-grouped the relevant information from the text, with a clear focus throughout on how the job had changed and an intelligent, interested general readership in mind. The very best answers had considered carefully both content and organisation, writing in fluent sentences and using own words as far as possible. They connected ideas with some skill and avoided long introductory statements and/or comments.

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

- read the question carefully and underline the key words which identify the focus of the task
- re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify potential content points
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to establish and select 15 distinct points
- list your points – one complete idea per numbered line – using as few words as possible
- plan your response in 3b to organise and sequence content helpfully for your reader
- write informatively
- do not add details or examples to the content of the passage
- you can choose to use your own words in 3a and must use your own words in 3b
- do not add further numbered points in 3a past the 15 required
- pay attention to the guidance for length in 3b
- avoid repetition of points
- when checking and editing your answers to **Question 3**, consider whether each point you are making could be easily and precisely understood by someone who has not read the passage



# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/23  
Reading Passages (Extended)

## Key Messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read the passages carefully, not forgetting any information at the top of each passage
- read all questions carefully, paying attention to the specific guidance offered
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- planned the structure and sequence of each answer, making each point once only in a response
- allowed time to address fully each section of each question
- avoided copying whole sentences or sections from either passage
- used their own words in **Questions 1** and **3b** and when explaining choices in **Question 2**
- ensured that ideas were developed and fully explained in **Question 1** and **Question 2**
- checked their responses carefully to correct errors of spelling and grammar affecting meaning
- used a range of appropriate vocabulary.

## General comments

Candidates' responses to this paper generally indicated familiarity with the demands of each task and the need to use relevant material from the passages to answer each question. Most candidates attempted all parts of the three questions and most responses were an appropriate length.

Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible and most were able to finish the paper within the time allowed.

Most **Question 1** responses were generally focused on the question and all parts of the task were attempted. Good responses displayed a sound understanding of the ideas in Passage A by including a range of relevant ideas that were developed effectively and supported by well-integrated detail. Less successful responses often did not pick up on implicit ideas from the passage and there was little modification or development of the material. A mechanical use of the passage demonstrates at best a reasonable level of understanding. Candidates are expected to adapt and modify the material in the passages for higher band marks, and lifting or copying from the text is an indicator of less secure understanding and to be avoided.

For **Question 2** candidates need to offer appropriate choices of words and phrases from each of the two paragraphs and make specific, detailed comments about these choices. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to write detailed explanations of the effects of their choices in both parts of the question, demonstrating sound understanding of the writer's purpose. Most responses included a sufficient number of appropriate examples from the relevant paragraphs. Few answers included the clear explanations of effects and images that are required for marks in the top bands. Many contained some accurate explanations of meanings and the identification of some linguistic devices but only partially explained effects.

In **Question 3a)** many candidates managed to attain a mark in double figures, finding a reasonable number of points. Candidates do not need to use their own words in **Question 3a)** but need to use short notes, rather than whole sentences taken from the passage. Copying from the passage will not be rewarded. In **Question 3b)** some responses contained examples of lifted phrases and sentences from the passages rather than ideas clearly expressed in their own words. It is important that candidates use their own words as far as possible in this summary task as otherwise it suggests that they do not fully understand the wording of the original. It is important too that when the wording is altered and a fact rephrased, that meaning should not be blurred as a result.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to keep in mind that 20% of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1 and 3**. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing – planning and editing their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, imprecise meaning and awkward expression. Whilst writing is not specifically assessed for accuracy in this paper, candidates should be aware that unclear or limited style will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Leaving sufficient time to edit responses is advisable. The majority of responses were within the recommended length guidelines and thus were focused and without the repetition that can come with excessive length.

## **Comments on Specific Questions**

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

Responses to **Question 1** required candidates to modify the third person description of Argin's experiences as District Officer to write a radio interview in which his own ideas and thoughts about the resettlement programme were expressed from his perspective. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and there were attempts to create a convincing voice. Despite the instruction that the interviewer should ask only the three questions given, some responses contained extended and quite intrusive contributions by the interviewer. These included comments and information that might have been more successfully articulated through Argin to develop a sense of his character, and opportunities were missed as a result. Most candidates were careful to follow the instructions and asked Argin just the three required questions, resulting in mainly focused and often well-structured responses.

Argin's answer to the first question in most responses included several key points about the concerns of the villagers. There were references to their fear of losing their homes, neighbours and land, and concerns that they would not receive sufficient compensation if their livestock and possessions were lost while being transported to the new location. In less good responses these points were not fully developed and only a few details from the passage were included, for example, that people had always lived in the same village, they did not want to live with strangers and were worried that their herds would not be tallied. In better responses Argin explained their anxieties more fully and displayed some appreciation of their fears, for example that generations of families lived in the area and had emotional and historical attachments and that very old and very young people would face a lot of upheaval with an uncertain future. Better answers also noted that the livelihood of farmers was reliant on obtaining good grazing land for their livestock in the new location. Few responses referred to the importance of the heritage of the area and the fear that ancient relics would be lost or destroyed, missing opportunities to extend range further, though some did refer to the fact that homes and land would disappear under the water.

For the second part of the task, most responses attempted to address both parts of the question and explain what Argin's job involved, giving an assessment of how well he had done. Explanations included that Argin had to organise transport, take notes, make calculations and generally oversee the process of resettlement. Some responses developed these ideas by expressing Argin's need to be meticulous and honest in his record-keeping, and equally fair to the wealthy merchants, peasants and farmers. He had to listen to peoples' concerns and assure them that the move would go smoothly. It was clear from the passage that many people did not understand the concept of the dam and the permanent disappearance of their village so Argin needed to be understanding and not allow his frustration to become evident. Good responses avoided repeating points from the first part of the interview and were focused on the qualities needed to carry out his tasks successfully. Weaker responses were reliant on the description in the passage of large numbers of villagers visiting Argin's office with their livestock and offering him food, money and animals. In these answers, details from the passage were not modified or used effectively to illustrate the difficulties of Argin's task. In better responses the huge number of visitors was used as evidence of the anxiety of the villagers and their need for information and reassurance from Argin. Their attempts at bribery were seen as a sign of their desperation to hold on to their land and possessions, and also as evidence of Argin's integrity and moral strength in turning down the 'gifts', even though they would have made him wealthy. Many responses included his added responsibility of dividing the land up fairly between the large numbers of archaeologists who all spoke different languages.

When assessing his level of success many responses referred to Argin's failure to keep promises because of the lack of time and money. Better responses gave a more detailed evaluation and allowed him to express some reservations about his role in relocating a whole village of people against their will while trying to show that he had carried out his work to the best of his ability.

In the final part of the interview, most responses showed at least some awareness of the need to address both parts of the question: Argin's views about life in the new settlement and his decision about his future. Less good responses contained quite general comments, stating that after some initial difficulties people would eventually settle down and adapt to their new way of life. Some made references to being among old neighbours and having new, modern homes but overall the range of ideas was quite narrow. There were opportunities to use the information from the passage to refer to further potential benefits of the new settlement, for example, access to electricity, the possibility of new employment, better land for farmers and increased markets for merchants. Although Argin was chosen for his tact and discretion, and would therefore be unlikely to display overt criticism on a national radio programme, some interviews did express carefully his disquiet about the consequences of the forced relocation of the villagers. Any positive or negative comments about life in the new village could be rewarded if they were linked to ideas in the passage. Some responses questioned whether the villagers would be happy in their new community, whether they would benefit from the hydroelectric dam project and whether they had been sufficiently compensated. Few responses commented on the treatment of the ancient relics and the loss of the historical artefacts that were an important part of the area. Good responses considered a range of outcomes and expressed any concerns in a measured tone while expressing some degree of empathy with the villagers. In most interviews Argin's decisions about his future plans were supported by reasons that could be credited as development. References were made to the difficulty of his task and his need for a break. Some referred to the Governor's words that the job 'could help establish a man's name' and Argin felt that his career had benefitted and he could now move onto something better. In some responses Argin expressed the wish to stay as he had formed a close bond with the villagers and he wanted to continue to help them.

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

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

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

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

### **Question 2**

In response to **Question 2**, candidates were advised to include four appropriate examples for each part of the question and most answers contained a sufficient number of choices. Responses to **Question 2** are expected to take the form of continuous prose in order to allow candidates to explore their choices fully and consider how language examples are working in context. Using a grid or table format is not advised as this often results in duplication of material and forces responses to be expressed very briefly or in note form. Similarly, brief notes jotted under the choice as a sub-heading are unlikely to allow for full consideration of the subtleties and complexity of the language choice being discussed. Analysis in both halves of the question needs to be sufficiently developed and extended, for example to allow candidates to unpick each word within a chosen phrase and consider how exactly the language is contributing to and affecting the reader's understanding and reactions. Less good responses often only included one or two choices in each half limiting the discussion possible. This is not sufficient to display an understanding of the writer's use of language and to secure marks in the higher bands. Likewise, selecting too many choices in each half often resulted in superficial explanations that did not fully explore and explain the effects intended by the writer.

Some responses contained fewer relevant examples in part **a**) often lowering the overall marks for this question as a result.

Credit is given for the ability to select evocative or unusual words that may have different layers of meanings or certain connotations, and in this question candidates were asked to comment on the description of the Governor. Some of the words offered by candidates as choices from paragraph 2 were not sufficiently focused on the question as set and included words used by the Governor to describe the proposed job, rather than words or phrases used to describe him and his manner. For example, 'a tricky job', 'a great deal of tact' and 'liaise' were chosen by some, resulting in literal or imprecise meanings about the nature of the task given to Argin rather than comments about the language used to describe the Governor and his attempts to influence and manipulate. Some referred to factual detail such as the 'comfortable surroundings of his air conditioned office' commenting on the luxury around him at the expense of considering more profitable choices. By focusing on less interesting words and phrases candidates missed the opportunity to explain the effects that the Governor's style of address might have on the listener.

Better responses contained clear explanations of how the words 'cooed' and 'hypnotically' suggested an attempt to entice and control Argin. Some answers missed the opportunity to show understanding by including overly long phrases with several effective words that were not all addressed. For example, in the phrase 'thin wisps of words seemed to drop out of his sentences and float away', many responses only focused on the effects of 'thin wisps'. The explanations were often clear; some suggested the words were like trails of smoke or vapour that disappeared. There was, though, an opportunity to explore and explain how 'drop out' and 'float away' each reinforce the idea that his words were elusive, difficult to grasp and often lost. Some included the phrase 'infuriating habit of speaking in such a slow manner' and gave a fairly simple explanation of 'slow manner' without addressing the key word 'infuriating'. Better responses recognised the need to include short, focused examples with a precise analysis of individual words and clear explanations of their collective effects. Many responses linked the word 'hypnotically' with 'mesmerisingly', though not all explained that the Governor's 'meandering' and indirect style had the effect of both distracting the listener from the main points, and exerting some control. In several responses the use of alliteration was identified but its effectiveness was not always fully explored. The naming of a literary device can only be rewarded when accompanied by an explanation of its effects.

In most responses part **(b)** contained a wider range of more relevant choices, although some included the phrases 'all corners of the globe' and 'first-come-first-served basis' which were not useful choices since they did not refer to the focus of the question. Many responses contained clear explanations of how the words 'hasty heaps' and 'dismantled' suggest a careless attitude and a lack of respect towards the human remains. There were also some clear explanations of how the use of 'hordes' and 'descended' creates a negative image of a large group of creatures coming down from the sky, like vultures, to claim the relics. In some responses there were accurate meanings of words, which were rewarded, but the effects were not always considered, for example, in the phrase 'sprouted from the earth'. The things growing out of the ground, like plants, were human remains but few answers commented on this rather horrific and disturbing image. Some responses gave the meaning of the word 'pored' without considering its effects in the context of examining or human bones.

Less good responses to this question did not include a range of precise and appropriate choices in both sections. Some repeated the original wording in their explanations and some included overlong examples which did not address the key words. The best responses made judicious selections, identified images and analysed the writer's use of language with precision and clarity.

### **Advice to candidates on Question 2:**

- pay close attention to the focus of each part of the question when choosing words or phrases
- avoid generalised, 'empty' comments such as 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there'
- spend time before you write considering how and why the examples you have chosen work in context
- make sure your choices are precise – do not write out whole sentences
- do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle.
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or only give a general comment which applies to all of them.
- if you are not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning, in the context, for each of your choices.
- to explain effects, think of all that word might suggest to a reader - the feelings, connotations and associations of the language

- do not simply identify literary devices, focus on the meaning and effects of the words themselves
- learn to recognise images and explain them. Say what they convey within the paragraph, and how they reinforce each other, if this is the case.
- use your own words to explain your choices rather than repeat the words from the choice itself.

### Question 3

To answer **Question 3a)** successfully, candidates needed to first identify fifteen points from Passage B that were relevant to the question and to list them clearly, one per numbered line, in note form. Candidates are reminded that they are only credited with a maximum of one point per line. Any points added after line 15 are not credited unless replacing an answer crossed out earlier on. Most responses understood that in a question testing their ability to 'select for specific purposes' they should not go beyond line 15 or include groups of ideas on each line. There were a total of 18 possible answers available from this one passage, which gave candidates looking for 15 some leeway, and most responses were able to identify 10 or more points.

It is important that points are made with sufficient precision and clarity to be rewarded. Some responses included one-word answers. In some cases, for example, 'volcanoes' and 'darkness', this was enough to secure the marks. However, some points needed to include more information, for example, the comet or asteroid would have been massive, the storms would have been severe and the flood was worldwide. It is advisable for candidates to check back through **3a)** responses during the planning of **3b)**, to ensure that each point has been communicated accurately, imagining for example how clear each answer might be to anyone who had not read the text. Candidates need to remember that their notes in **Question 3a)** are marked for Reading and are not simply shorthand planning for their response in **3b)**. Each answer needs to demonstrate an unambiguous understanding of the content point in hand. Consequently, unspecified ideas such as 'nutrition', 'brain size' and 'sea level', along with general references to climate/weather were not detailed enough to be rewarded. Phrases copied from the passage without clear focus were also too imprecise to be credited, for example, 'too hot, too cold, too wet, too dry'

Candidates are not required to use their own words in this part of the question, though in better responses there was some evidence of own words, which was often in clarifying points and when moving on to write the summary in **3(b)**. Selecting and identifying relevant points in this first section meant that candidates had the opportunity to plan their summaries carefully to avoid repetition and to organise their ideas effectively into a concise and focused prose response.

Most candidates were aware of the appropriate style and form for a summary and many part **(b)** responses were factual and informative, and most were an appropriate length. Most summaries were reasonably focused and concise. Some included information from the first and final paragraphs, making references to the physicists and to HG Wells; these were not relevant. Some contained overlong explanations about why the worldwide floods were a credible explanation and some included unnecessary facts about new landmasses and locations. Some also expressed opinions about different theories of extinction which resulted in less focused responses and affected marks.

Candidates are rewarded for writing the summary in their own words. In less good responses words and phrases were copied from the passage which sometimes resulted in a lack of concision and focus. Some included lifted phrases such as 'enormous environmental catastrophe' and 'subsequent absence'. Better responses used suitable alternatives for words in the passage for example, 'enormous comet', 'fluctuations in sea levels' and 'toxic plants and water'. Some found fairly inventive ways to express ideas in their own words, for example referring to 'tidal waves' not unreasonably as 'tsunamis' and stating that the dinosaurs lacked the intelligence to survive, instead of referring to their stupidity. Summaries that contained attempts to use own words often displayed a better level of understanding and a wider range of vocabulary than those reliant on the original wording.

Not all of the summaries were written with fluency. Higher marks are awarded where candidates use varied and fluent sentence structures. Less good responses were list-like and often written in the same order as the passage, or were rather stilted, with points expressed in short sentences. Better responses used the information in **3a)** to reorganise the material, link similar points together and explain possible chains of events clearly and coherently. There was very little repetition of information in any of the responses and few misunderstandings of the theories and ideas in the passage.

#### Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- read the question carefully and underline key words

- re-read the passage after reading the question in order to identify precisely the point required
- list relevant points clearly in as few words as possible
- read through your points in 3a checking each is distinct and accurate
- plan the structure of your response for 3b, organise and sequence the content logically
- write informatively and do not comment on the content of the passage
- be careful to give only information that answers the question
- use your own words as far as possible in 3b
- do not add further numbered points in 3a beyond the 15 required
- pay attention to guidance for length in 3b
- avoid repetition of points
- leave time to check and edit your response.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/31

Directed Writing and Composition

## Key Messages

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

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

- use an appropriate form and style in both questions, adapted for the intended audience and genre
- structure ideas and organise their writing effectively, keeping the reader in mind
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct sentences accurately and vary sentence types to create specific effects
- select appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary and use language with precision.

## General Comments

Examiners found that in the great majority of responses a secure understanding was shown of what was expected in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. Most responses, regardless of achievement, were developed and there were relatively few very brief scripts. There were also very few scripts where more than one composition question had been attempted. In these cases each response was given due regard by Examiners, but there was inevitably some deleterious effect where insufficient time had been devoted to any of the tasks.

Most responses showed a committed engagement with the topic in **Question 1**, often with a sound grasp of the issues addressed in the passage and usually some attention paid to the style and format of a letter. The majority of candidates approached the topic in their own language rather than lifting or copying the words in the passage. Better answers here also tended to structure their responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the passage to support a cohesive argument of their own. Weaker responses tended to reiterate the ideas in the passage, often in the same sequence rather than selecting and regrouping points. Some made good use of the two bullet points in the question to help structure the response. Occasionally, insufficient use was made of the reading material, and responses drifted into a generalised discussion concerning medicine and examples of medical case histories. These responses tended to focus less on the points raised in the radio interview than on their own personal thoughts and experiences, missing opportunities to evaluate the ideas in the passage.

Better responses paid attention to the register, audience and style required for a letter to a radio presenter and dealing with the ideas discussed in a radio interview with a Doctor. These were persuasive in purpose, using the passage with subtlety to show an understanding of the argument rather than listing the points. Some in the middle range of marks showed an insecure register, sometimes lapsing into a more colloquial style less appropriate for the audience. Valedictions were sometimes forgotten, or were inappropriate in weaker responses, a feature symptomatic of an insecure grasp of audience and purpose.

In the compositions, the descriptive and narrative genres were attempted in fairly equal numbers. Better responses in the composition section as a whole were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected and the particular ways in which the reader's interest could be engaged. Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and although there was some narrative content in the middle range, most responses gave a range of descriptive detail. The best narrative writing engaged the reader with well-drawn and interesting characters and scenarios which were engaging and credible. Weaker narrative writing was often characterised by inconclusive or unsatisfying endings, sometimes with simple storylines which were largely a series of events with limited awareness of the reader. Composition responses would have

benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in specific genres. The conscious shaping of narratives to interest and intrigue the reader, and the creation of characters to stimulate the reader's sympathy, were features understood by effective writers in this series. Many descriptions would have been improved by the inclusion of well-chosen detail and the narrator's reactions in order to recreate the scene in the reader's imagination.

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

#### **Section A**

##### **Question 1**

**Imagine you have heard the radio interview about homeopathic medicine and decide to write a letter to the presenter, Ms Sanderling, in response.**

**In your letter you should:**

- **explore and evaluate the arguments of both sides**
- **give your own views on what you have heard.**

**Base your letter on what you have read in the transcript, but be careful to use your own words. Address both of the bullet points.**

**Begin your letter: 'Dear Ms Sanderling, I heard your interview with Dr Schinkl today and felt I had to respond.'**

**(25 marks)**

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

High marks were awarded where a perceptive and evaluative argument was made concerning Dr Schinkl's views on modern medicine and homeopathy and the points raised in the interview by Ms Sanderling. Higher marks were awarded when the letter was both accurate and appropriate in style. Better responses assimilated and integrated the material into their own focused argument in a convincing manner. These responses had a clear understanding of the range of points delivered in the reading material, both for and against modern medicine and homeopathy, and developed these points and evaluated the overall argument. Most responses reproduced the material effectively and demonstrated an understanding of the different ideas delivered during the radio interview. Examiners awarded the highest marks where a clear line of argument was developed, using the material to support the point of view, and leading to a consistent and convincing conclusion.

Responses given marks in the middle range tended to be more focused on a definition of homeopathy and an explanation of its pros and cons, together with those of modern medicine. The benefits, or otherwise, of the different approaches to medicine were understood and written about, but the exploration and evaluation of the material was less clearly the main focus. Some development of the material was offered, and a conclusion was usually reached.

Weaker responses showed some understanding of the more obvious qualities of homeopathy and modern medicine as expressed in the passage. At this level, the range of ideas was narrower and candidates often relied more on the wording of the passage, often offering repeated direct quotation from the radio interview.

#### **Marks for reading**

The best responses adopted a consistently evaluative stance and read effectively between the lines of the passage to show a more sophisticated understanding of both sides of the argument concerning homeopathy and modern medicine. These responses had an authoritative grasp of the material, and used it to support their own effectively developed viewpoint. Opinions both for and against the efficacy of both homeopathy and modern medicine were awarded Band 1. The range of benefits, and also the disadvantages, of both types of medical approach was explored. A clearly explored and evaluated conclusion was reached and expressed in a style which assimilated the reading material.



Marks in Band 2 were given where the ideas were evaluated to some degree. A mark of 7 was awarded for many responses where some thoughtful inferences were made from the passage and the ideas in the passage were successfully developed. At this level, responses tended to include a good range of the positive and negative attributes of the medical methods, together with some developed comments about them to show a grasp of the passage's subtler points. For example, some mention was made of the fact that both homeopathy and modern medicine do actually share some common ground. These inferred ideas, even where other, more surface qualities were reproduced, were often enough for Examiners to award a mark of 7, but a more sustained understanding of the ideas which underpinned the passage was needed for a higher mark.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 3 where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the passage but without the more implicit meanings mentioned above. Responses at this level showed a sensible understanding of the specific points made in the passage. Responses tended to list the qualities of homeopathy and modern medicine, and did not always reach a definite conclusion concerning the value of either. The range of points and clarity of understanding were the discriminating factors in this Band.

Weaker responses showed some misunderstanding, drifted away from the passage or addressed the material thinly. Some at this level went through the material with little reference to the ideas discussed in the interview, or offered literal definitions of homeopathy and modern medicine without offering an appropriate register or personal viewpoint. A number of responses spent time on irrelevant analysis and criticism of Ms Sanderling's interviewing techniques. Where a mark of 4 was awarded, some firmer links with the passage and a wider range of points were needed, whereas 3 was generally given for very thin or brief responses. Marks below 3 were rarely given and usually applied when the task was not understood or only a few lines were written.

### **Marks for writing**

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

### **Style and audience**

A relatively formal tone was appropriate for a letter to a radio presenter and most responses were written in an appropriate register, even where the writing was technically weak. Some weaker responses were written in a much more colloquial style, and these were not always credible as letters addressed to a professional concerning this subject matter. There was also a tendency to make assertions without effectively using the reading material to support them.

In the middle to lower mark range, the style was often appropriate, although there were sometimes lapses in candidates' awareness of the intended audience, and although most started in an appropriate way, valedictions were frequently forgotten.

### **Structure**

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for writing, handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a persuasive letter which was clearly derived from the ideas in the passage but was not dependent on its structure and sequence. At the highest level, an overview of the issues involved was given rather than a list of desirable attributes.

Responses given 7, 8 or 9 for writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the article in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed. Responses opened with a considered introduction and ended with a concluding paragraph which showed a clear sense of the purpose of the letter. At the lower end of Band 3, responses sometimes struggled to tackle the second bullet point productively which led to some repetition.

Some weaker responses given marks below Band 3 were less coherent in structure and more dependent on the sequence of ideas in the passage. This often led to some basic reiteration of the passage with less careful selection of ideas about the types of medicine.

### **Accuracy**

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in Band 1. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free

of error. Precision in the control of a subtle and ambitious vocabulary resulted in some very high marks in this component.

Responses given 7, 8 or 9 were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Although the style was usually appropriate and the level of formal language was sustained, a range of quite basic spelling and punctuation errors was evident. The failure to use a capital letter for the personal pronoun 'I' was a very frequent error, as was the use of capital letters where they were not needed, even where there was otherwise general accuracy in the writing. Apostrophes were very often not used appropriately and sentence demarcation by commas rather than full stops began to creep in at the lower end of Band 3. Commonly used words were also wrongly spelled in many responses. These included words used frequently in the passage, such as 'medicine', 'disease', 'psychological' and 'homeopathy', or words essential for letter-writing such as 'sincerely' and 'faithfully'.

While some of these minor errors could be compensated for by secure sense of audience or a varied vocabulary, faulty sentence structures often kept writing marks for **Question 1** in Band 4. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation errors which meant that Examiners could not award in Band 3 where mostly correctly structured sentences are required.

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

- **Think about the underlying attitudes in the passage as well as the specific points being made.**
- **Look for, and use in your response, inferences made indirectly by the writer**
- **Aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them.**
- **Be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly. Think carefully about the kind of style the recipient of your letter (or reader of your article) would expect.**
- **Check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing full stops, missing or wrongly used capital letters or key words mis-spelt.**

**Section 2: Composition**

**Descriptive Writing**

**Question 1**

**Describe your thoughts and feelings on an occasion when you were desperate for someone or something to arrive.**

**(25 marks)**

**OR**

**Question 3**

**Imagine you are travelling in a cable car which stops unexpectedly. Describe your surroundings and your thoughts and feelings.**

**(25 marks)**

25 marks were available for this question, of which 13 were for Content and Structure and 12 for Style and Accuracy.

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range. In the first question, many different objects or people were written about, from simple subjects such as waiting for the pizza to be delivered, to more complex subject material allowing for some sophisticated descriptive development. The question led to some engaging responses dealing with thoughts and feelings. In the second question, there were some vivid descriptions of different landscapes and environments. As in previous series, some inexperience in tackling descriptive writing tasks was seen by Examiners in responses which became narratives or which contained limited descriptive detail as well as rather mundane or repetitive details. The interpretation of a 'cable car' was varied, but the question delivered some strong descriptions of thoughts and feelings.

For the first question, the best responses often included the feelings of the narrator as a cohesive device for the piece as a whole, starting with a range of emotions and feelings concerning the anticipated arrival. Some effective description of the chosen location, either positive or negative, was used and sustained in quite sophisticated images throughout some responses.

Responses given marks in the middle range were more straightforward in their approach to the task, perhaps repetitively dealing with the idea of being 'desperate' without effectively developing a range of thoughts and feelings. There was sometimes a tendency to use the senses in a rather formulaic way to help structure the response, with comments on what was seen and heard, touched and smelt being somewhat mechanically covered. Some responses included extended details of airports and stations without sufficient attention to thoughts and feelings.

Examiners gave marks below Band 3 where the writing was more typically narrative than descriptive in focus. Such responses were often led by dialogue rather than description of the surroundings or the thoughts and feelings. While a narrative frame is often useful to give descriptions cohesion, there was at this level some insecurity about what constitutes effective descriptive writing.

The second question also elicited responses across the mark range. Mountainous locations were predictably the favourite setting, but there were also city centre cable cars and cable cars running through theme parks. Occasionally a car with cables was written about rather than a cable car, but if the descriptive content was successful, then this was marked positively. A variety of focus was offered, zooming between the people stranded in the cable car and the environment outside. A wide range of feeling was described, from fear and anxiety to philosophical musing. In the middle range, some rather formulaic use of the senses tended to feature, very often with attempts to describe the smell of fear. While there was some descriptive detail, it was often a little predictable or clichéd. Responses given marks below Band 3 were usually narrative in intent and with limited descriptive focus. Some responses used conversation between the occupants of the cable car without sufficient focus on the description of location or thoughts and feelings. Perhaps candidates' marks could have been improved at this level by a better understanding of the differences between narrative and descriptive writing.

Marks for Style and Accuracy were sometimes lower than those for Content and Structure, even in some original and interesting responses. In the best responses, precise and varied vocabulary and controlled complex sentences with secure punctuation within and between sentences were used. Images, words and phrases, as well as varied sentence lengths, were employed to create specific effects. In weaker responses, as is often the case in descriptive writing, tenses switched between past and present, sometimes within sentences, and incomplete or verbless sentences were common, even in scripts where responses to **Question 1** showed a secure grasp of sentence structure.

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

- **Try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content.**
- **Remember the key features of descriptive writing and keep the timespan of your writing short.**
- **Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.**
- **Choose your vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects.**

#### **Narrative Writing**

##### **Question 4**

**You were walking along when someone rushed towards you, asking for help. Write a story which begins at this point.**

**(25 Marks)**

**OR**

##### **Question 5**

**Write a story called 'A Way Out'.**

**(25 marks)**

The first narrative question was usually well-structured, and the title allowed for a wide range of incidents. Accidents and crimes were popular topics, as well as characters losing their children or their pets. As in most narrative writing, the success of the story depended as much on the degree to which the characters were well-realised, believable portrayals as on the sequence of events in the plot. Middle range stories offered a clear and engaging account of the encounter, with some effective detail and a range of subsequent events. One feature noticed by Examiners was the lack of satisfactory endings after reasonably effective beginnings and the creation of quite credible characters. This weakness often kept marks in Band 3 where there were some features of Band 2 at the start and highlights the need for candidates to have the ending in mind from the beginning. Some narratives were also too reliant on speech in places. Dialogue was used to tell the story more than to highlight aspects of characters and relationships, weakening the overall impact and often also revealing weaknesses in speech punctuation.

Weaker responses tended to be series of events rather than shaped narratives which showed due regard for the needs of the reader. Even where the plot itself was credible and had some shape and sense of purpose, a mark of 6 was often given where there was insufficient preparation and characterisation was weak.

For the second narrative question, the variety of topics covered was very wide. The title was developed in a wide range of ways, sometimes very literally, as in finding the way out of a maze, to some dense psychological interpretations. Mysterious portals leading to strange places proved quite popular subject matter, with the main character trying to find the way out and back to their own world. The best responses were carefully managed and created a believable and effective denouement. Better responses focused attention on characterisation and setting before this moment was revealed. Fairly straightforward scenarios were often lifted by careful scene-setting and characterisation into effective stories which could be given marks in Band 1. Indeed, these kinds of narratives were generally more effective than stories with a wider scope or more extreme storylines.

Average and weaker responses were characterised by less effective, more contrived stories which seemed to be developed in an unconvincing way. Responses given marks in Band 4 were particularly dominated by events, some of them rather unlikely, while Band 5 marks usually reflected rather brief accounts with very little to engage the reader in terms of characters and setting.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was lively and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, if persistent, limited even competently told stories to Band 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation. In many scripts, the punctuation of direct speech was insecure, even when the story itself was quite well-structured. Again, basic punctuation errors with misused or omitted capital letters, the spelling of simple words and wrongly selected homophones appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes so frequent as to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy. A controlled, competent style secured a mark in Band 3 and even where candidates wrote in a fairly pedestrian style but punctuated sentences accurately, Examiners could award a mark of 7 or 8. Weaknesses in constructing sentences, comma-splicing or frequent basic spelling and punctuation errors resulted in marks below Band 3. A few responses were very brief and faulty in style, making it difficult to follow the meaning. These were given marks lower than Band 4.

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

- **Plan how to resolve your story in an interesting way before you start writing.**
- **Consider more creative interpretations of titles.**
- **Characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader.**
- **Check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes.**

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/32

Directed Writing and Composition

## Key Messages

Successful answers:

- used an appropriate form and style, adapted for the intended audience and genre
- structured ideas logically and organised their writing effectively
- created thoughtful and well-structured arguments, producing detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- constructed sentences accurately and varied sentence types to create effects
- selected appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary with precision.

## General Comments

Most answers showed a clear understanding of the tasks undertaken and of the different skills required in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. Most responses, at all levels of achievement, were reasonably developed and relatively few were very brief or unfinished.

Most responses showed a real engagement with the topic in **Question 1** and with the task to argue against urban exploring. There was very little copying of the wording of the passage. Better answers here addressed specific ideas in the passage, acknowledging the apparent strengths of the pro-urban exploring case but able to challenge and undermine them. Weaker responses tended to summarise the writer's points with less reference to the particular ideas raised in the passage and often ended with a final paragraph arguing against urban exploring. Simple reaction to the concept of urban exploring and the writer of the passage was common at this level.

The majority of responses adopted a suitable tone and style for the kind of letter required and nearly all adhered to the format of a letter. Better responses showed some subtlety in style and audience awareness, whereas weaker responses were more limited in the tone adopted, sometimes rather too informal or confrontational.

Directed Writing responses in general could have been improved by a more careful consideration of the specific ideas in the reading passage rather than the way in which the ideas were presented.

Both genres and all questions were addressed in fairly equal numbers in the Compositions. Better responses were characterised by a sound understanding of the demands of the genre selected. Descriptions were, in better responses, both detailed and cohesive overall, although weaker scripts relied too heavily on narrated observations of events and incidents rather than the evocation of atmosphere. In the narrative writing, many stories were engaging and sustained the interest of the reader with well-created characters and settings. Weaker responses were characterised by simple storylines which were largely a series of events and by predictable or ineffective endings. Many Composition responses would have benefited from a better understanding of the features of good writing in the different genres and of how to use them under timed conditions.

## **Comments on Specific Questions**

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

Higher level responses used a range of reading material to support and justify views. Ideas were well identified and incorporated into responses. The more successful were able to assimilate the reading material by evaluating the validity of the statements made in the article. These top band responses acknowledged the apparent strength of the pro-Urbex case, but were able to challenge and undermine them and at the same time they built and developed on the anti-Urbex arguments. Higher Band responses recognised that the dangers of urban exploring outweigh the thrills, that young professionals were putting their whole futures and that of their families at risk, not just by potential injury but by risking future careers. Many questioned the notion of Superman, arguing that Superman 'rescues people .... does selfless things for others' rather than showing off climbing abilities as does the Urbex proponent. Responses at this level challenged the concept of urban exploring as an escape from reality, considering it childish, and pointing out that it was illegal. Often such responses opened with a stance against urban exploring and implied that the article was not as neutral as it appeared and was, in effect, a recruitment for the activity. Good answers rejected the very notion of urban exploring as a sport and referred to other legal extreme sports which give the same thrill, such as sky diving and bungee jumping.

Most responses were able to recognise that the article was balanced and at times in favour of urban exploring, and sought to explore the disadvantages and drawbacks of the 'sport'. In the middle range, there was some development of ideas; this was normally placed at the end of paragraphs and not properly assimilated into responses. At this level most offered their opinions about urban exploring, often reverting to general assertion and concern about this 'dangerous hobby'. Some mistook the audience to be the urban explorers themselves, leading to less secure responses. Some middle band responses failed to use the detail of the passage accurately, stating that 'urban exploring has been attracting most of the younger generation of the world', or that there are post graduate courses in urban exploring; some developed the passage inappropriately, 'many people have died taking selfies' and 'urban exploring is to be included in the next Olympics'.

Weaker responses showed some general understanding of urban exploring but the details were often misunderstood. The article states that the exponents of Urbex are mostly young male professionals. Some took this to mean that they were professional Urbex exponents. At this level, there was a tendency to exaggerate the consequences of participating in urban exploring, that a generation of young men could be 'wiped out' or that a weekend on a construction site would lead to starvation. There were also examples of over-long digressions covering the 'heavy sentences' which should be given to urban explorers or the best way to take photographs of city skylines.

### ***Style and audience***

The majority of responses were able to address the editor as audience in the opening paragraph and give an appropriate, formal sign-off. However, only a small proportion addressed the editor as an audience throughout the whole response, thus gaining higher marks. On the whole, the more successful responses were able to include their own ambitious vocabulary and adopt a polite, formal but authoritative and argumentative tone, showing an awareness of the editor as the audience. Some responses successfully addressed the audience directly through the use of rhetorical questions, which was generally effective. However, there were some instances of candidates using informal language and 'text speak', which was obviously not appropriate in terms of audience.

Successful responses adopted an appropriate argumentative tone and stance; there were, however, a number of responses which adopted a 'balanced' view, simply giving the advantages and disadvantages of urban exploring. A small proportion of response argued in favour of urban exploring, thus misunderstanding the task.

### *Structure*

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for writing, calibrated their arguments carefully for maximum effect. The issues addressed were combined into a persuasive application which was clearly derived from the ideas in the passage but was not dependent on its structure and sequence. Some stronger responses did not base their structure around the bullet points. At the highest level, an overview of the issues involved was given, rather than a list of reasons against participating in urban exploring. Some fluent responses with effective sentences did not give full attention to sequencing, so ideas within and between paragraphs were not linked as smoothly as they could be. Moreover, there was some tendency, even among stronger responses, to neglect the use of paragraphs. Many middle band responses used discursive markers which provided effective structure. Some responses were structured according to the bullet points, occasionally devoting one long paragraph to each. Others devoted one paragraph to the advantages of urban exploring, a second to the disadvantages and a final paragraph expressing an opinion against. Weaker responses lacked a clear introduction and conclusion to the letter and ideas were presented in a jumbled way, often without paragraphs. Responses given marks below Band 3 were characterised by brief or no introduction, a simple list of some of the writer's points in sequence and no conclusion or valediction.

### *Accuracy*

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in Band 1. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. Examiners looked for precision in the control of a fluent and subtle style and gave the highest marks where it was sustained throughout the response.

Responses given 8 or 9 were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Most responses were written in correct sentences and structured into accurate paragraphs. However, some candidates seemed to lose syntactical control when attempting more complex sentence structures. Although the style was usually appropriate and the level of formal language was sustained, a range of quite basic spelling and punctuation errors was evident. There were sentence boundary errors at this level, apostrophes misused and, very commonly, the mis-selection of homophones.

While some of these minor errors could be compensated for by secure sense of audience or a varied vocabulary, persistent use of commas where full stops were needed kept many marks for Writing in Band 4. In many cases, Examiners could not award marks in Band 3 for responses which were otherwise mostly accurate and which showed some clarity and coherence. Other common inaccuracies included errors in verb forms, lack of consistency with tenses, missing articles and incorrect use of prepositions.

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

- **Consider the writer's ideas rather than the way in which they are presented.**
- **Read the passage carefully and use the correct detail and information within it.**
- **Look for underlying ideas or implicit meanings in the passage as well as the more superficial points being made.**
- **Aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them.**
- **Be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly. Think carefully about the right style for an article or a letter.**
- **Check your writing for accuracy in terms of tense, verb forms, use of articles and prepositions.**
- **Check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as the use of commas where full stops are needed or lapses in clarity or formality.**

## **Section 2: Composition**

### **Descriptive Writing**

#### **Questions 2 and 3**

##### *Content and Structure*

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range. The best responses to **Question 2** showed a range of sensory experiences and were able to capture that mixture of awe, fear, insecurity and excitement which is often experienced when visiting a big city. There was a slight tendency to focus on descriptions of individuals within the city; this worked well if the individual was an example of a type of person who had not been encountered before.

The majority of candidates were successful at describing their thoughts and feelings as they arrived in the city, many picking up on feelings of excitement, wonder and awe. Most responses were well-structured and some compared the 'city' to their home villages and towns, which was fruitful and led to some effective imagery. Better answers often explored different facets of the city, such as the juxtaposition of affluence and poverty.

Those who adopted a narrative approach were less secure. Less successful responses lacked atmosphere and consisted of ordinary, everyday details; often, these responses gave a simple description of tall buildings and shopping malls. A few failed to observe that they were meant to be visiting a city for the first time and some focused too much on the journey, for example on a plane, at an airport or station rather than describing the city itself; these responses in particular were overshadowed by narrative. Some of the lower band responses seemed to be an amalgamation of previous pieces of writing, for example about a beach or the countryside, which therefore did not address the task.

A large proportion of responses featured New York and a few chose to write about other capital cities such as London, Harare, Mumbai and Tokyo. The best responses captured a very narrow time period and a range of experiences.

Those who chose to answer **Question 3** often gave breath-taking descriptions of carnivals and processions from different parts of the world, showing the diversity in which we live. Carnivals often took the form of fun fairs; some were based in Notting Hill, Brazil or the Seychelles for example. Higher Band responses were able to engage the reader effectively and bring the festivities to life. Some effective, vibrant vocabulary and interesting metaphors were used. Other descriptions which were equally successful focused on, for example, the reverence of a funeral procession on its way to church and a thanksgiving procession at harvest time in a time gone by. Often, responses were structured by either choosing to follow the parade and explore different details this way, or remaining in a fixed vantage point and watching the parade unfold and change as it progressed. Many also chose to contrast the excitement and anticipation felt before the parade or carnival to the sense of anti-climax in the aftermath. Again, most higher and middle band responses effectively described thoughts and feelings, as well as the feelings of others, for example the crowd. Most were successful at using sensory details to describe the atmosphere, focusing on colours, smells and movement, and employed a variety of foci, zooming in and out on the procession and members of the crowd.

Less successful responses tended to give a description of what could be seen directly in view without addressing thoughts or feelings or wider significance. Some responses lacked atmospheric detail; a number simply relayed the events of the parade, without taking into account the wider audience.

##### *Style and Accuracy*

Marks in Band 1 and high Band 2 for style and accuracy were awarded for the most controlled writing in which an ambitious range of descriptive vocabulary was used precisely and effectively. Band 1 responses were characterised by an assured and effective style in which striking effects were achieved using carefully chosen language and imagery. Many successful responses showed use of effective literary techniques, such as simile, metaphor and personification to describe setting and engage the reader. The most successful responses included an impressive range of ambitious vocabulary, showing evidence of planning vocabulary before beginning their responses.

In the middle range and below, a more straightforward vocabulary was employed and where there was sufficient control and accuracy a mark in Band 3 was awarded. Although responses in this range used relevant details and images, there was still some clichéd figurative language, for example, describing people



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

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

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

### Narrative Writing

#### Questions 4 and 5

Responses interpreted confession in **Question 4** in a variety of ways, with narratives often ending with revelations, messages or discoveries rather than an actual confession. The nature of the question led to many well-structured and sequenced responses, with a secret or confession revealed at the end of the response. It was quite common for responses to deal with issues affecting teenagers, such as sneaking out to a party without their parents' permission. A significant number set their responses within the context of a family e.g. a husband cheating on a wife or a naughty child confessing to parents, which were generally effective if a little pedestrian in content. Romantic scenarios were also popular, with a confession of love at the end. Higher Band responses often built up to the confession quite successfully through exploring, for example, the narrator's feelings of guilt or fear of discovery and often were able to root their response in a clear setting and established a sense of characterisation. Many chose to use a flashback to explain how they had arrived in this uncomfortable position. In stronger responses, dialogue was used effectively and emotions were well described.

Middle Band responses sometimes ended very abruptly with the confession, interpreting the question very literally. At this level there was little consideration of the impact or ramifications of the confession. There were some original ideas, though a lot at this level were romantic and involved confessions of the heart and read like teen-romances.

Lower Band responses followed clichéd or predictable plot lines, such as a child finding out they were adopted, exam cheating, boyfriend/girlfriend issues or even murders. Other less successful ones tended to be action driven. Some lacked sufficient descriptive detail and simply relayed events which were taken place. These showed less evidence of planning and spent too long on setting up the characters and there was, consequently, not enough time to reach a satisfactory climax.

Responses to **Question 5** were quite frequently in the science fiction/dystopian fiction genre, with post-apocalyptic societies living underground which led to varying degrees of originality and skill. Other settings included underground bunkers in war time, hidden cellars or basements in homes, and underground railways. Many responses focused on being trapped after an incident and subsequent attempt at escape, followed by a rescue of some kind.

Higher Band responses often created conflict and subsequent suspense. At this level, there were several sombre, dark narratives which evoked a metaphorical underground. Some employed descriptive writing skills to help to create a visual of the experience.

Middle and lower band responses were often highly derivative, using *Harry Potter* and *The Boxtrolls* for example. Often, where responses involved secret agents on missions to blow up key buildings or assassinate key figures, they lapsed into action-driven plots which were too unwieldy to convey events convincingly.

Frequently, lower band responses were rather surreal, attempting to evoke a rather unconvincing underground world, but with little sense of plot. Often these responses started with a long preamble to finding

the underground setting which was then only briefly referred to. Realistic settings, such as mines and basements or cellars, tended to produce more effective writing.

### *Style and Accuracy*

Marks for style and accuracy varied considerably among those who chose the narrative option. Better responses used a range of sentence structures and well-chosen vocabulary to help create specific effects and to add colour and pace to their narratives. Less successful responses tended to be those that simply relayed events with little thought for their protagonist's feelings/emotions, leading to a lack of atmosphere. A controlled, competent style secured a mark in the middle Band and even where candidates wrote in a fairly pedestrian style but punctuated sentences accurately, Examiners could award a mark of 7 or 8. Weaknesses in constructing sentences, comma-splicing or frequent basic spelling and punctuation errors resulted in marks for style and accuracy below Band 3 and depressed marks for responses which were otherwise fairly accurate and clear. There were some examples where dialogue was overused, often punctuated incorrectly, and did not move the narrative on. Relatively few responses were so error-prone as to obscure meaning. These were given marks lower than Band 4.

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

- **Characters' thoughts and feelings help to involve your reader in their story.**
- **Plan the lead up to the ending before you begin so that you can shape your story appropriately.**
- **Check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes. Be sure that commas are used within sentences and not instead of full stops. Punctuate direct speech accurately.**
- **Use a consistent tense throughout.**

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/33  
Directed Writing and  
Composition

## Key Messages

Successful answers:

- used an appropriate form and style
- structured ideas logically and organised their writing effectively
- produced detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- constructed sentences accurately and varied sentence types to create effects
- selected appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary and used language with precision.

## General Comments

The great majority of candidates showed confident awareness of what was expected of them in both the Directed Writing and Composition sections of the paper. There were very few responses which were unacceptably brief or undeveloped, and rubric infringements where candidates answered more than the required number of questions were rare. At all levels of achievement, candidates showed clear understanding of the reading material and the task in **Question 1**, and usually demonstrated strong engagement with the topic, while paying appropriate attention to the style and format of a letter. The great majority of candidates approached the topic in their own words, with little evidence of simple paraphrase or indiscriminate copying of material in the passage. Although the reproduction of some key words and phrases was widespread, this was usually where synonyms were not readily available. Many excellent answers, which interrogated the views expressed by the writer of the article and the parents of the young person described in it, showed a firm grasp of the issues and a sophisticated awareness of the changes in education in a world increasingly dominated by the internet and social media. Some strong responses enthusiastically supported the Weitz family's views, but were still able to develop them in a suitably evaluative manner. At all levels of achievement, the issue of social contact in on-line schooling was inclined to dominate the appraisal, often at the cost of more comprehensive coverage of the material. The parts of the article dealing with the costs of online education and its failures in terms of retaining students were often insufficiently examined and sometimes completely ignored: more attention to these might have resulted in more fruitfully critical evaluation of the family's views and those implied by the writer.

The best responses combined an assured grasp of the content and attitudes of the material with an independence of thought reflected in the structure of their writing: rather than a mechanical consideration of the points in the same sequence as the original, they were evaluative of the whole thrust of the article from the outset, selecting and commenting on its details to support their views. In the middle Bands, responses showed simple agreement with the views of the members of the family, developing them with personal anecdotes from their own experience of school life. Here, the writing was often of a fluency and accuracy typical of higher Bands, and these answers sometimes demonstrated in their **Section 2** compositions an originality of thought and invention absent in the handling of the reading material. A small but not insignificant number reproduced and agreed with the views of the family members and the reservations touched upon in the penultimate paragraph without challenge or evaluation.

In **Section 2**, there was usually a clear awareness of the differing requirements of the two genres, which were attempted in fairly equal numbers, and there was much writing of a high standard across the different types. As always, the best responses were typified by careful planning and structuring, a wide-ranging and precisely employed vocabulary, and a high level of technical accuracy. Although **Question 2** evoked some excellent descriptive pieces with evidence of conscious crafting for effect, a relatively large number of

responses drifted into narrative. Some narrative framework for cohesion was often apparent in responses to **Question 3**, but was usually appropriate and did not detract from the essentially descriptive nature of better responses. Weaker responses to both questions in the descriptive genre were typically dominated by simple, sequential narrative, plodding reference to the senses, and limited vocabulary. Strong responses to **Questions 4** and **5** frequently engaged the reader's interest from the beginning, and also provided a satisfactory and believable resolution to the story. In the middle Bands of narrative responses, often engaging and well-written stories were let down by weak or unconvincing endings.

Weaker responses in both **Section 1** and **Section 2** sometimes struggled to find the correct register and tone for their intended audience, and were marred by the frequency of basic errors in punctuation and syntax. Weak sentence separation and uncertain control of tense were evident at varying levels of achievement, and there were a small but significant number of compositions which were un-paragraphed, even in the setting out of dialogue.

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

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

##### **Question 1**

High marks were awarded where the views expressed in the article were subjected to rigorous examination and there was an overview of the subject of virtual schooling. At this level, the style of the response was appropriate and displayed a high level of accuracy, and points from the article were selected to support the candidate's views in a cohesive and balanced argument. The letter format was followed at the beginning and end of the response and the mode of address was consistently appropriate, the underlying assumptions and implications of the contributors' positions were recognised, and more contentious claims scrutinised and challenged. Marks in Band 3 were awarded when candidates showed reasonable understanding of the issues, and subjected some points to more extended discussion and development. Responses here were typified by often enthusiastic support for communication by social media, and agreement with Carl Weitz's opinions about conventional schooling. More thoughtful responses made some attempt to question the desirability of spending so much time in front of a computer screen to the exclusion of more sociable and collaborative modes of learning, and also often challenged the stereotypes offered in the article about 'normal' schools. Weaker responses tended to work through the article, agreeing and disagreeing, often resulting in contradictory assertions which reduced cohesion in the overall argument. The weakest responses focused on one or two points only, showing limited understanding of others, or offered lengthy anecdotes of limited relevance to the material.

The best responses were evaluative throughout, demonstrating the ability to assess objectively the views expressed in the article and adopt a wider view, rather than focusing upon those which apparently offered more immediate benefits for computer-literate teenagers. These respondents referenced the contributors' views without laboured reiteration, having assimilated them into a cogent argument of their own. While most responses awarded marks in Band 1 demonstrated effective reading between the lines to produce a clearly evaluative and balanced argument, which recognised the merits of virtual schooling for students with specific requirements while perceiving its disadvantages and weaknesses for the majority, some responses of great maturity considered the implications of this development for society as a whole, sometimes lamenting its apparent preclusion on grounds of cost and internet access of those most in need of it—the rural poor: "How ironic that such schooling may only be available to students in first-world countries who already have access to high-quality education....". At this level there were some also some very assured and perceptive responses which closely scrutinised but fully supported the extension of virtual schooling by focused development strongly rooted in, but not restricted by, the text: "Because the internet provides a whole new interface for data transmission which enables the transmission of information over great distances at an astonishing rate, in a highly comprehensible and user-friendly manner, it enables the student at home immediately to access research materials and varieties of modelling and demonstration in a quite unprecedented manner." "A paralysed or quadriplegic student could learn and interact in new ways without having to worry about social acceptance because of the anonymity that virtual schooling offers." Candidates awarded marks in Band 1, and to a lesser extent in Band 2, were able to compare what was offered by virtual schooling with the riches and rewards they perceived in their own education to develop their evaluative stance: here the benefits of physically-proximate friendships and group work, of participation in team sports and debates, and the opportunity to develop skills in positions of responsibility in their schools were discussed in an impressively mature and sophisticated way. Even candidates awarded marks in Band 1, however, rarely discussed in any great depth the rather briefly-referenced failures of online schooling mentioned in the penultimate paragraph of the article: that many students do 'give up', and that the 'quality of

the teaching on offer can vary considerably'; only a small minority remarked upon the similarity between on-line tutors who are responsible for too many students and their colleagues in conventional schools—according to Carl Weitz. Opportunities for rigorous interrogation were missed here. They did however raise many concerns about long-term social education, problem-solving in the 'real' world and the deleterious physical effects of being bound to a computer on a daily basis. Responses awarded the top mark were quite rare: these required assimilation of the material, without its mechanical reproduction, in an authoritative, cogently argued and perceptive manner.

Marks in Band 2 were awarded when there was more than simple agreement or disagreement with the views in the article, however well developed or supported; here, at least some were held up to scrutiny. Candidates often began by reproducing and agreeing with the contributors' views as presented by the writer, but went on to offer a more balanced evaluation of the benefits asserted in the light of the perceived disadvantages of such a restricted education. They were able to recognise that for some students, conventional schooling was not an option, but were able to discuss its implications for the majority, often suggesting, for example, that many students would find it difficult to resist the distractions so readily available, or that cyber-bullying was becoming a greater threat than the physical variety. "At least if you're bullied at school you can escape and go home, but not if you've got to be online all the time."; "People with disabilities often have low self-esteem, and it (cyber-bullying) would make it worse." At this level, responses often lamented the high cost of on-line schooling but rarely demanded an explanation of why this should be so, when there were not the financial burdens of building and maintaining school premises. Often sensible precautions were suggested, such as the close monitoring of chat-rooms or limiting access to on-line education to students with a high degree of self-discipline and motivation. When responses demonstrated substantial coverage of the material with some degree of evaluation, a mark of 8 could be awarded. When coverage was reasonable and evaluative in its approach, or where one or two points showed evaluation, albeit limited, a mark of 7 was given.

Marks in Band 3 were awarded where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the reading material but less recognition of implicit meanings or unsupported assertion. A mark of 6 could be given where the candidate reproduced key points with some appropriate, often anecdotal, development. At this level, responses often concentrated their efforts on the points raised in the third paragraph of the article concerning social interaction, agreeing or disagreeing with the views therein. There were some very substantial responses, covering every point in the material and developing them with a little discussion, awarded a mark of 6 and not 7 because evaluation was absent, although clear understanding of the views in the article was repeatedly demonstrated. Alternatively, a response was sometimes evaluative in approach, or made a clearly evaluative point, but could not be awarded a mark in Band 2 because its range of coverage was too limited: here a mark of 6 was usually given. Where there was clear understanding of the main thrust of the article but only a limited number of points discussed, a mark of 5 was given. In Band 3 responses there was a great deal of re-wording of the arguments in the text without further meaningful development. While straightforward 'lifting' of material was rare, close and often fluent paraphrase was not.

Examiners gave marks below Band 3 where there was some misunderstanding – although this was quite rare: for instance, responses sometimes suggested Katherine was a slow learner, or that the tutors referred to in the penultimate paragraph were those in conventional schools. Sometimes the material was reproduced in such a way that it appeared that Petur Sorensen was being 'taught' what virtual schooling was. Elsewhere focus on the material was quite uncertain, or there were rambling anecdotes of little relevance. A few responses which were awarded relatively high marks for writing were only given reading marks in Band 4 because they consisted mainly of assertions about the value of education in the modern world, with little reference to its varying means of delivery.

Some responses were valid and relevant to the task and the article but made only a few points: these were awarded a mark of 4; where coverage was very flimsy a mark of 3 was more appropriate. Marks below this were applied when very little had been written and connection with the text and task was only tangential.

#### *Style and audience*

An appropriately formal tone and style of address was required for a letter in response to such an article, and most candidates achieved that except for the fairly widespread use of the colloquial 'kids', 'Mum', and 'Dad'. Almost all candidates began with the provided salutation.

The best responses demonstrated an authority and confidence quite admirable in such young people. The great majority wrote in their own voice: a small number adopted the persona of a parent or the sibling of a disabled child, although this did not necessarily detract from the value or quality of the evaluation within. The most accomplished, evaluative responses demonstrated their stance from the start, the candidates immediately signalling the direction their argument would take.

In the middle to lower mark range, responses were usually appropriate in tone and form, but they often followed and reproduced the wording of the passage quite closely; while there was very little wholesale 'lifting' of clauses or sentences from the material, some words and phrases appeared repeatedly in candidates' responses, sometimes unadapted to their own style and syntax. Weaker responses sometimes forgot the relationship with the addressee, concluding with 'Love from....', or forgetting the valediction altogether.

**Structure:** The most successful candidates framed their arguments in a coherent, cohesive response, prioritising their points in a fluent and authoritative manner independent of the order and structure of the passage. They supported their ideas with cogent detail, often showing a sophisticated, wide-ranging awareness of the educational and societal implications of the topic. Responses in Band 2 were clear in their stance, and often supported their argument with carefully selected points leading to a lucid conclusion.

In the middle range, there was often an attempt to order the response to support the thesis, but a majority followed the sequence of the article in a predictable or even laboured manner, sometimes at the expense of their argument. Marks at the lower end of Band 3 were awarded when points were simply reproduced either in the order of the passage followed by a brief paragraph or concluding sentence which stated their own view in a simple manner or consideration of the letter and a reply were asked for. At this level too, responses sometimes showed a clear familiarity with the material but covered only a limited range without developing a distinct argument or point of view. Responses given marks below Band 3 used the material very thinly, were sometimes only partly relevant to the task or comprised only a couple of confused or contradictory remarks or largely lifted or paraphrased material.

#### *Accuracy*

Responses in Band 1 combined a fluent and authoritative style, typified by sophisticated, precisely employed vocabulary and a wide range of sentence structures, with a very high level of technical accuracy. An impressive number of candidates gained high marks for this element. Others would have merited a mark in Band 1 on the strength of their authoritative tone and sophisticated vocabulary, but were penalised for errors of sentence separation, which apart from its inaccuracy also undermines the force of the argument. Responses in Band 2 were often clearly and quite fluently written within a secure structure, but their vocabulary sometimes lacked ambition or was overly elaborate and imprecisely employed. Responses awarded marks for writing in Band 3 were usually plain, reasonably clear and competent within a basic structure. Vocabulary here was usually adequate. What was evident was the frequent and widespread incidence of errors of sentence separation, the major fault at the lower end in this Band. This, and a lack of paragraphing, often restricted the writing mark to a Band below that awarded for reading. Two types of writing typified responses awarded marks in Band 4 and below: the first, more common one lacked any evidence of controlled shaping, and simply followed the patterns of speech. Here phrases such as, 'Well I think...' were seen. Words essential to letter-writing such as 'sincerely' and 'faithfully' were often miss-spelt. Their sense of audience was frequently rather insecure, sometimes addressing Petur Sorensen as the owner of Futures Academy or the inventor of online schooling in general. There were very frequent basic errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar; however, it was not only the weakest responses that used capital letters randomly and inaccurately. The second type was often characterised by secure spelling and quite ambitious vocabulary, but marred by serious structural faults in sentences and syntax, errors of agreement and tense, and an uncertain use of prepositions. Here, articles were sometimes omitted or 'the' was used rather than 'a' or 'an'. Meaning was occasionally blurred by the levels of error, although only a small, if still significant, proportion of the responses fell into this lowest level.

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

- Consider the underlying attitudes of the writer or contributors in the passage as well as those explicitly expressed, and how those affect their opinions
- Try to identify the key arguments in the passage
- Aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well as some depth in evaluating them
- Be prepared to scrutinise carefully and challenge the views expressed in the passage
- Be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly. Think carefully for example about the correct style for a letter, an article or a speech
- Check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing full stops and capital letters
- Check your spelling, especially of key words from the passage

## **Section 2: Composition**

### *Descriptive Writing*

#### **Questions 2 and 3**

While at all levels of achievement responses showed some development of context for the required scene, weaker responses, especially to **Question 2**, sometimes developed their writing too far along the path of narrative, thus forgetting the requirements of this type of writing. Stronger responses framed their descriptions in a much more controlled manner, providing just enough context to introduce their writing and to provide cohesion, but the most successful responses to both questions involved the reader immediately in the designated situation. In the middle range some responses were more narrative in manner than is usually desirable for this genre, but included such vivid detail that the engaging atmosphere which is its first requirement for success was satisfactorily created. Here, the Examiners were able to reward marks in the middle Band.

The best responses to both questions produced writing of a very high order, earning marks at the top of Band 1. These were highly evocative, often creating overall pictures of considerable clarity and employing a wide-ranging and ambitious vocabulary. Although there was still some evidence of the over-use of elaborate and multi-syllabic words in sentences including proliferating adjectives, this seemed less apparent than in previous series.

**Question 2's** popular scenario of arrival at a very strange hotel was interpreted with surprising variety and ingenuity, although very many responses featured hotels perhaps seen in horror or fantasy films – populated or staffed by vampires, zombies or other rather vaguely-delineated monsters. Elsewhere the strangeness of the establishment resided in the absence of everything that arriving guests might reasonably expect to find, and this type of approach was often very effective. The best responses avoided both familiar cliché and excessive exaggeration, but an emphasis on disgusting or otherwise repellent accommodations and threatening staff was widespread

Among responses awarded marks in Band 1 for Content and Structure were some original and effective interpretations; several were witty and wry satires on the horror genre. The most successful responses, while often providing a narrative framework, sometimes richly descriptive in itself, remembered the term 'arrival' in the task, avoiding the slide into developed narrative seen often with this question. Here, the writers also left much to the reader's imagination, halting the description at the door to the bedroom or, in one memorably dystopian establishment, with 'G-forces robbing me of breath as the elevator shot to the 387th floor.' Some very effective descriptions employed precisely-chosen details to convey the guest's unease: in one futuristic hotel apparently staffed by immaculately coiffed and tailored young people the 'persistent whiff of cleaning fluid' in their proximity was chilling. What these most successful responses shared was the creation of an impression of reality, an internal cohesion which convinced the reader.

Responses given marks in the middle band approached the task more straightforwardly, with varying degrees of accomplishment: these often had a more overtly-narrative framework, and a tendency to exaggerate. There were at this level many satisfactory pieces which demonstrated a grasp of the intent and requirements of the genre; some were interesting and original. Others remained focused until part way through when they lost sight of the task and descended into stories of macabre and unconvincing events usually ending in the guest's escape from the hotel. A considerable proportion of responses in this band forgot about 'arrival' and recounted stays at the hotel of varying lengths before departure; these often began with lengthy preambles to explain what they were doing there in the first place. Although this degree of narrative would usually confine a response to Band 4, it was clear that some candidates were rooting their descriptions of the hotel's strangeness in what happened, or, when expected, did not happen there. Examiners rewarded the sustaining of descriptive detail in these cases. Some responses were only partly relevant to the task. Others, while employing some well-chosen and sometimes developed images, lacked overall cohesion in that they gathered together so many mismatched ideas of what constituted strangeness in a hotel that only a most haphazard picture emerged.

At the lower end of this Band and below it responses were driven by narrative or filled with jumbled and chaotic images. Candidates could usefully be reminded that Examiners must see some attempt to create atmosphere to consider awarding a mark in Band 3. Sometimes, pieces which successfully eschewed

narrative were nonetheless so formulaic – 'I can see....I can smell...' that they quite failed to engage the reader. There were a significant number of responses which were less realistic at this level, or occasionally entirely unconvincing. In one, the narrator arrived at a filthy and crumbling building emitting all sorts of noxious smells to be greeted by a member of staff who appeared to have been partly eviscerated and was dripping with blood, but walked in to register anyway. There were also a few examples describing bizarre and grotesque people and events which then concluded 'It was all a dream'. Examiners awarded marks below Band 3 where responses were almost entirely narrative in focus rather than descriptive, or where details were scarce or ineffective, and only a chronological series of barely differentiated events was supplied. There were very few responses awarded marks below Band 4: these usually lacked coherence or awareness of what constitutes descriptive writing.

The second question elicited responses across the mark range, including some of the strongest in the descriptive genre: here also were far fewer very weak responses. A narrative framework was less frequently apparent than in the first option, and where it was employed, only rarely became a developed story: relatively few candidates lost sight of the task in hand. Firework displays on a wide variety of occasions were described, but most frequent were New Year, Fourth of July, and local festival celebrations. Responses gaining marks in the top Band included some wonderfully effective descriptions of Chinese New Year festivities. There were also at this level responses focusing on the excitement of being in the areas of the world which are the first to 'see the new year in', lending an extra dimension to the descriptions. Some very effective responses conveyed the strangeness of gathering in a familiar, well-trodden place in one's home town now made 'other' by the darkness and anticipation of the display. One such response of great subtlety circumscribed the description of the actual display with the arrival and later departure of two shadowy figures charged with the responsibility of setting off the fireworks: 'The smoke now hangs in the air like the wispy tendrils of a half-forgotten dream; as the last vestiges of gunpowder and sulphur leave the air, the two youths return from whence they came.'

In Band 2 and the upper end of Band 3, responses were typified by believable detail and an avoidance of narrative, although young couples kissing in the dark became a familiar trope which occasionally led to the continuance of the romance and thus a loss of focus. Candidates usually responded well to the requirement to describe sounds and smells as well as spectators' responses. 'Dads shuffle through, swiping their phones up, down, right and left, trying to capture the "moment" while they still can. A toddler stares blankly at the sky but you can see the sparkles reflecting in its eyes.' Families and individuals of all ages were described, and smells of smoke and hot-dog stands were common. At all levels knowledge of the protocols of such displays was apparent, and answers often included the variety of activities which support the main event, to great effect. The descriptions of the fireworks themselves were often less successful, belied by inadequate vocabulary, with dependence on non-specific adjectives such as 'fantastic', 'amazing', 'unbelievable' and 'unreal'.

At the lower end of the range, narrative passages sometimes intruded, giving accounts of squabbles between young people and their families, or overlong passages about the journey home. Here colours were primary and bangs were loud, and simple vocabulary such as 'scary' or 'humongous' was employed. One lengthy description of a town centre in the early morning was suddenly embellished at the beginning of the fourth paragraph with some details of a firework display which was as rapidly forgotten. Common also in this range was weakness in concluding the description, although less so perhaps than usual, the last firework often providing a valid if simple ending. Responses given marks below Band 3 were often simple accounts, narrative in intent, with little descriptive detail or evocation of feeling or atmosphere.

Marks in the top Band for Style and Accuracy were awarded to those responses which not only employed a wide-ranging and ambitious vocabulary in the creation of images and effects but were also controlled and crafted to produce a harmonious whole virtually free of error. In the middle ranges, vocabulary was plainer or less precisely applied, and images less striking. Weaker responses seemed limited to unelaborated accounts of personal experience, especially in response to the second question. Consecutive sentences beginning with 'I' (often lower case) typified these responses.

The most frequent issue in awarding Style and Accuracy marks for descriptive writing was the very large number of candidates who produced sentence after sentence without a main or finite verb. Even where there were other qualities which went some way to compensate for this error, Examiners found it very difficult to award a mark higher than Band 4 where it persisted. Thus, candidates who were awarded writing marks in Band 2 or 3 for **Question 1** often earned much lower marks for this element of their compositions. Uncertain control of tense characterised many responses, especially to **Question 2** where an initial context or explanation was provided for their arrival at the hotel, then referred to in the body of the composition. A lack of effective paragraphing, and errors of sentence separation also restricted the marks for many responses. Sometimes responses given marks in Band 4 or below for Style and Accuracy demonstrated an extensive



range of vocabulary, and accurate spelling, but had poor control of syntax and sentence structure, sometimes to the point where communication was impaired.

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

- Remember the key requirements of descriptive writing: you are not writing a story.
- Try to be original, in both the scenarios and the images you create.
- Make deliberate choices in your vocabulary to create atmosphere.
- Write complete sentences with proper verbs: the same rules of grammar apply to all types of writing.
- Remember that the majority of available marks are awarded for Style and Accuracy.
- Check your work for errors of tense and agreement.

### Narrative writing

#### Questions 4 and 5

At all levels of achievement engagement with the tasks was evident, with both titles eliciting some lively, intriguing and often moving narratives. Both titles also seemed to invite and encourage the inclusion of character, setting and descriptive detail, so that atmosphere was created which enhanced the narratives. The difficulty evident in many responses of creating satisfactory conclusions to the stories was, however, often apparent, underlining the need to have the end of the story in mind while writing. **Question 5** produced a fascinating variety of structural devices and solutions: many opened in the courtroom and then supplied the events, the 'back story', which had resulted in the case being brought, often returning to conclude with the verdict; other narratives were set entirely in the courtroom and depended on a great deal of dialogue, handled with varying expertise; others only introduced the courtroom at the very end, in an uncomfortable compromise.

Responses to the first of the narrative options overwhelmingly focused on the decision-making process and its consequences, and often contained many effective details about the storm. In the middle and lower ranges responses were largely accounts of evacuation, or escape stories which often missed opportunities for dramatic narrative. In both the top and middle ranges there were also stories of altruistic sacrifice, often very moving and convincing, and involving aged relatives or beloved pet animals. At the lower level of achievement there were several simple, sequential accounts with occasionally a last-minute twist attempted with varying degrees of success. A not insignificant number of responses to this question attached a simple 'moral' at the end, which was rarely apposite and usually further reduced the effectiveness of the conclusion. A number of responses were awarded marks at the top of Band 1: these narratives were closely focused in time and space, using the hurricane warning as a springboard and employing well drawn characters and impressive setting detail. These did not depend on the inherent drama of such an event but remembered to construct a narrative with believable characters and a satisfactory conclusion, which was not simply the end of the hurricane itself, as was seen in many examples at lower levels. Sometimes intense internal debate was described, engaging the reader in the fate of the individual or the family. Sometimes the writing conveyed insights into familial and cultural customs which enhanced the narrative. These responses were often reflective, considering the comparative values of people and belongings, and enriched with convincing detail about the destructive path and eventual effects of the storm. In the middle ranges were many clear and competently told stories, but climax and resolution depended almost inevitably on the movement of the hurricane rather than skilful narrative. These often had engaging characters which might have qualified their narratives for inclusion in the top Band of marks, but were frequently let down by precipitate or ill-planned and unconvincing endings. Narrators frequently woke up in hospital or not infrequently dead: it should be appreciated that effective story-telling from beyond the grave is extremely difficult to achieve. In the middle range too, narrative success was often undermined by lengthy preambles about the decision-making process, and the preparations made to leave, before the story ever got under way: sometimes the decision was completely illogical in the light of the foregoing deliberations, or the subsequent narrative, usually an escape, ended prematurely. Responses given marks below Band 3 tended to be undistinguished series of events without any effective characterisation or convincing detail. A few were not narrative at all, but clumsily-handled discussions on whether one should or should not accept one's fate in such a situation.

The second option in this genre was marginally less popular, but produced some very impressive responses offering highly engaging and dramatic narratives. There were many and varied approaches to this question: many were told very effectively in the first person, with personas ranging from the accused to the prosecuting counsel (and in one case his daughter), from the clerk of the court to the mother of the accused. The subject

matter of the court cases varied equally widely: murder and crimes of passion featured prominently, but cases involving adoption, custody and child abuse also occurred frequently. There was very occasional confusion about the term 'courtroom': one response was set in a courtyard, another in a classroom. A significant proportion of responses to this question earned marks in Band 1: they were extremely interesting and engaging, using the courtroom situation expertly to create tension, sometimes but not always with the return of the jury, or the verbal swordplay of the prosecuting and defending counsels; elsewhere the tension arose from the depiction of character in the interested parties, revealed as the case progressed. One response given marks at the top of Band 1 was a controlled, moving and topical first-person meditation by the mother of the accused, a young man who had been 'radicalised' and was on trial for terrorist offences. It concluded: 'Never in my life have I--a mother--prayed such a terrible prayer, as silent tears run down my face: please, please, give my son a long, long, sentence.' Another at this level was a very knowledgeably presented corruption case 'blown' at the last minute by the vengeful wife of the defending barrister.

In the middle range there were many engaging stories, often concerning adoption or custody, and sometimes told effectively in flashback, although here the verdict often provided the only conclusion and was not always convincing given the foregoing case. At the lower end of the middle range there were also some over-cluttered crime stories which concluded in variously convincing verdicts. Sometimes an unconvincing narrative could be rescued by descriptive skill, as with one case where relatives were shouting at each other and apparently determining the direction of the trial, but the description, by the miserable accused in the dock, of the rain pattering on the courtroom window was extremely effective. Some otherwise quite well-told stories were weakened by gaps in the plot which caused confusion and forced re-reading.

Below Band 3 responses were only partly relevant to the task or were a series of mundane events with a final paragraph about their legal consequences. The weakest responses were usually very brief or aimless, offering little to engage the reader.

Examiners were able to award high marks for Style and Accuracy to many responses whose vocabulary and sentence structures were varied and effective, and whose writing was free of repeated error. In the top Bands syntax and sentence structure were often effectively manipulated for effect, especially in the creation of narrative tension. In this genre, dialogue is a particularly important aspect of effective narrative and a failure to punctuate and paragraph it correctly sometimes proved a pitfall for otherwise fluent and accurate writers. In **Question 5** particularly, where it was natural to include a great deal of dialogue, its proper punctuation and paragraphing was crucial in avoiding confusion. Again in **Question 5**, the common error of poor tense control seemed more apparent: sometimes tenses changed within a sentence, creating absurd effects. Inappropriate tense changes caused confusion and impeded the narrative thrust, inevitably reducing marks. In the middle Band, where there were a few basic errors of spelling and punctuation and plain, unvaried, vocabulary, Examiners could award a mark of 7 or 8: conversely, clear and accurate sentence structure and straightforward paragraphing could compensate for a lower mark for Content and Structure. Marks in Band 4 were given when writing was affected by errors in sentence separation, weak punctuation, and faults in tense control and agreement. The frequent misuse or omission of capital letters inevitably reduced the marks given for otherwise sound writing. Occasionally only a mark in Band 5 could be awarded because serious errors in sentence structure and syntax impeded communication.

#### **Ways in which the writing of narratives could be improved:**

- Plan your story so that you do not run out of ideas for the plot, and you can bring it to an interesting conclusion.
- Make your story believable by creating realistic characters and settings.
- Ensure that any dialogue is correctly punctuated and paragraphed
- Leave some time to check through your work for errors which will seriously affect your mark, such as basic errors in spelling, capital letters and punctuation, and unexplained tense changes.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/04  
Coursework Portfolio

## Key messages

Successful candidates:

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

## General comments

Varied, lively and individual work did well. In cases where Centres had set the same assignments for whole sets, even for all their candidates, work lacked some of the liveliness of writing that the Moderators were looking for. There were also instances where too much guidance had been given to candidates concerning the content of an assignment. This resulted in uninspiring writing and an unsatisfactory similarity from script to script.

In the first assignment more attention appeared to have been given to the level of challenge of subject matter than in previous sessions.

There was an increase in the submissions of descriptions for Assignment 2 and a decrease in original and engaging fiction. While some of the descriptions were excellent, others were presented as a series of unstructured images, and it seemed that the techniques of presenting a description had not always been studied sufficiently. Autobiographical episodes were generally successful because of their originality and the personal involvement of the writers.

There was a trend away from responding to the text in Assignment 3 and instead, addressing the topic. Centres are reminded that the ten marks reward the ability of candidates to read for an overview of the text (including the writer's attitude) and to evaluate selected ideas and opinions from the text in relevant detail. The writing of a generalised commentary that included single words from the text was not sufficient for high reward.

Annotation of accuracy in final versions of assignments was generally not well done. In some cases a significant number of errors were disregarded. The use of full stops and commas was frequently poor and semi colons, colons and dashes were used too often and sometimes inappropriately. Exclamation marks and question marks were also sometimes used injudiciously. Faults in punctuation were usually associated with the lack of ability to construct and control complex sentences. Candidates sometimes did not take the opportunities offered by the second assignment to use a wide range of appropriate vocabulary. Some of the writing was spoiled by the use of over-ambitious vocabulary that prevented effective communication. Where a Centre's marks were reduced the quality of style (including register) and accuracy was generally the chief reason.

### **Good Practice:**

The Moderators recognised Centres that ensured that their candidates should

- write three assignments that clearly differed in the type of content, style, register and range of language and where the quality of all three pieces was consistent;
- express their own views and experiences free from undue teacher influence or repetition of ideas and content from the Internet;
- work on the first draft of their work, editing, revising and correcting so that it was clear to the Moderator how progress had been made;
- read final versions carefully, making their own corrections of simple errors.

### **Bad Practice:**

Candidates did less well because they

- did not structure their first and third assignments satisfactorily;
- were not able to sustain an assignment to the very end;
- did not control the register of their writing or, in the second assignment, the tense they had chosen;
- did not construct fluent sentences or punctuate them correctly.

## **Assessment of coursework**

### **Writing**

Coursework offers excellent opportunities for candidates to draft and to check their work for errors. They have time to check their work and are allowed to use electronic devices to help them with spelling and to identify stylistic shortcomings. Therefore, the expectation is that there should be fewer errors in Coursework than in work done in the Examination room.

The assessment of content and structure was generally correct, although one or two exceptions are noted in the comments on individual assignments below.

The commonest shortcomings in style were the use of repetitive sentence types, particularly short, simple sentences, and a limited range of language. A common fault was the repetition of key words in adjacent sentences. Some candidates had difficulty in handling complex sentences that proved to be exceedingly long and convoluted, so that the meaning became less clear as the sentence went on.

The commonest errors were

- putting commas at ends of sentences, or no punctuation at all. Pronouns were commonly mistaken for conjunctions;
- using semi-colons where commas or full stops were correct. Some candidates split up sentences by putting a semi-colon where no punctuation was called for;
- using question marks and exclamation marks for statements because it was thought that they would illustrate a certain tone of voice. However, these were frequently inappropriate, for example in sentences beginning with 'surely';
- spelling homonyms wrongly, such as 'there/their/they're', 'off/of', 'were/where'. Many spelling mistakes were the result of the careless use of a spell check, for example 'manor' for 'manner'.
- making basic grammatical errors such as 'off of', 'she should of' and 'him and me'. There were frequent errors of singular and plural and of parts of verbs.
- Simple errors such as missing words out of a sentence or a letter off a word.

### **Assessment of reading**

This was a test of reading. Centres were often careful to select a text or texts that presented a high enough level of difficulty to ensure that candidates could score marks of 7 and above. Such texts had to contain ideas and opinions that were complex enough to require candidates to understand not only the wording but also the implications. Many Centres were careful enough to ensure that candidates understood the main drift of the article and could appreciate the writer's attitude to the topic. They then ensured that a selection of ideas and opinions was made and that there was some evidence of evaluation. Evaluation consisted of understanding the difference between a fact and an opinion, dealing with inconsistencies in an argument and

detecting bias. Where there was an overview of the article and a consistent approach to a number of ideas and opinions the high marks of 8-10 were correctly awarded.

However, some marks were too high, significantly so where candidates addressed the topic and not the text. They used the text at least partly as a stimulus for their own ideas and drifted away from what had been read. This meant that there was insufficient evidence of reading other than a very general understanding of what the article was about.

### **Assignment 1**

The best of this work was where the topic was sufficiently challenging to produce work justifying a mark in Band 3 and above and where the argument was clear, presented in a logical sequence, and sustained until the end. While there were examples of interesting and well-presented factual content, the best and most secure work was argumentative and persuasive. Factual topics such as an introduction to the rules of a sport might result in competent work but are unlikely to generate work worthy of marks in Band 2 and above.

Film reviews sometimes produced weak pieces with little structure or argument. Where the films were the individual choices of the candidates, work could be competent enough, but where a whole Centre wrote about the same film, the scripts were too similar and did not appear to be the unaided, original work of the candidates. There was also a weakness in structure because, although each paragraph was secure, the connectivity between them was often weak.

It was appropriate to write the words of a speech and some of them were very good. However, the over-use of rhetorical devices, such as exclamations and questions, was sometimes disturbing to the flow, and candidates who considered their style and register were more successful than those whose work bordered on the colloquial.

This was particularly true of the 'rant pieces', many of which still went under the general title of 'Don't get me started...' The problem here was that they were often weak in content and structure. Candidates might not have much to say, so after two paragraphs, there was a good deal of repetition. Another problem was that of register. Some attempted to use an appropriate register at first but were unable or unwilling to maintain it and slipped into colloquial and sometimes inappropriate language. Candidates who ranted about, for example, year 10 boys, school skirts, teachers, Transport for London, produced work that was immature and not typical of what a Year 11 candidate should be capable of.

Where the topic was a serious one, such as racism, and where the candidate controlled diction, the result was usually much better.

The following list of topics shows the wide range offered by Centres. All these topics produced good writing.

*The Syrian crisis*  
*Equal pay in sport*  
*Beauty pageants*  
*Cheerleading (personal)*  
*Being in a percussion band (personal)*  
*A secret guide to Hong Kong*  
*Forced marriage*  
*Votes for 16-year-olds*  
*Online learning*  
*One gender schools*

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### **Assignment 2**

There was noticeably little good fiction. The best examples provided engaging stories with changes of focus, turning points and some clever endings. These were original choices and were the product of some careful teaching. Both descriptions and fiction need some careful handling and a good deal of preparation before a piece for the folder can be attempted. Unfortunately, a number of assignments looked very similar. There were too many haunted houses, and the content of some of these stories was predictable and immature. There were also a number of zombie stories which nearly always descended into a catalogue of blood and gore. Many of the stories were opportunities for candidates to write about violence with sometimes graphic descriptions of death and injury. On several occasions the amount of violence interrupted the flow of the narrative and became an end in itself. Matters such as these could have been addressed at the draft stage.

The best descriptions had structure. It was not enough just to give a series of images. In such cases it appeared that candidates were struggling to find new content as the piece continued. Where a single event or a short passage of time was built into the writing, the description had cohesion and often came alive.

There was plenty of writing from experience and this was typically very sound and engaging work. Candidates wrote about places they had visited, sometimes with perception, and about important moments in their lives ranging from auditions and performances on stage through football matches to sad deaths in the family or personal misfortune and illness. They were careful to choose content that was significant enough to engage readers, and the writing worked because of the vivid detail that memory conjured up and the genuine emotions that were expressed, often with commendable restraint and control.

There were many monologues, mostly through the mouths of literary figures. These too, needed shape and where the outpouring was confined to one event or situation it was difficult to structure without repetition. The emotion was sometimes well expressed, although this was more difficult than where personal writing was chosen. Some candidates found it difficult to climb convincingly into other people's shoes and walk about in them.

It is important to consider the language of this assignment. The aim is to communicate events, descriptions and emotions with conviction, and this is largely done through the arrangement of the content and the subtlety with which the unbelievable is made believable. Language plays an important part. The choice of words with their associations carries the reader along with the events that they describe. These words need to be suitably varied, attractive in themselves, and above all capable of creating pictures in the mind. Simple, repetitive vocabulary does not do this, but equally, over writing, using too complex vocabulary is just as bad because it cloy the mind. Some candidates tried to use too complex a vocabulary and at its worst this only led to a lack of meaning where the words were inappropriate. The Moderators looked for a wide range of appropriate vocabulary that suited the content of the writing.

Many assignments had no title, or the title did not prompt opportunities for original and developed writing. Examples of assignments are as follows:

#### Stories

*The humming*  
*The final breath*  
*The chimney sweep*  
*Paradise Lost*

#### Descriptions

*Meeting a legend*  
*Aurora Borealis*  
*The football stadium*  
*On the sea*

#### Experience

*Dismaland (a visit to a theme park invented by the graffiti artist, Banksy)*  
*Tornado*  
*A day that changed my life*  
*The day the earth shook (account of the New Zealand earthquake)*

### Assignment 3

The best approach was to give candidates a text no longer than two sides, with some very clear ideas and opinions. The text was not reportage or factual, and it was well written structurally. Many online texts were repetitive and were written in confusingly short paragraphs. Texts that worked were complex enough to provide a test of reading for Band 1 candidates, but controversial enough for candidates to be aware of arguments that were inconsistent or heavily biased.

The best responses showed by means of an overview that they understood the stance the writer was taking and the gist of the whole text. Having discussed this in what was often an opening section of up to two thirds of a side, they then chose four or five important ideas and opinions from the text, explained what they meant and implied and commented on them as contributions to the theme of the text. Each of these evaluations would be in the form of one substantial paragraph which was entirely relevant to the chosen quotation.

It was not appropriate to feed in ideas that did not relate to the text as these did not constitute a response to the text itself. Still less was it appropriate to use the text as a stimulus for the candidate's own ideas. Candidates who provided a critique of literary and rhetorical devices did not respond to ideas and opinions. This is tested adequately in Papers 1 and 2 and is inappropriate here. It was not sufficient to feed in single words from the text as part of a generalised commentary except as part of an opening overview of the text.

Some texts were repeatedly used from Centre to Centre. The Flamehorse argument against the death penalty, although a good article, did not work well. Candidates tended to quote the headings as a very easy selection of ideas and opinions, but then did not deal adequately with the complex arguments that the headings gave rise to. 'I saw a killer die' was reportage and was a questionable choice for 16-year-olds. Little good analysis arose from this unpleasant article.

Some articles elicited good analysis and evaluation. They included

*Katie Hopkins on immigrants*

*Katie Hopkins on choosing friends for her children*

*Why I hate Facebook (although there were better alternatives to this well-worn article)*

*School sport*

*Tattoos*

*Bring back the cane*

*Stereotyping teenagers*

*Several different texts on video games and perceived links with violent behaviour and other problems*

The article on legalising cannabis proved difficult and many important arguments were ignored. Malala's speech was too long, although part of it could have been used. 'Casualties of class warfare' was confusing to candidates who did not really understand which side to take and found little in the passage to analyse. There was little content in the article on footballers' pay, which was not a good challenge for candidates seeking marks in Bands 1 and 2. The Educating Essex /Yorkshire articles confused because they were reviews of television programmes, but also had very little of any weight to select and to comment on. These articles are now very outdated.

### **Administration by Centres**

There were instances where internally moderated marks were not correctly transcribed on to the mark sheet. There were also some errors of addition. It was also important that the candidates' final marks should be written on the folders themselves.

Centres are reminded of the importance of the candidate Assessment Summary Form (also known as the WMS). This is a record of the marks awarded for each candidate for reading and for writing, and any alterations to those marks that have been made at internal moderation. The Moderator expected to see the evidence of internal moderation on this form and expected the marks of a number of candidates to have been changed. However, the only evidence of internal moderation was often in the folders and in some cases there was no evidence that internal moderation had been carried out.

The internal Moderator used the CASF to check that the final marks had been correctly transcribed, to check which candidates belonged to which set, and to create a distribution of the reading marks. The CASF had to be completed for all candidates in all columns and sent to the Moderator.

Centres are asked to make sure that the work of each folder is securely fastened together to avoid the risk of lost work.

Most Centres submitted a copy of the text used for Assignment 3. Where this was not sent, the Moderator was put at a disadvantage in assessing the reading marks.

Otherwise, the administration was very good and Centres are thanked for the time they spent on these important tasks.

### **Summary of the contents of the folder**

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

### **Annotation**

Centres are reminded that final versions of each assignment should be annotated. Moderators were interested in the general comments on strengths and weakness at the end of each assignment. However, it was also important to annotate errors in the body of the text, since the number and types of these contributed significantly to the final mark.

### **Drafts**

Some Centres submitted drafts where individual errors were corrected by the teacher. This is strictly not allowed and can lead to a malpractice enquiry. Centres are asked to give general advice at the end of each draft, alerting the candidates to work that must still be carried out before the final version is submitted. No comments should be made in the body of the text or in the margin.

There was some excellent practice where candidates had obviously made considerable revisions to their first drafts. Best practice was when changes made in what was obviously the candidate's own handwriting were made to the draft.

Some drafts had no final suggestions for general improvement at all.

### **Authenticity**

There were again some cases of plagiarism. These should have been noticed before folders were submitted.

Moderators found it easy to discover websites where the wording of much of an assignment had been copied.

### **Choice of assignments**

Some Centres chose assignments that were immediately recognised by the Moderators. An example of an 'off-the-shelf' folder would be 'Don't get me started', a fictional episode related to 'Saving Private Ryan' and an analysis of the Flamehorse article on the death penalty. It was not clear where these assignments came from, although they were not CIE recommendations. The best assignments were those that were carefully guided by teachers to suit the individual interests and concerns of candidates. This frequently led to more lively and committed writing.



# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

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Paper 0500/05  
Speaking/Listening

## Key messages

- Candidates can make their Part 1 presentations more lively by incorporating more creative presentational styles such as taking up a 'voice' or presenting a dramatic monologue.
- Candidates do best when the task matches their ability level.
- Candidates do best in both tasks when they have had opportunities to practise in timed situations.
- Centres are required to send all recordings.
- Candidates did best when the timing requirements of both tasks were adhered to.

## General comments

Candidates had the opportunity to perform to their best ability when they had had the chance to practise both types of task in timed conditions. They could then learn from this how best to plan their work. Tasks which were set with an eye on the assessment criteria, and designed to bring out the qualities to be rewarded by the mark scheme, allowed candidates to show what they could do. Candidates did best when tasks were kept to time: long rambling presentations were less successful.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Part 1 – the Individual Task**

In Part 1, candidates who met the criteria for Band 1 fully, for 9 or 10 marks, showed creativity, the ability to develop a topic and sustain the listener's interest. Simple, factually-based tasks in reportage style usually produced work which merited a maximum of Band 2.

Candidates who presented very short Part 1 pieces, or relied heavily on notes did not usually achieve higher than Band 4, where "delivery is not secure, resulting in some loss of audience interest". Very long Part 1 pieces (that is, more than 5 minutes) also tended not to satisfy top band requirements, as they lacked the required control and structure.

Content in itself could not score any marks- – it is the use of (i.e. the *development* of) the content which is being assessed. For example, "What has inspired me..." could achieve a Band 1, or indeed a Band 5, depending on how the content has been planned, is introduced, is organised, and then presented and developed.

The more successful individual tasks were from candidates who spoke from brief notes and about a topic which they had researched thoroughly. Successful tasks often included some kind of visual presentation to the examiner, such as sharing a PowerPoint slide or some photographs. The most successful presentations were given by candidates who also utilised a variety of speaking devices to maintain the listeners' interest. In all the best examples there was a real sense of engagement with the topic. Where candidates chose well, prepared thoroughly and were fully committed to the task the results were usually good.

Talks which showed greater awareness of a wider audience did well, and these sometimes involved humour and irony. These presentations were often highly engaging and memorable. Candidates who created their

own literary pieces (e.g. in character, or empathic pieces) often performed well. Presenting empathic work using literary texts often leads to quality work. Teachers may like to explore these approaches in lessons.

#### *Use of third party sources*

Candidates did best when they chose a topic of personal interest. However, some relied too much on collating from third party sources and simply repeated them. Those who referred to third party sources for inspiration and then created their own talks based on the material achieved higher reward. In the better cases, being stimulated by third party sources and quoting directly from them in a minimal and selective manner led to highly competent work.

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

- ISIS – is it really a global issue, or an issue only for the Western world?
- Despite our advances in other areas, racism is growing globally
- Escaping from a war zone
- My philosophy of life
- The human brain
- The importance of travel
- Work/life balance for students
- Gifted hands
- My tribe and how it makes me what I am
- Volunteering
- Are we sure that pride always comes before a fall?
- Are teenagers growing up too quickly in Latin America?

From this list, it can be seen that the crafting of the task is important. Some very simple topics did not give candidates the best opportunities – e.g. my family, my pets, my football team, my favourite video game – unless these were woven into a controlled piece with a specific objective and/or rationale, e.g. instead of just ‘football’, the consideration that professional footballers should not be paid more than doctors.

#### **Part 2 – the Discussion**

Candidates did well when they had clearly practised a structured discussion, run to time, and focusing on a topic that could spark interest and promote a full, 6 to 7-minute dialogue, allowing for the incorporation of anecdotes, examples, views and opinions. Good pieces also made use of tangential discussion – i.e. contributions from both parties which change direction but which still relate to the main theme.

Some very long discussions (more than 7 minutes) did less well because the discussions tended to stray off task and begin to lack cogency.

In many cases, examiners were very much part of the discussions, entering into the spirit of the occasion, and in these cases the conversations were generally productive extensions of the individual tasks. Such candidates had clearly planned for further discussion and had predicted probable questions, or areas of interest that might be appropriate for further discussion. More effective examining ‘raised the bar’, encouraging stronger candidates to explore more sophisticated issues by asking challenging questions to demonstrate higher order thinking skills.

#### *Taking notes to prepare for discussion*

Effective discussions clearly arose when examiners took notes as the candidates completed their talks, and then based the discussions very closely on what the candidates had actually spoken about. This usually led to focused conversations, and changes in direction which arose naturally from the content covered in the individual task.

#### *Staying on task*

In general, candidates and examiners stayed on task. However, there were some instances of examiners using the allotted time to involve candidates in discussions about other matters – for example, their future plans or other interests – when this was not part of the candidate’s talk. Such transgressions are likely to

result in lower marks as the assessment criteria assume that content in Part 2 relates directly to content in Part 1. The examiner should ensure that the discussion stays on-task for the duration of Part 2.

*Open and closed questions, and effective questioning*

Good prompts drew on previous discussion and enabled the candidate to respond with an argument, a defence, a point of view, an anecdote, or an example. Candidates did well when they had clearly practised effective questioning. There was a lot of refreshing and lively work, where it was clear that the students had enjoyed taking control of their own learning and had responded well to being allowed to be active in the skills of research, oral presentation and subsequent discussion.

**Administration**

*Conduct of the examination and a suitable location*

This is a formal examination and as such an appropriate examination room is required. Candidates should not be examined in the presence of other candidates. A quiet, secure room is crucial for the success of the examination. The test should be conducted by a single examiner. While a second person may be present, the test itself must be conducted entirely by one examiner – it is not permissible for two people to be asking questions or discussing matters with the candidate.

*Materials required by the Moderator*

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

- 1 There should be a single folder on the CD or USB with all recordings in that folder. The use of sub-folders should be avoided. Without the full set of recordings, Cambridge 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 teacher/examiner who conducts the examination is responsible for filling out the summary form. S/he should sign the form and date it – this is the form which is the working record of the examining undertaken, and is therefore of most use to the external Moderator. It is useful if the candidate numbers are recorded on the summary forms as they appear on the mark sheets.
- 3 The Moderator needs a copy of the mark sheet in order to verify the accuracy of the transcription of the marks from the summary forms.

Some centres entering candidates for the IGCSE First Language English syllabus might consider whether their candidates might be more suited to the IGCSE Second Language syllabus. The assessment criteria assume a fluent discussion and this can be impeded where significant language slippage is present. While the 0500 05 test can cater for some language limitation, it is not equipped to deal with the assessment of second language usage.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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

## Key messages

- Component 6 consists of three distinct tasks: Task 1 is an individual presentation; Task 2 is a paired activity; Task 3 is a group activity.
- The three separate tasks can be assessed at any time during the course. This flexibility allows a broader range of topics and skills to be assessed but requires Centres to fully embrace the concept that the Speaking and Listening tasks are an integral part of the overall course.
- Centres are required to record Tasks 1 and 2 and send all recordings.
- Candidates do best when their tasks are carefully planned and well prepared.
- Candidates achieve best results when they are given adequate time to demonstrate both speaking and listening skills.

## General comments

Successful Centres implemented the component efficiently and imaginatively. Candidates performed best when they selected tasks which matched both their ability and interests. Well planned and prepared responses to tasks were generally more successful. In each of the activities candidates needed to be given sufficient time to demonstrate a range of speaking and listening skills.

## Comments on specific tasks

In response to Tasks 1 and 2, candidates whose performance was lively and well developed met the high band criteria. Those candidates who relied heavily on written material were less successful as Tasks 1 and 2 do not benefit from over-scripted and seemingly 'artificial' performances where spontaneity is missing. Candidates who met the higher band criteria were able to react positively to changes in the direction of the discussion in Task 2.

It is very difficult to achieve the higher bands if the performances are heavily scripted and/or very short. A response which is too short does not allow the candidate to meet all the criteria and should not normally be considered as more than 'adequate' in Band 3.

## **Task 1 – Individual Activity**

Responses generally took the form of an individual presentation. This component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when topics are chosen.

*Some examples of productive Task 1 activities include:*

- A personal experience that is relevant, thought-provoking and developed beyond narrative
- Social issues teenagers feel strongly about
- A review where the candidate is thoroughly engaged and able to develop the presentation beyond a literal re-telling of the events
- An engaged reflection on a hobby or sport (though responses to football can be problematic).

### **Task 2 – Pair-based Activity**

There should be only two participants in Task 2. Where there is an extra candidate, a teacher or a candidate who has been assessed may make up the pair. Task 2 activity comprising of more than two candidates becomes a Task 3 Group Activity. As three distinct tasks are expected in response to Component 6, this becomes non-compliance.

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

Unlike Component 5, there is no specified time duration for Component 6 tasks but, given that both speaking and listening are assessed, it is important that the activities last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. Planned, rehearsed and developed performances will normally justify higher marks in the same way written examination practise encourages more successful outcomes.

Scripted responses have become more common but Component 6 is not an assessment of a candidate's reading skills. Heavily scripted responses normally do not meet the criteria of the higher bands when judged against the Speaking and Listening skills being demonstrated.

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

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

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

*Some examples of productive Task 2 activities include:*

- Topical social issues such as sexism in sport
- Which video game is the best? (One championed by each candidate)
- Analysis of set texts such as poems and novels focusing on specific events/characters
- The influence of social media in teenagers' lives
- Desert island survival techniques
- Are politics irrelevant to teenagers?

### **Task 3 – Group Activity**

Task 3 may take various forms but it is most important that each candidate in the group is allowed sufficient scope within the activity to demonstrate their strengths without being dominated by others. A group made up of candidates of similar ability levels is often more successful. In more diverse groupings the weaker

candidates are disadvantaged and do not have the opportunity to contribute to the best of their ability. The role of a group leader should be considered as a more successful outcome usually results from having one of the candidates directing the focus of the discussion.

*Some examples of productive Task 3 activities include:*

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

### **Administration**

There are many Centres where internal moderation has been successful.. Samples are well-prepared and aid the moderation process considerably.

### *Recordings*

- Centres are required to record and send all the Task 1 and 2 responses for the entire entered cohort.
- We strongly encourage the use of digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or USB drive in a recognised common audio file format that can be played by standard computer software.
- Please check the quality of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge and ensure that the CD, DVD or USB is securely packaged to avoid damage in transit
- Each track should be labelled with the candidate's name and number. For Task 2 both candidates' names and numbers should be included in the title of the track.
- Each track should be introduced formally using the rubric prescribed in the current syllabus. This is particularly important for Task 2 recordings where Moderators must be able to distinguish between the candidates. The ideal way to achieve this is for candidates to introduce themselves by their names and numbers at the beginning of their responses.
- Wherever possible, recordings should be made in a quiet, undisturbed environment.

### *Materials required by the Moderator*

- Please be aware that four different items must be included in the sample package sent to the Moderator: all of the Centre's recordings; all the Summary Forms; all the individual candidate Record Cards and a copy of the mark sheets showing the total marks awarded for each candidate entered.
- Moderators require Summary Forms detailing a breakdown of the marks awarded for the whole cohort entered.
- The accuracy of the Summary Forms should be checked thoroughly before submitting to Cambridge.

### *Recommended support material*

Centres are encouraged to use both the current syllabus, Speaking and Listening Handbook and online training course to ensure the requirements for the administration of the component are fully met.