

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/01
Composition

General Comments:

The overall standard of work this year seemed to be well up to that maintained in previous years. The narrative questions in **Part 1** were more popular than the others and there was some falling off in the amount of description. This year, **Part 2** was, as usual, a discriminator and this report will elaborate below on approaches to this part of the examination. The vast majority of candidates used the time well and rubric infringements were few. The length of essays was generally appropriate, although attention should be drawn again to the writing of lengthy drafts which are then copied word for word. The use of correcting fluid poses less of a problem than it used to. The strengths and weaknesses were very much those which have featured in previous reports: there was much lively, dramatic, engaging writing but also serious problems with the inconsistency of tenses and faulty agreement. It is, however, always a pleasure to be able to pay tribute to the extremely high standard of work at the top end of the range which continues to impress with little evidence of second language errors.

Comments on specific questions:

Part 1

1. Describe a time when you felt awkward and out of place.

This was a popular choice of question and usually well done. It was intended, as the first question often is, to be a descriptive essay which would allow an opportunity to those candidates who could create atmosphere, setting, and character etc. and it is true that there were very many successful attempts. Parties, weddings and moving to a new School were favourite occasions for the narrator to feel awkward or out of place; very often such awkwardness was caused by wearing the wrong kind of outfit. In fact when some of the outlandish costumes were described it was hardly surprising that the narrator did feel out of place, but this did not detract from the powerful sense of unhappiness caused by being so different; some of course revelled in being the centre of attention because they were so different. Even more sensitive were the essays, and there were many of them, in which the narrator went to a party with a best friend and ended up being shunned by other party-goers and even their best friend. One candidate wrote very movingly of that moment of realisation when an apparent friendship was revealed as little more than a convenient acquaintance. On such occasions parents often came to the rescue by picking up the narrator early. All in all, there were some excellent explorations of feelings in the better essays with some psychological perception and sensitivity. Candidates spoke touchingly of the inability to find something appropriate to say in awkward circumstances and the cold feeling of rejection by a best friend. There were many good descriptions of the party atmosphere to provide a contrast to the feelings of the narrator. The excellent, sparing use of properly-punctuated direct speech was a feature of the better essays. Adjectives, carefully chosen, were another very positive feature as one would expect in descriptive essays. However, far too many candidates failed to take a descriptive approach and reduced their answer merely to its narrative base – they were simply stories which emphasised the procedure of going to an occasion and contained little emotion of any kind. Similarly, there were far too many unbalanced essays in which candidates substituted overlong, factual preparations for the party for any description of feelings at the event. Unfortunately, a small number of candidates took a mistaken approach and saw the phrase 'out of place' as meaning geographically removed and so wrote about being abroad, away from home or out of the locality and sometimes even saw that as an advantage, for example when studying at a foreign university.

2. Have classroom teachers become less important with the increased use of technology in education?

This topic was close to the hearts and the experience of most candidates and therefore produced more responses than is usually the case with the discursive option. A very small number of essays took the rather misguided approach of simply attacking either their teachers or the Internet, but thankfully such essays were unrepresentative of the majority. In fact, Examiners commented that there were very many sensible and interesting arguments and they were grateful that most candidates avoided the temptation to fill their essays with technical information about computers. Candidates these days of course are very knowledgeable about the potential of technology and the web in particular and it was clear that most were fully conversant with the use of the Internet in their own education. What was particularly striking was the balanced nature of the arguments and candidates are clearly learning that being aware of both sides of a debate will not only impress as a rational approach but will, in practical terms, provide much more material and so avoid the greatest pitfall of discursive essays, the repetition of ideas. The Internet was generally seen as very useful in research work and it had the value of being more up-to-date than teachers could often be. The Internet could lead enquiring minds into related topics of which they had been unaware and so widen their education. Yet candidates were also fully aware of the shortcomings of such technology: the temptation to become sidetracked, often into inappropriate sites, the lack of exam guidance and the lack of human contact. This led to a very comforting appreciation of the role of the teacher: the one-to-one contact, the motivation, the exam experience and the ability to bring a moral dimension to learning – as one candidate put it ‘...the Internet just does not have the ability to teach good manners...’. If there were weak essays it was because the candidates repeated ideas and/or vocabulary or did not structure the answer in a balanced way. Also, the use of the word ‘Internet’ sounded very awkward without an appropriate article.

3. Write about an occasion when a parent was badly treated by a child.

This essay was probably the most popular of the questions set. The responses were generally lively, interesting and readable. There were lots of melodramatic stories involving violence and drunkenness and the settings were usually parties, beaches, markets or stores so that the main protagonists were irate teenagers or spoilt children. There were some very powerful examples of ingratitude, nastiness and spitefulness so that several Examiners remarked on the level of violence meted out to parents, hopefully all imaginary! Most candidates took the opportunity to finish off the essay with a comfortable moral about respecting one’s parents so that scenes such as those described could be kept to a minimum. At their best such essays were marked by a high level of characterisation. The reader was given details of fiery personalities and long suffering parents, most of whom candidates were honest enough to say did not deserve the treatment they received. (Unfortunately there were some examples of parents who seemed to deserve the treatment, in which case it was difficult to see how they were ‘badly treated’). In good essays there was useful background detail supplied, such as the impoverished circumstances of the family life so that one had some understanding of how the events came about. Less successful essays dealt in stereotypical characters painted in very little detail, so that the essay depended almost entirely on the strength of the far-fetched narrative which then descended into overlong details about beatings and the use of ‘foul language’ or, mistakenly, ‘foul languages’. Some weaker candidates rushed at the question and mistakenly wrote about parents who badly treated a child. Examiners took a lenient view of this and as to what constituted a ‘child’, but it was pushing the point to see some thirty-year-olds involved. Weaker candidates overused the expression ‘a parent’ because it was in the title, rather than varying it with ‘mother’ or ‘father’.

4. School Assemblies.

With short titles such as these any approach is invited but most candidates this year chose to ignore the narrative possibilities and chose to write simply about what happened in their own School assemblies or wrote more philosophically about the merits and demerits of School assemblies in general. The former was more popular and therefore the essays tended to be chronological and very similar throughout the various regions of the world. An early start was normal, followed by flag-raising, the singing of the national anthem, an inspection by a discipline master or prefects and the inevitable punishment for those not in School uniform or those with long hair. Therefore the essays did tend to be very factual and overall they could lack a little atmosphere or personal involvement, the narrator satisfied with the role of an observer rather than a participant. The more discursive approach bemoaned the long time spent in assemblies, often in the hot sun, and felt that assemblies were too repetitive and not sufficiently interactive.

Nevertheless, even disgruntled candidates saw the value of assemblies as an effective means of communication and actually warmed to those assemblies which involved students in the telling of personal episodes and the rewarding of students for academic or sporting achievements. Linguistically, the best essays overcame the potential flatness of the mere list of events with lively paragraph openings and some quotations or advice from teachers which gave life and immediacy to the proceedings. Even though in actual practice it is not to be encouraged, occasional examples of minor naughtiness during assemblies, whether fictional or not, did break the feeling of routine and acted as effective contrasts to the discipline of the occasion. Weaker candidates depended on arbitrary paragraph openings such as 'Moreover' and 'Furthermore' and far too many candidates used 'assemblies' in the plural because it was in the title, even when they meant it in the singular and then followed it up with a singular verb.

5. Write a story which includes the words: 'Our secret code had proved very successful.'

There was scope for great imagination and varied interpretation with this essay title and indeed it produced the most creative responses. Lively, engaging narratives, though often quite incredible, resulted in a very wide range of different 'codes' even if some of them were far from secret – there was even a coded message from a Michael Jackson song to rouse the School to depose the Principal! Mostly though there were the expected military stories and less violent episodes of friends needing to keep a truth from prying parents or siblings. Good characterisation, setting, vocabulary and varied sentence structure marked out the better scripts as always. On the other hand, weaker scripts treated the idea of a code as a bolt-on to a familiar story or indulged in a long drawn out build up to a far too rapid denouement. Linguistically, weaker scripts jumped awkwardly from first to third person narrator and also failed to introduce snippets of properly punctuated direct speech which are so useful in enlivening a narrative. A very great failing on the part of even the stronger candidates was to ignore the tense 'had proved' in the given sentence so that its introduction at whatever stage seemed to grate. The perils of reading the question too quickly were all too clearly illustrated by one candidate who wrote about a 'secret road'.

Part 2

In **Part 2**, candidates were asked to imagine their School was holding a special event to mark an important anniversary for the School and, at the request of their Principal, they had to write to local businesses asking for sponsorship or other help. A large number of candidates responded extremely well to this task and were able to gain all five Content points very easily whilst the majority managed to gain at least four. The scenario allowed for a wide variety of events to mark the anniversary and this contributed greatly to the interest of the responses.

As is always said with this question, **Part 2** is directed writing and so is more of a reading task than **Part 1**. Candidates had to be aware that in order to satisfy the requirements of the bullet points this year a perfect answer had to have:

- a clear indication of what anniversary was being celebrated;
- precise details about the sort of event(s) chosen to mark the anniversary;
- a precise date and time for the event;
- a clear request for sponsorship or help linked to the anniversary and event(s);
- the reason why the School should need to request help from businesses.

Where candidates failed to gain the Content points they were usually guilty of simply omitting the point or misreading the question or the scenario. It is vital to remember in this task that it is partly testing whether a candidate can follow instructions as they would do in factual writing in later life. In the first bullet point it was essential to mention an anniversary of the School, something clearly taking place every year. To mention the 50th, or similar, anniversary of the founding of the School was a straightforward way of gaining the mark and for most candidates this is what they did. Some candidates assumed that mention of an event like Sports Day would be enough, but candidates must ensure that there is no doubt in the Examiner's mind – Sports Day may well be an annual event but it had to be more than just implied. In French speaking regions, some candidates assumed 'anniversary' meant a birthday and so lost the point, unless they linked it strongly to the founder of the School. In the second bullet point there was the most variety with all sorts of events planned. Most were very reasonable and there was virtually no restriction on what might be mentioned: parties, dinners, dinner-dances, musical evenings, fetes, and many, many more were to be held, both indoors and outdoors. One person even said that there would be a blood donation session, and this is only mentioned to highlight that there was little restriction on what could have been planned. A large number of candidates did here mention Sports Day or a School magazine launch or Prize-Giving (too often 'Price-

Giving') but this was acceptable if it was in conjunction with an anniversary. Some candidates were too enthusiastic and, in order to add detail, listed so many events it was difficult to imagine how all could take place as well. It was a good illustration of how a little care in the choice of additional does pay dividends. For the third bullet, both time and date were required and it was remarkable to see many candidates threw away the point by mentioning the date but not the time – and here it was perfectly acceptable to say 'in the morning' or similar for a time as this was not a specific invitation to attend at a given time, only an outline indication of when it was to take place. Too many candidates assumed that it was not necessary to mention the time because the event was clearly to take place in School time, but again the purpose of the bullet points is to make candidates address them and it is unwise to leave anything to chance in this respect. When it came to making the request, many candidates seemed not to understand the word 'sponsorship' but it was not crucial as any kind of help was welcome. It was far more important to make clear that it was a request for help with this event and not just in a general sense. Candidates did though need to see the difference between 'request' and 'ask for' and not confuse the two. The last bullet point proved to be most troublesome for candidates. The easy answer was to make clear that for some reason the School was short of funds and could not stretch to this event without help. In other words it had to be this event, not just general fundraising or to build a new classroom for example. The letter could list specific items that the business could supply, even its expertise, and this would have gained the mark.

Overall, the vast majority wrote a suitable amount for **Part 2** and captured the polite, persuasive tone very well. This involved using 'Yours faithfully', 'Yours sincerely' or 'Yours truly' as a valediction and maintaining a register suitable for School students to use when addressing people older than themselves and of whom they were asking a favour. It certainly did not help the cause if candidates were too aggressive in their stance and said, as one did, 'You must sponsor us...'. On the other hand, but equally to be regretted, was the attempt to be too friendly or flattering as in the clichéd '...have a nice day...' or the fawning 'Yours adoringly'. It is very pleasing to be able to say again this year that more and more candidates are paragraphing their directed writing along the lines of the bullet points, but equally there were still far too many who just wrote the response as one paragraph.

Guidance for teachers preparing candidates for future examinations:

- In **Part 1** tasks, essays asking candidates 'To describe...' should not be attempted unless the candidate is prepared to demonstrate that skill.
- Letter headings are not required in **Part 2** unless specifically requested.
- The proper punctuation and layout of speech can give problems and a greater focus on this would pay dividends.
- Continued work on correct tenses would help the majority.
- Candidates should avoid clichéd essay openings such as 'It all happened/began...' or 'I still remember...'.
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- Candidates should be clear about the difference between and appropriate use of 'his' and 'her' and the verbs ask/say/tell.

Final Comment:

This was an immensely enjoyable and enriching experience for all concerned in marking it. There is a great deal of excellent expression and vocabulary amongst the candidates who take this examination. The best writing this year was really was of a very high standard indeed; it is a tribute to the hard work of both candidate and teacher and it was a privilege to share in it.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/02
Comprehension

General comments

This year's paper was the first discursive, non-fiction topic for some time. It seemed to engage the interest of the candidates, while at the same time being able to test the most able candidates. It stretched and discriminated the candidates – a true test of comprehension reflected in the wide range of scores. In the summary, there were sufficient nuances even amongst the most successfully attempted content points to tax the candidates and to engage their thought processes rather than their ability to copy the text.

The performance of candidates showed that, in general, they had been well prepared by their teachers and understood the nature of the examination. The Paper seemed to be deceptively hard for some candidates, probably because there was less possibility than in many previous papers to score by fortuitous lifting. Examiners reported very few rubric infringements.

As in previous years, candidates seemed to be familiar with the layout of the paper and, in the main, the types of questions likely to be asked. Almost without exception, candidates completed the paper, and some, though not many managed to offer both a rough draft and a fair copy in response to the summary question. The paper followed the usual pattern. Twenty five marks were allocated to the testing of literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, vocabulary, use of own words and appreciation of writer's craft. A further twenty five marks were allocated to the summary question, these marks being divided between assessment of ability to select content points from the text, and assessment of ability to express these points fluently and in own words. As in previous years, the questions giving most difficulty were the questions which required candidates to answer in their own words; some candidates seemed to ignore this rubric or, even when they identified the key words for re-casting, found it impossible to find synonyms.

Examiners continued to report some candidates writing in excess of the 160 words prescribed by the rubric for the summary. They also reported fewer candidates than usual scoring full marks for content points in the summary. Where candidates made alterations to their summaries, this was not always done neatly, or was sometimes done in pencil; candidates must understand that such untidy or pencil alterations make it difficult for Examiners to check the accuracy of the number of words used in the summary. Some, though very few, candidates made the Examiner's task more difficult by writing in very pale ink, or in minute handwriting.

Again, some Examiners were concerned about Centres which gave candidates examination booklets of eight or twelve pages, resulting in waste of paper and unnecessary postage expenses.

Many Examiners noted the neatness of presentation and handwriting, the fact that spelling and punctuation were generally very good and the overall impressive standard of written English.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 (a) was designed, as the opening question, to ease candidates into the examination with a fairly straightforward test. However, this proved to be a challenging opening question because the answer, which was that the Olympic Games are amazing because they have been famous for a long time, or for thousands of years, could not be made by lifting from the text. Many candidates failed to score the mark here because they lifted from the text at line 3, writing that the Games are as famous now as they were 'all that time ago', which makes little real sense; some distillation of the text was required. Others wrote, wrongly, that the Olympic Games are a test of physical excellence which, although a true statement, did not answer the question.

Candidates fared better with **Question 1(b)**, offering the correct answer that the Greeks exercising the body was as important as exercising the mind; those who failed to score the mark wrote that the Greeks believed that sport exercised the mind. The answer could be made by lifting text at line 6 ('a society which believed that developing the body was as important as exercising the mind') and this in fact is how very many candidates chose to answer the question.

The mark for **Question 1(c)** was awarded for writing that the connection between the Greek gods and athletic competition was that the Games took place on a holy mountain, or that they took place near a temple; the mention of a religious term, i.e. 'holy' or 'temple', was the key to the correct answer. Some candidates made the religious link but failed to score the mark because they did not write that the Games took place at or near that place of religious significance. Some wrote, wrongly, that the connection was that Olympia was near the coast.

Question 1(d) was an inferential question which proved to be challenging for many candidates. The inference to be made was that spectators or competitors could access the Games from the sea or by boat or from the islands. Some wrong inferences made reference to water sports, playing games on the beach, swimming or even sun-bathing; colourful as these ideas were, they could not score the mark. Some candidates merely copied the final sentence of the paragraph, which clearly did not score the available mark.

The answer to **Question 2(a)** could be scored by lifting from the text at lines 13-15, and writing that the evidence that the Greeks thought the truce was important was either that they fined cities or banned athletes who broke the truce. Very many candidates were successful in scoring this mark, although some failed to score because they explained why the truce was important (it stopped fighting) rather than answering the question (how we can tell that they thought it was important). Others merely defined a truce without attempting to answer the question.

Question 2(b) was the first of the two questions on the paper which required candidates to answer in their own words. Candidates were required to make the link between the trigger in the question, 'treated as a celebrity', with the key words 'enhanced' and 'reputation'. Acceptable synonyms for 'enhanced' were, among others, 'improved', 'increased', 'developed' or 'built up' and, for 'reputation', 'name', 'popularity', 'esteem' or 'prestige'. The mark for 'enhanced' could also be scored for the mention of a simple term like 'more'; thus, 'he made his city more popular' scored two marks. Candidates who failed to gain the second mark often did so because they offered 'fame' or 'honour' for 'reputation', which were attractive but nevertheless wrong answers. Many candidates had the wrong focus here and centred their answer on the lack of cash prizes and missed the key words altogether. Sometimes marks were lost because the candidate focused on the reputation of the competitor rather than on that of his city or country.

Question 3 proved to be a difficult question for a large number of candidates because they failed to see that its focus was the organisers and not the competitors. The answer was that the organisers ensured that competitors were fit by making them swear oaths that they had been in training at home for ten months, and by fining them if they did not attend the training sessions at the venue. The key to scoring in each of the limbs of the question was mentioning the element of compulsion. Many candidates missed the point and wrote that competitors swore oaths that they had been in training at home for ten months, without specifying that the organisers made them swear these oaths. Likewise, some candidates referred to training at the venue without specifying that this training was obligatory or that competitors would be fined for not attending it. Another problem with the first limb of this question was that there were in fact three details which had to be picked up, namely the compulsion of the oath, the training at home, and the timescale of this training.

Question 4(a) was another question which candidates found difficult, where injudicious, random or thoughtless copying abounded, and therefore no marks were scored. The first reason why interest in reviving the Games grew was the fact that the ruins of the site, or of Olympia, were discovered. Some candidates merely copied at lines 25- 26 ('its ruins were uncovered by archaeologists'); this could not score the available mark because of the vagueness of the mere mention of 'ruins', with no indication of what these were the ruins of. Likewise in the second limb of the question, the answer was that the campaigning of Pierre de Coubertin brought about interest in revival of the Games. Many candidates merely copied again, this time at line 28 ('without the enthusiasm of Frenchman Pierre de Coubertin'); this could not score the available mark because the link had to be made with the subsequent reference in the text to the campaigning of Pierre de Coubertin – action was required, not mere enthusiasm or interest. A surprising number of candidates gave the answer to **Question 4(b)** here instead.

Question 4(b) was not a conventional own words question, where candidates were directed to isolate, two key words. Here there were two key ideas which had to be dealt with. The first of these was the 'spirit of solidarity' and the second was 'a peaceful world'. For 'spirit of solidarity', there was a range of acceptable answers, such as 'young people felt at one with each other' or 'like brothers and sister' or 'shared common goals or desires' or 'co-operated with one another'. Some candidates thought, wrongly, that 'solidarity' was related to soldiers. Acceptable re-castings of 'peaceful' were 'harmonious' or 'without war' or 'without violence'. There was a reasonable degree of success with this fairly difficult question, particularly with the second limb, although some candidates ignored the rubric instruction to use own words and merely lifted from the text. Some candidates saw the meaning of 'peaceful' but failed to score the mark because they linked it specifically to the Games - the athletes would not fight with each other - and not to the wider, global picture.

Question 4(c) was a relatively straightforward question at this stage of the Paper. The mark could be scored for making the point that it was appropriate that the revived Games took place in Greece because it was in Greece that the first Olympic Games took place, or that the Olympics originated in Greece. The idea of 'first' or 'origins' was essential here, not merely that the old Games took place in Greece. Some candidates merely wrote that the games took place every four years; although a correct statement it did not answer the question. Perhaps some candidates did not know the meaning of 'appropriate' in the question.

The mark for **Question 5** was scored for writing that the Games took place mainly in capital cities because the capital cities had more, better or enough facilities. This was an inference which had to be made from lines 37-38: 'There will certainly not be enough of these facilities across the country although the capital city might be more fortunate'. There was a reasonable degree of success here, although popular wrong answers were that capital cities had more money to spend. Another common wrong answer was merely to lift 'capital cities might be more fortunate', which in itself did not answer the question. It seemed that some candidates confused 'capital', as used in reference to capital city, with the idea of 'capital' as money. Some candidates offered their own suggestions rather than text-based ones.

Question 6, as a question on the writer's craft, was intended to be a differentiating question, and thus it proved to be. In order to score the mark, candidates were required to de-code the iceberg image by discerning the relative sizes of the visible iceberg ('the tip') and the unseen, submerged part of the iceberg, and then relating this to the security at the Olympic Games. Thus acceptable correct answers were that airport security is only a part of the entire security required, or that there is more for security staff to worry about than simply airport security, or that total security is more important than only airport security. Few candidates answered this question correctly. Many candidates offered the incorrect answer that airport security was tight or that it was expensive; these were true statements but did not attempt to de-code the image being tested.

Candidates scored generally well in **Question 7** for picking out the correct two consecutive words which showed that the Olympic Games attract a lot of visitors, namely 'huge influx'. Some candidates unfortunately spoilt their answer by adding 'of people' to a correct answer. In addition, it seemed that some candidates did not know the meaning of 'consecutive'.

Question 8 was the second of the own words questions, and proved to be the differentiating question which it was intended to be at this stage of the Paper. The trigger in the question was 'inspires young people', which was meant to direct candidates to the text at line 82: 'young people can be inspired' and in turn 'by their heroes determination and so reach their own potential'. Thus the key words to be re-cast were 'determination' and 'potential'. Acceptable synonyms for 'determination' were, among others, 'persistence', 'perseverance', 'will power' and 'dedication', while acceptable synonyms for 'potential' were, among others, 'possibility', 'capability', 'the best of their ability' and 'doing their best'. Although it seemed as if many candidates were able to isolate the correct key words, or at least the second of them, there was much difficulty with correct synonyms. A popular wrong answer for 'determination' was 'hard work', while popular wrong answers for 'potential' were 'goals', 'dreams' and 'aims'. Few candidates scored a mark for a correct synonym for 'determination', and many ignored it altogether.

In order to score the available mark for answering **Question 9**, candidates were required to make a general observation out of the particular information contained in the statistics given in the paragraph about the Olympic Games. Thus, acceptable answers were that the writer wanted to show, point out or demonstrate the importance of the Games, or their power to influence the planet. Where candidates failed to score the mark, it was often because they overlooked the focus of the question, which was the writer's purpose; thus, answers which merely stated that the Games influence the planet, or are important, did not answer the question. Others failed to score the mark here because they merely repeated or re-cast one or more of the statistics, again not answering the question.

Question 10 was the customary vocabulary question, in which candidates were required to show understanding in context, not necessarily in direct synonyms, of five words or expressions from a list of eight. Examiners reported fewer candidates scoring full marks than in previous papers. Most candidates who attempted 'key' scored the mark for synonyms such as 'important' or 'main'; likewise, very many candidates scored the mark for 'mounted' by offering correct synonyms such as 'increased' or 'grew', although some lost the mark or writing 'arose' instead of 'rose', which changed the meaning and therefore could not be rewarded. A reasonable degree of success was gained by candidates who correctly offered 'renovation' or 'development' for 'regeneration' and 'provide' or 'present' for 'stage' (although some candidates incorrectly offered 'level', thus showing the need to examine the word in its context.) Candidates scored a mark for writing 'unfortunately' or 'sadly' for 'regrettably' and for offering 'timetable' or 'order of events' for 'schedule'. 'Obsession' was rarely attempted and, when it was, it rarely scored; correct synonyms were words like 'preoccupation' or 'fascination'. Some candidates ignored the context and offered answers such as 'addiction' which did not fit the sense here. Similarly, few candidates attempted 'elaborate', where correct synonyms were words like 'fancy' and 'decorated'. Again, some candidates who made an attempt here overlooked the context, confusing adjective with verb, and wrote, incorrectly, 'to give details'. Examiners reported, as in previous years, some candidates giving the question word in a sentence rather than trying to explain its meaning, but there were very few cases of this. As ever, there were some candidates who offered two or three synonyms for each word; such candidates must realise that only the first word offered will be credited. Another misconception among a few candidates was that all of the words would need to be tackled, or perhaps that the best five of eight would be credited; such candidates must understand that only the first five attempts will be looked at by the Examiner.

The final question on the paper was, as is customary, the summary question, carrying half the total marks for the paper. Candidates were asked to summarise the disadvantages and advantages of hosting the Olympic Games. As is normal, the rubric asked candidates to base their summary on just over half of the original text, expressing content points as far as possible in their own words, using a maximum of 160 words, the first ten of which were given. They were to write in continuous prose, not note form. There were twenty content points, of which they could identify any combination up to a maximum of fifteen points carrying one mark each. Examiners reported that almost all candidates completed the summary question. However, there continued to be the incidence reported of candidates failing to cross out their rough draft, thus failing to make it clear to the Examiner which version was to be marked. A very small number of candidates forfeited their Style mark by writing their summary in note form rather than continuous prose. Some candidates confused information given as advantages in the text and suggested such information were disadvantages, by writing, for example, that host countries had to build better airports or spend money improving roads. In such rubric infringements the mark had to be withheld.

The first two paragraphs of the area for summary search, namely paragraphs five and six, dealt with the disadvantages of hosting the Olympic Games. There were six content points available in paragraph five. The opening ten words were designed to ease candidates into the summary by leading them to the first content point, which was that it is expensive to build new facilities required to host the Games; most candidates started off well by making this point. 'Facilities' could be given, or an example of these facilities, such as swimming pools or running tracks. The paragraph went on to explain that there will not be enough facilities across the country, that there is a discrepancy between the estimated and the actual cost, and that the money spent on the Olympic Games could have been spent on other things, or on education and housing. Most candidates were successful with this latter point, although the other two were much less frequently made. Further points rendered by this paragraph were that only a few cities benefit from the expenditure, (a point overlooked by most candidates) and that money is often diverted from charity to pay for the Games (a point scored by the majority of candidates, showing altruism, at least.)

In paragraph six, another three content points were available. Many candidates successfully made the point that security is expensive. The other two possible points to be made were that governments are under pressure, firstly to meet targets, and secondly to host lavish ceremonies; these latter two points were rarely made.

Paragraph seven moved onto the advantages of hosting the Olympic Games, and there were four content points in this paragraph, all concerned with transport. Railways and roads will be improved and new transport facilities will be created. The term 'infrastructure' was an acceptable synonym here, although some candidates lost marks in other areas of the summary for writing 'infrastructure' as a synonym for 'facilities'. A further two marks were awarded in paragraph seven to candidates who wrote that new, improved or enlarged airports may be built, and that this in turn will increase tourism.

There were four content points in paragraph eight. Marks were awarded to candidates who wrote that the building of hotels will cause employment, that these hotels will improve tourism after the Games, that accommodation for competitors will create employment, and that these Olympic villages can be converted into homes for locals. The marks were withheld if mere reference to hotels or accommodation for competitors was made without the link of employment, which is the real advantage. Similarly, the mark was withheld from the candidate who wrote that hotels improve tourism, without reference to that advantage happening when the Games are over. There were many missed marks here because of points being only partially, and therefore unsuccessfully, made.

Paragraph nine contained a further three content points. The Olympic facilities provide a means of keeping fit for local people, the importance of physical exercise is highlighted, and the competitors are an inspiration to people.

As is customary, ten marks were allocated to the style of writing in the summary question, where style was assessed according to how well the candidates were able to use their own words and the extent to which they were able to write error-free, continuous prose, using a variety of sentence structures. Examiners reported that ability to break away from the words of the original text varied from candidate to candidate and even from Centre to Centre, but that in general candidates were skilful at re-casting the original text in their own words. Random, mindless copying did not occur as much as it has done in the past. However, some weaker candidates played safe by relying fairly heavily on the text wording, thus not scoring highly for use of own words, but in so doing they gained several marks for content points. It seemed that some candidates had been taught, or had decided, to adopt this latter strategy and, indeed, it may be a good course of action for candidates who are lacking in skill or confidence in the use of English. However, only those candidates who were competent and confident enough to grapple with the original text, re-shaping and re-casting it in original complex sentence, were able to gain many, or full, marks for style. As has happened in the past, Examiners reported candidates who scored only a few marks for content points, despite being clearly proficient in English, because their summaries were far too generalised and lacking in the precision required to make content points; however, the incidence of this was lower than in some previous Papers.

Common errors reported were the usual failures of agreement in singular and plural, misplaced or omitted prepositions, omission of definite and indefinite articles, use of articles where none were in fact required, and inconsistent and illogical verb tenses. Spelling and punctuation were generally very good, and handwriting was generally clear.

In parts of the world where French is spoken, there was some confusion between French and English grammar and vocabulary, e.g. 'assist' for 'attend', 'envy' for 'want', 'recommand' for 'recommend', to 'lose' time for to 'waste' time, confusion of 'make' and 'do', confusion between 'his' 'her' and 'its', and problems with plural nouns of uncountable items, such as 'transports' for transport.