

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/11

Writing

Key Messages

- It is essential to read the question carefully and follow all the instructions given.
- In **Section 1** tasks it is important to develop the bullet points as evenly as possible and ensure that all required information is included.
- Register, style and tone are important aspects of Directed Writing and need consideration.
- In **Section 1** carefully consider purpose, situation and audience when planning a response.
- Pay attention to commonly confused words such as this/these, they/there sit/seat.
- Greater focus on the accurate punctuation and layout of speech would improve performance.
- Concentration on correct tenses and agreement would improve candidates' writing in both sections.

General Comments

The overall standard of the vast majority of responses this year seemed to be on a par with that of previous years. **Section 1** was done well by most candidates but some underestimated the demands of the question. There was a pleasing spread of responses in **Section 2**, although the narrative questions were generally more popular than the others and this is a sensible approach for many candidates who are clearly comfortable writing narratives. The vast majority of candidates used the time well, wrote appropriate amounts for each question and avoided rubric infringements. The strengths and weaknesses of the linguistic ability were similar to previous sessions: there was a great deal of very fluent, imaginative and accurate writing. Very few prepared openings to essays were used and this worked to the benefit of candidates. There were very few instances of prepared essays, although occasionally a candidate found it challenging to include a prescribed sentence in a natural way. There were fewer examples of the inclusion of text messaging language, abbreviations and expressions such as 'gonna' and 'wanna', which can sometimes suggest the wrong register and are best avoided. There were some examples of unnecessarily offensive language, or violent/explicit content designed to shock, in **Section 2**: candidates are reminded that this is never appropriate, even in direct speech.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

The Directed Writing task is assessed with equal marks given to **Task Fulfilment** and **Language** criteria. Candidates had to write a report to their Principal responding to the Principal's suggestion of starting and finishing the school day half an hour earlier than the usual times. The candidates were asked to write the report as a member of the School Council. In particular, the candidates had to offer details of what the advantages of such a change might be, the potential disadvantages, and the School Council's recommendation, giving a clear reason for that recommendation. This was a scenario that was within the experience of the candidates, the majority of whom responded well to the task. The scenario allowed use of a range of real and imaginary information and this contributed greatly to the success and interest of the responses.

Section 1 is Directed Writing and so involves more reading than **Section 2**. In this task candidates had to be aware that they were focusing on writing a formal report for the specified audience, the Principal, in addition to the content of the report. Candidates were also instructed that they were reporting on how the change might affect **the students**. In order to satisfy the requirements of the bullet points this year, responses needed to include:

- the advantages of the change
- the disadvantages of the change

- what the School Council recommends and why

In the first and second bullet points it was essential to develop the bullets and consider a range of potential advantages and disadvantages, although it was acceptable for the bullets to be slightly uneven to reflect the final recommendation. The third bullet point required a reasonably developed response, offering a clear recommendation to the Principal and a measured reason to explain how that recommendation had been reached.

The descriptors for **Task Fulfilment** in the syllabus make clear that candidates will be judged on:

- clear understanding of purpose, situation and audience
- a correct format for the piece of writing
- appropriate tone and register
- the use of information to justify opinion
- the sensible development and organisation of the bullet points.

As far as **Task Fulfilment** was concerned this year, the highest marks were awarded to responses which kept their focus on the context and purpose of the report and shaped their writing according to the descriptors. There were a number of candidates who misunderstood the situation, sometimes assuming that the school day was being lengthened or shortened, or mistakenly referring to starting school an hour earlier in the morning. This did lead to some irrelevant considerations at times. There were also a number of responses written as a letter including inappropriate salutations and valedictions.

In **Task Fulfilment** it is the development of the ideas that will gain most marks. The first and second bullet points were relatively clear and did not pose problems for the majority of candidates who offered some sensible suggestions for how changing the timings of the school day could advantage or disadvantage the students. Many considered the advantages of avoiding rush hour traffic, the coolness of early morning or candidates having a greater capacity to assimilate information earlier in the day. The disadvantages considered tended to centre on disruption to family schedules, inappropriate behaviour due to loitering after school, problems with public transport so early in the morning or the dangers of travelling to school in the dark. However, many responses considered the advantages and disadvantages for the teachers or the school itself, rather than focusing on the students as instructed. There were also a few less convincing arguments offered, mainly regarding increased student involvement in drugs and crime. The third bullet point was often less developed than the first two, with many candidates failing to provide a reason for the School Council's recommendation. Some simply suggested that the disadvantages outweighed the advantages or vice versa, which failed to develop the bullet point appropriately. The best responses offered a key reason or developed an idea suggested earlier. The very best linked a point made about the candidates to a whole school benefit or disadvantage, for example, suggesting that an increase in candidates arriving late would be likely to have a detrimental effect on the examination results and the school's reputation. Occasionally candidates did not address the third bullet point at all, or offered an alternative proposal to the Principal's suggestion. This did not comply with the clear instruction to explain the School Council's decision meaning that the bullet point had not been addressed fully.

The stronger candidates usually were able to amplify all three bullet points, using relevant and imaginative ideas to develop the response. Other responses needed to incorporate more detail in the first and second bullet points. The bullet points do not always have to get equal treatment but it is also true that the answer should not be too unbalanced because otherwise a bullet point might not be adequately developed.

Generally, there was a good awareness of audience and most candidates were comfortable with the concept of writing a report to the Principal. However, some candidates missed the finer detail in the task. The register was kept suitably formal in most responses. Others occasionally were too informal, expressing outrage and demanding that the Principal back down, or at times were too gushing and complimentary. The vast majority of candidates employed an appropriate format following the guidance given in the rubric by adopting a persuasive but polite tone. The best responses were able to balance the need to persuade with the respect due to the Principal's position of authority. Less successful answers became too insistent, often focusing on their own feelings rather than representing the whole student body. The majority of responses adopted an appropriate format for a report, using the opening specified in the task. Some responses included an inappropriate ending for a report with a valediction included, rather than a signature and date as specified in the task. Organisation varied, with some candidates following the bullet points chronologically and others grouping their ideas as effectively in another order. Some wrote a formal report that followed a very specific format, including material not required in the task; this sometimes resulted in rather sparse development of the three bullet points. Candidates are advised that they need to organise their writing in appropriate paragraphs in order to improve performance.

Overall, the vast majority wrote a suitable amount for **Section 1** and captured the polite but persuasive tone very well. Other responses were rather short, only just reaching the lower word limit. Candidates need to ensure that they address the word length requirements in their responses. Linguistically, candidates were generally at ease with vocabulary associated with school and student issues, although there was some confusion with the use of the future tense when discussing a proposal for future implementation. Most candidates found little difficulty in addressing the task to produce a convincing piece of work.

Section 2

Question 2

Describe two places, one your favourite indoor place, and the other your favourite outdoor place. (Remember that you are creating the atmosphere of the two locations and why there are so special to you.)

This was a less popular title. The majority of candidates were able to clearly identify two specific locations to describe, one indoor and one outdoor. Others were rather vague about the exact locations, sometimes choosing a city or even a country. This was rather limiting in terms of language and the full exploration of the title, as the responses were less personal and drew less on genuine experience and feelings. The best responses were more personal, employing convincing details about the locations chosen, focusing on holidays, favourite places of cultural interest, or even their own homes. Most remembered to describe the atmosphere of the places, some drawing interesting contrasts between the settings and how they could reflect different sides of their own personality. A few responses focused purely on describing the places chosen; these were self-limiting in terms of ideas and development.

Question 3

'You're never too old to learn.' What is your opinion? Give reasons and examples to support your view.

This was a popular title and proved to be an attractive topic for candidates of all abilities. It was often approached by candidates who had interesting ideas and opinions on the subject. Most expressed great support for the statement, citing the lack of opportunities in education for many of the older generations and great admiration for those who have returned to school or university to study in old age. Some candidates discussed our ever-changing technological world and the need for older people to learn how to use electronic gadgets such as iPads and the latest mobile phones. Many referred to the younger generation helping the older generation keep up with modern methods of communication. A few candidates argued that older people find it difficult to assimilate information due to their aging brains, often referring to members of their extended family to offer examples and reasons. Again, it was impressive to see how many personal experiences could be successfully utilised by candidates and it was clearly a title for those who had genuine experience of the topic, as they could explore their ideas with convincing evidence over a number of paragraphs rather than merely repeating a strong but limited view.

Question 4

Write a story which includes the sentence: 'We were very aware that someone might overhear our conversation, so we left the café.'

This was a very popular title. Favourite themes included spy stories, criminals planning a bank raid, or a friend disclosing a terrible secret. The best essays were those that built up to the prescribed sentence effectively and then explored the aftermath fully. There were some really intriguing and well developed plots involving secret plans being overheard and foiled. Such responses focused on building up suspense for the reader. Less successful responses spent a great deal of time building up to the required sentence in their narrative, but failing to really explore the potential in terms of consequences. These responses often ended with the prescribed sentence and the reader was left unsure of whether the conversation had been overheard or not, or whether anything would result from the breach of confidentiality. The weakest responses were those which simply told a narrative story which lacked any development of tension or drama, or those where the conversation was so trivial or mundane that it would not have mattered whether it was overheard or not. Very occasionally the trip to the café was completely unrelated to the rest of the story. It was noticeable at all levels of response how well the majority of candidates integrated the given topic sentence into their writing without any sense of awkwardness.

Question 5

Faces.

This was a less popular topic inviting a small number of responses. Any approach to this question was possible. The best responses treated it as a reflective title exploring the importance of the faces that we present to the world. There were some thoughtful explorations of why beauty is of such importance in the modern world and why we so often judge people on their looks rather than other, more important, characteristics. Other successful responses considered how our faces represent who we are and how we feel. Some responses took a more narrative approach, writing stories about mistaken identities or dishonesty and behaving in a two-faced manner. Weaker responses found little to say on the topic and tried to define the word 'faces', often resulting in rather repetitive and unconvincing responses.

Question 6

Write a story in which losing a passport or identity card plays an important part.

This was a very popular title, inviting some really tense stories about failed attempts to travel, or arrests at airports resulting from a failure to produce the correct documentation. Stories usually involved a situation in which the protagonist, having looked forward to a trip, lost their passport through carelessness and ended up having to return home bitterly disappointed. The better responses made the plot more complex through a deliberate theft or other act of dishonesty. Such situations were treated in a number of ways with some showing a good lexical range to highlight the drama and tension. Many responses were more reflective, exploring how a moment of carelessness could affect future plans for education overseas, or opportunities to attend important events. Less successful responses took a discursive approach, arguing that passports and identity cards should be looked after properly as they are such important documents. Such responses were rather self-limiting and ignored the clear instruction to 'write a story' in the title.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/12
Writing

Key Messages

- In **Section 1** candidates should be familiar with all the criteria for good Task Fulfilment and use them as a checklist.
- In **Section 1** thought should be given to the proper format for reports, if required.
- Candidates must be clear about the situation in **Section 1** and not contradict what is given in the task.
- In **Section 1** tasks it is important to develop the bullet points as evenly as possible and ensure that all required information is included.
- Candidates are advised to check their work. They are not required to give a word count.
- Concentration on correct tenses and agreement would improve candidates' writing in both sections.
- Candidates should avoid repetitive vocabulary at sentence openings; a varied vocabulary marks out the better candidates.
- Care should be taken with the use of capital letters.

General Comments

The overall standard of the entry this year was equivalent to previous examination series. There were relatively few examples of the highest mark band for writing, although when they did occur they were genuinely impressive. Besides the creativity and accuracy shown by the top candidates, their use of a wide-ranging vocabulary is notable. All candidates are now much better at avoiding slang and text messaging conventions in essays. **Section 1** was done well although there were many examples of mixed format. All the **Section 2** titles were popular – there was an improved take-up for the discursive and single word titles. Most candidates managed their time well. There was improved paragraphing in the **Section 1** task this year although sentence separation errors still give cause for concern.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1 Directed Writing

In **Section 1**, candidates were asked to imagine that their school had been given a sum of money in order to improve the school library. The Principal of the school wanted to see what the students thought was the best way to spend the money on the library. As a result, candidates, speaking as members of the student council, had to write a report for the Principal, giving such advice.

Candidates had good first-hand knowledge of their school library and the overwhelming majority responded extremely well to this **purpose** and **situation**. There were also, however, a number of minor misinterpretations of the task which limited the Task Fulfilment marks of some candidates and these will be detailed below.

Section 1 is directed writing and so is more of a reading task than **Section 2**. Candidates had to follow instructions and satisfy the requirements of the three bullet points showing:

- clear and specific reasons as to why the library needed improving;
- which improvement was needed first and the reason why it was the priority;
- how and why the students **and** the school would benefit.

In **Task Fulfilment** it is the development of the ideas, or responses to the bullet points, that will gain most marks. Therefore, for **bullet point 1**, simply noting that the library was 'old' was correct in one sense but certainly did not help the Principal with the fine detail. It implied more than it said and left the reader to do all the work. More successful candidates were prepared to provide the fine detail in listing some of the

shortcomings of the library. The most popular reason for the library needing improvement was the lack of space. This was seen in the lack of adequate shelving, the lack of seating space and the inability of students and staff to move around easily. Many candidates referred to the state of the roof which let in water. Faded paint on the walls, poor lighting, as well as books in bad condition and the shortage of relevant and modern books also earned frequent mention. Noise, either from adjoining classrooms or the nearby school fields, was another common complaint. Many candidates had sympathy for librarians who often worked alone or had inadequate data systems for monitoring book-lending. The most successful candidates responded fully to the word 'why' in the bullet point and gave the consequences of the shortcomings they had listed. So it was that students found leaking roofs had ruined shelves and books; the noise in crowded spaces made it difficult to read in peace; some students sat on the floor because of inadequate seating; poor data systems meant that lending books for students to read at home was often impossible.

Bullet point 2 asked for the relevant improvements and candidates, for the most part, drew on what they had written for bullet 1 and suggested how these wrongs could be rectified. Shelves were to be replaced, walls painted, computers installed, staff hired and so on. However, bullet 2 was not merely a repetition of the information in bullet 1. Candidates needed to emphasise a sense of priority. Where substantial problems had been highlighted in bullet 1 (lack of space, leaking roof) the sense of priority was obvious because large-scale building work would be required. Nevertheless, obvious as this was, it still needed stating as a priority and many successful candidates used words and expressions such as 'First', 'The first thing...', 'In the first place...' to make their understanding clear. Some candidates missed this sense of priority and merely re-listed what they had put in bullet 1, only this time as an improvement. They needed to elaborate so that the list was not merely regurgitation, so, for instance, instead of merely saying that the library needed new books, it would have been relevant to suggest appropriate titles. The very best candidates used the whole paragraph to present all the improvements in their logical order, from rebuilding down to a final day of cleaning before reopening. Some more able candidates saw the danger of repetition when moving from bullet 1 to bullet 2 and held back some of the improvements for bullet 2.

Bullet point 3 needed to be very carefully thought out. A discernible number of candidates assumed the benefits would be obvious and failed to spell out what they were. It is worth remembering that doing what the task asks is essential in **Section 1** and a new paragraph about benefits was a requirement. It was possible to answer this point by suggesting that the benefits to students and the school (which included staff) were mutual. Hence some candidates wrote that the students and school would benefit 'from more space and seating' or 'from the inclusion of computers and a wi-fi connection'. This gained some credit but candidates would do well in bullets where there are two parts highlighted by the word 'and' to consider that extra detail will always be helpful as long as it is relevant. In this case students and school/staff could clearly gain different benefits and so this would give more detail. Better answers stressed how students would gain from the increased peace and quiet of a renovated library and their vocabulary would be improved. They would have the ability to borrow books to read at home. Computer access, especially for those denied this at home, would improve their project work and general knowledge. For the staff and school, candidates saw other, separate, benefits in the ability to use the library for certain lessons or meetings and in the increased sense of discipline that would arise from a well stocked and well run library. Most of all, the benefit to the school was seen as the improved reputation it gained from the academic success associated with a first class facility and the consequent increase in the number of students coming to the school.

Generally, there was a very good awareness of **purpose**. The **situation** was very well understood by the majority although there was some evidence of a hurried reading of the scenario. Some candidates assumed the money was for any improvement in the school and they happened to suggest the library as the most worthy of attention. Some candidates assumed they personally (or the student council) had been given the money and they detailed how it was going to be or had been spent. A significant number of candidates told the Principal that the school had been given money as if he did not know, whereas the opposite was true. Some thought the improvements had already been made. A few candidates were not sure about the function or make up of a student council. In the vast majority of cases the Principal was rightly identified as the audience, not least when using the given opening to the text in 'To the Principal,'. The **register** was very well maintained and kept properly formal by most. Appropriate vocabulary, as in 'examinations' and 'renovation', lent authenticity to the writing. Most candidates avoided the temptation of writing a narrative but a small number did allow themselves in bullets 2 and 3 to tell too long a story about the progress of the improvements.

The greatest difficulty candidates had this year in Task Fulfilment was in employing an appropriate **format** for a report. They were given a considerable steer in the suggestion that they start with 'To the Principal' but very many candidates immediately reverted to writing a letter. While conventions may vary a little in different parts of the world, a report would tend to suggest a formal piece of writing, giving findings and suggestions to a specified audience. The writing would probably include a subject subheading with a signature and date to

end the text. Whereas a letter is not strictly inappropriate, very many candidates ended up with an awkward mixture of a report opening and the letter format they were more used to.

Organisation hardly varied, with candidates logically and sensibly following the bullet points in the order given. A very small number made use of paragraph headings to reinforce the organisation which fitted well with the idea of a report. Overall, the vast majority wrote a suitable amount for **Section 1** and captured the polite, formal **tone** and approach very well. Where tone slipped at all it was when some candidates were rather forceful in their advice ('You should...' or 'You must...' or 'I expect you to...'). There were many particularly good final paragraphs where candidates reinforced their hope that their writing had been 'informative and persuasive' and offered their continued support and help if needed. **Opinion** and **justification** arose naturally when bullets 2 was answered fully. There were very few short scripts.

Linguistically, with subject matter close to their personal experience, most candidates found it quite straightforward to produce a convincing piece of work. Spelling was generally satisfactory. There was some confusion with the use of the word 'furniture' which many candidates wanted to use in the plural and which often led to agreement problems (as in 'the furnitures is broken'). The word 'Principal' was sometimes written as 'Principle', which was unexpected as the word was in the question.

Section 2 Creative Writing

Question 2

Describe a public garden or a park at two different times of the day or year. (Remember that you are creating an atmosphere and not just saying what happens there.)

This was not a very popular question but it was attempted successfully by a small number of candidates who obviously had a strong association with such a venue. Such candidates avoided narration and concentrated on evoking the atmosphere of the park or garden. Most were successful in stressing two different times of day or year so that the essence of the question was maintained. Morning and early evening were the most usual of the contrasts as they were clearly different in atmosphere but also had some (if limited) activity to give interest; for example, jogging early in the morning figured heavily, as did playing with young children, yoga and eating lunch. Nevertheless it was mainly description of the vegetation, the small animals present and the prevailing light which gained most attention. The use of adjectives was important and those candidates who could use effective similes did well. There were a few very attractive essays and the very best were the ones which gave some idea of the local features, whether it was a memorial or a building or even some of the staff who worked in these places. There were some wonderful parks described vividly through the senses and it was clear that some candidates had been well taught to use the five senses as a checklist or, sometimes, an aid to paragraphing. Too often, however, descriptions were generalised, and so did not engage the reader. This type of essay is most effective in the present tense, unless contrasting past and present events.

Question 3

Do you think that hard work is all that is needed to succeed in life? If not, what else might be needed? Give reasons and examples to support your view.

The discursive essay proved popular and candidates had clearly considered this idea at some stage in their lives. Many candidates sided with the idea of hard work being all important. Examples were given from their own lives of school work which had succeeded as a result of hard work and there also tales of those who had ignored pleas from their parents and teachers to work hard and had suffered as a result. Candidates who took this positive view of hard work often cited examples of famous people who embody the concept and the Apple founder Steve Jobs was a favourite example. Some candidates took the opposite view and saw hard work as merely a part of success. They gave equal measure to such attributes as talent, encouragement and luck. There were some serious and solid efforts here, but greater use of supporting examples would have improved many essays. This title required a variety of ideas and vocabulary to sustain interest and too many candidates lapsed into repetition. Tense consistency (present tense) was essential in this essay.

Question 4

Write a story which includes the sentence: 'At first I paid no attention to the strangely dressed old woman standing near the statue.'

This question was very popular and produced a number of very good narratives. There were many varied and interesting stories here, with considerable ingenuity demonstrated. Many of the narratives centred on a long-lost relative, usually a mother or grandmother, who turned up in distressing circumstances, usually because they were ill or homeless and were 'spying' on the narrator in the hope of being. These stories were appropriate as long as the woman was long-lost but it did stretch the reader's belief when the woman turned out to be relative whom the narrator had seen recently but 'forgotten'. Another set of narratives revolved around thieves who were preying on unsuspecting passers-by (often the strangely dressed old woman was a man in disguise). The candidate was often called upon to rescue the situation when the crime became obvious. Ghost stories featured as well, and the supernatural element of some of these stories was generally rather skilfully and chillingly handled. However, in some cases, the sentence was not well incorporated into the story, with rather an unconvincing context. Some stories took a long time to get the point at which this sentence had to appear. After that, hurried attempts were made to round off the story.

Question 5

Holidays.

This was a very popular title and many approaches were taken. Many concentrated, in a discursive way, on the power of holidays to refresh people. There was much emphasis placed on the stress of modern life and the need to have a restorative break. Other candidates wrote about how holidays add variety to one's life, perhaps in meeting distant relatives and pursuing leisure activities. Some lovely family occasions were described with cousins, grandparents and trips to the mountains, beaches, and remote villages, and there were a small number of truly evocative accounts. Another type of response to this title embraced a more narrative approach and took in holidays abroad; candidates described with great delight how they spent a fortnight doing all sorts of exciting activities. Less successful responses started with the expression 'It was the holidays...' although the narrative then made very little mention of the holidays. Grammatical problems were apparent in many essays with the title 'holidays' often followed by a singular verb.

Question 6

Write a story about a time when you felt completely helpless but were saved at the last moment.

This was another very popular question. The essays tended to split into two sorts – those which were about mental and emotional anguish and those which were more physical with candidates lost on a hike or at sea and undergoing difficulties before being rescued. There were some dark, nightmarish and ultimately sophisticated stories, sometimes with a supernatural element. Sometimes too much time was spent in the long build-up to the helpless situation and not enough time was given to describing the anguish or the rescue which happened too suddenly. It is always helpful to give some thought as to what is the most important aspect of the narrative with titles such as this.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/21

Reading

Key Messages

- As in past years, most candidates showed a good understanding of the summary passage, but experienced more difficulty in responding to the detailed demands of the comprehension questions. In both summary and comprehension exercises, close reading and careful attention to detail, as opposed to hurried generalisation, were the attributes which gave the best results.
- In **Question 1(a)**, the first part of the summary question, the majority of candidates followed the concise, bullet form of the first (given) point in each box. While recognising that the essential detail of each point must be included, candidates should avoid lengthy verbatim lifting of the text, as occasionally happened.
- In **Question 1(b)** candidates can improve on sentence construction by avoiding the repetitive and sometimes unsuitable use of simple conjunctions such as 'and' or 'but'. Similarly, practice in the accurate use of other connecting words and phrases such as 'However' and 'On the contrary' is advisable to prevent their inappropriate use.
- For those questions which ask for a response either in own words or 'without copying from the passage', it is necessary to recast all the key words or phrases identified in order to 'explain *fully*...' or 'explain *exactly* ...' just what is required.
- In order to select opinions in the first, non-fiction passage, candidates must understand that, unlike facts, these are not founded on certainty or proof. They can then start to home in on words which are subjective rather than objective and which will thus indicate the required 'opinions'.
- The final vocabulary question was not generally done well, suggesting the need for candidates to work on widening their vocabulary through dictionary exercises as well as through increased reading of both fiction and non-fiction material.

General Comments

Most scripts were presented legibly and within the guiding parameters of the answer booklet. The few incomplete scripts seemed less the result of insufficient time than of difficulties in terms of answering individual questions. Otherwise, candidates attempted every task and generally demonstrated the good level of preparation given by teachers in readiness for the various types of questions.

There were two passages, the first being non-fiction and the second being fiction, on which a range of questions were based and the variety of subject matter, whether familiar or unfamiliar, provided the opportunity for questions which stretched and differentiated amongst candidates. As in previous examination series, Passage 1 seemed to be more accessible than Passage 2 which required the usual understanding of implied meaning and some appreciation of imagery and the writer's craft.

The first passage, 'Coffee', explored the candidates' ability to read for ideas; the second, the story of 'The Locusts', tested their reading for meaning. Twenty marks were available for the summary question, with 15 of these marks being awarded for the assessment of the candidates' ability to select content points from the text of 'Coffee' and 5 marks for the assessment of their ability to express these points fluently in their own words. Further questions tested candidates' ability to read for main ideas; in this case to decide which of three given statements was true, to respond to the text by drawing on their personal knowledge or experience and to recognise two opinions, distinguishing them from the surrounding facts.

The second passage tested the candidates' literal and inferential comprehension, their understanding of vocabulary, use of own words and their appreciation of the writer's craft. The remaining 25 marks for the Paper could be gained here.

In **Question 1(a)** the majority of candidates produced a clear list of selected ideas separated, as instructed in the distinct headings, into the two boxes and only a very few confused the particular information required for each. The given point in each box should not be repeated as it cannot score, even if rephrased in a candidate's own words. A number of scripts displayed a tendency to list points noticeably out of the original order; this can result in a less cohesive attempt at **Question 1(b)**. The occasional practice of lifting directly from the passage, using its continuous prose rather than notes or bullet points, should be discouraged, otherwise points may be omitted through lack of space. There were fewer scripts which offered points split across two bullets than has happened in the past. Candidates should remember that any bullet point beginning with no subject or with the pronoun 'It' inevitably refers to the subject of the rubric; here, this was 'coffee'. There were a few points which were lost through lack of clarity regarding the precise subject e.g. 'It is quick and easy to make' could not score because it is not all coffee which is so convenient but, specifically, 'instant' or 'freeze-dried' coffees. Similarly, it is not simply 'coffee' which 'is available for those who object to artificial stimulants', but 'decaffeinated coffee' in particular.

In **Question 1(b)**, where candidates were to write up their note form content points in formal, continuous prose, there were some commendable attempts which used both original vocabulary and a variety of original structures. Such responses took ownership of the text and were secure in expression. Others relied heavily on the words of the passage with very limited use of their own vocabulary, though encouragingly many of these did manage to rework the text words into original structures and thus gained a higher score for use of English than for use of their own words. Weaker responses were those which directly copied blocks of text; the attempt to link these often proved unsuccessful in terms of sentence structure and resulted in fractured syntax.

Linking words were sometimes used in an arbitrary or inaccurate way e.g. 'however', 'whereas' or 'on the contrary' were sometimes used when what followed was in no way contradictory or different, as in 'There was vibrant trade between Africa and Venice. *On the contrary* coffee had an increased popularity in the 20th century'. Conversely, 'moreover' and 'furthermore' were sometimes followed by a different argument. Simple conjunctions such as 'and' appeared repetitively in weaker summaries, often inappropriately e.g. 'Socially aware consumers are attracted to Fairtrade coffee *and* it drives away fatigue.

Other areas for improvement include the misuse of 'it's'; this always means 'It is' and should not be confused with the use of the apostrophe for possession. Thus, it should not appear, as it did, in such phrases as 'coffee and it's processes', 'it's trade' or 'it's energising effect'. The curious but repeated phrase 'till date' appeared in relation to the origins and spread of coffee and its more recent success and popularity e.g. 'From back in the old days *till date* ...' This may be an attempt at the phrase 'until today' but is not correct usage. Similarly used inaccurately, perhaps for the linking phrase 'in addition', were the words 'To add on ...' Again, this is not standard usage. The use of the infinitive after the verb 'to make' was another mistake made by some candidates: '...allowing coffee to be drunk *made it to go* to other places' and 'The development of instant coffee has *made it to be* more simple to prepare' exemplify this clumsy construction.

While the punctuation of accurate sentence separation showed improvement, further practice is necessary to eliminate intrusive commas elsewhere.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1 Reading for Ideas

Question 1(a) was the first part of the summary question. Candidates were asked to identify the information in the passage which described the origins and spread of coffee before the twentieth century and the reasons for its economic success and popularity from the twentieth century until the present day. Using only the material from paragraphs 2 to 5 inclusive, they could present these points using either the words of the text or their own words. One content point under each heading of the rubric was given by way of illustration, although these given points were not rewarded with a mark.

Excluding those supplied, there were a further 18 content points, of which candidates could identify any combination up to a maximum of 15 points, carrying one mark each. The full range of marks was seen, with a number of responses being awarded the maximum – indeed some candidates identified in excess of 15 content points, although only 15 marks could be awarded. Many others scored half marks and above.

Candidates were not instructed to use bullet points but the majority copied the format of the sample points, realising that this would help them to focus more clearly on identifying further points. A few responses presented long verbatim sections of the text but most candidates avoided doing so, favouring the space saving strategies of note form or short sentences.

Where marks were denied it was usually because a point was incomplete, a key word or phrase being omitted e.g. 'Coffee houses were popular'. This failed to include the essential element that these were places of social entertainment and not simply places to drink coffee. Similarly, to say that 'Coffee was important to the economies of several countries' recognised neither the 'crucial' or 'very important' nature of its contribution to the economies, nor the fact that it was so because these were 'developing' countries. One or two points were quite often split across two bullets and, without an appropriate contextual link, the two halves of that single point could not score e.g.

- The Dutch obtained coffee bushes
- Cultivation began in Sri Lanka

The second bullet, above, did not make clear the fact that it was *because* of the Dutch obtaining the bushes that they were able to start cultivation. In a similar way,

- Coffee growing benefited from the opening of the Panama Canal
- Coffee was exported further afield

gave no indication that it was the Panama Canal which meant exports went further afield. A suitable link at the start of the second bullet would have been '*This resulted in* coffee being exported further afield.'

Paragraphs 2 and 3 described the origins and spread of coffee before the twentieth century, offering a possible 12 points which the candidates could make. In Paragraph 2, there were 8 content points, the first two explaining how popular stories attributed the discovery of coffee particularly to the activities of two Ethiopians, a monk and another holy man, Oman. Most candidates picked up on at least one of these references, most frequently the idea that Oman boiled coffee berries, thus creating the brown liquid now known as coffee. Many also mentioned how the Ethiopian monk sampled the berries and experienced increased vitality. Its export, or spread, from Africa to Yemen was invariably noted, as was its use there, by monks, as a stimulant during long periods of night prayer. It was important to state that either the periods of prayer were 'long' or that they were during the night; either of these suggested that the use of coffee spread to these monks because of its stimulant nature. That the Yemenis started to cultivate the beans was a further point usually offered. Some candidates were led into irrelevance by including the information that there were periods when religious leaders banned coffee drinking because of its stimulant effect; this situation limited rather than 'spread' the drink and was thus something of a distractor. What was important, and was recognised as such by some, was that these bans were eventually lifted. More candidates jumped straight to the two points which resulted from the lifting of the bans: that coffee became acceptable in (or 'spread to') influential cities, and that coffee houses became social or recreation centres. Sometimes the importance implied by the 'influential' nature of the cities named, merely as examples, was omitted, as was the recreational nature of coffee houses. Candidates could gain the second of these points by using at least two of the given examples of the social events which took place in coffee houses, as in 'Coffee houses were places where chess was played and dancing took place.'

From Paragraph 3 candidates could select a further 4 points, all describing the spread of coffee across Europe. The first of these points was rarely missed and was usually given in the words of the passage: 'Vibrant trade (in coffee) between Africa and Venice'. What was essential was the idea that coffee was traded or came to 'Venice', to 'Europe's leading port' or simply 'to Europe'. Candidates who merely lifted lines 20 -21, stating that 'Venice made huge varieties of African goods available, including coffee' did not adequately suggest the trade that went on. Coffee was not something which had always been in Venice and which they started to let others have; it had to *get* there by 'trade', 'export' or 'spreading'. Almost without exception candidates recognised the second point in the paragraph, that the introduction of coffee to the wealthy, by Venetian merchants, was a factor in spreading the drink. The next point was about its further spread 'across Europe' or to '*other* European cities or countries'. (Without the inclusion of 'other', candidates ran the risk simply of repeating the earlier point that coffee spread 'to Europe'.) An alternative way to score this point was by reference to the large number of European coffee houses or by quoting its particular spread as far as England: 'By 1675 there were more than 3,000 coffee houses in England alone'. The final point available in Paragraph 3 regarded its spread via the Dutch who managed to 'obtain' coffee bushes from Yemen and then started cultivation further afield, in what is now Sri Lanka. As these bushes were 'closely guarded' it was important to say that the Dutch got hold of them somehow, thus allowing the spread, from Yemen, in a different direction.

The second section of the summary was slightly more difficult than the first because marks could be more easily lost through the omission of essential elements in the points. The rubric asked for the reasons for the economic success and popularity of coffee from the twentieth century until the present day. A further 8 content points were available (apart from the first, which was given) in Paragraphs 4, 5 and 6. From paragraph 4 candidates could find just one of these: the opening of the Panama Canal allowed coffee to be exported further. This was attempted by almost every candidate, many making it completely, others going no further than the fact that the canal opened. Some gave the effect of its opening as a second bullet, as has been mentioned above, but without a clear link to the first statement a point made in two halves did not score.

Paragraph 5 outlined 3 further reasons for the recent economic success and popularity of coffee and all three of these points required a specific, essential element to score. There were a number of candidates who lost marks because they did not always offer these elements. The first was that the introduction of Fairtrade coffee 'attracts' people to buy it, or that those who are 'socially aware' will find it a popular option. The next reason was that, economically, coffee, or its production, provides employment for millions of people; the huge number was a necessary element. It was not enough to lift part of the sentence in which the point appeared, suggesting that merely the '...marketing of coffee provides employment for millions of people'. Examples of the areas of production which might account for 'millions' of jobs were accepted but there had to be at least three of the five listed for it to be a reasonable statement. The third point available in the paragraph could be given in one of two ways: that coffee is 'crucial' or 'very' important to the economies of developing countries, or that it accounts for 'half' or '50%' of foreign trade in such countries. The qualification of its importance or the size of its contribution to foreign trade and the definition of these countries as 'developing' were necessary if candidates were to score.

Paragraph 6 contained the final 4 reasons and, again, there were certain essential elements to be included in 3 of them which not all candidates offered: that caffeine drives away fatigue or lethargy, or promotes vigour or energy, that decaffeinated coffee is available for those who object to artificial stimulants and that instant or freeze-dried coffee is convenient or quick or easy to make or use. If candidates did not mention the specific subject of each of these points then the subject had to be understood as that of the rubric i.e. 'coffee'. Inevitably that was incorrect here as it is specifically the caffeine content which is a stimulant, only decaffeinated coffee which contains no stimulants (or caffeine) and only instant or freeze dried coffee which offers the advantages of speed and convenience. The last point was gained by many candidates, only the minority forgetting to qualify the 'variety' of types of coffee available now. It is the great number of varieties or the 'endless' varieties or ways of making it that have increased popularity, To say merely that coffee comes in 'different' varieties was not enough.

A noticeable number of candidates were awarded maximum marks and a large number scored 9 marks and above.

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were asked to use their notes to write a summary, in their own words, in which they describe the origins and spread of coffee before the twentieth century and the reasons for its economic success and popularity from the twentieth century until the present day, as outlined in the passage. They were asked to use no more than 160 words (the first 10 of which were given), within the space available in the answer booklet.

Almost every candidate completed the task, the vast majority being able to do so comfortably within the given space and short answers were extremely rare. Occasionally, where a candidate had listed points somewhat randomly in **Question 1(a)** this impacted on the coherence of **Question 1(b)**. There was little irrelevance seen, apart from the odd straying outside the parameters laid down for making the notes and the very rare inclusion of candidates' own comments on the content. Care should be taken to ensure that the continuation from the introductory words is grammatical, avoiding the sort of tense confusion contained in the following example: '*One story describes Kaldi being energised by coffee berries and the other a monk in Ethiopia ate some berries and became very lively*'. This should have read: '*...a monk in Ethiopia eating some berries and becoming very lively.*'

The best candidates used their own words in a sustained manner and with confidence, structuring their summaries with originality, variety and fluency. These scripts were able to gain many or full marks for style. Others reworked and edited some of the text phrases and sentences and this often allowed for variation of structure which was sometimes handled quite competently, the difference in marks for the assessment of own words and use of English being noticeable. Others chose to write short, but fairly accurate simple sentences or relied heavily on conjunctions such as 'and' or 'but', with rather unstylish results. Competence in writing simple and compound sentences is a sound basis for the development of complex structures,

something which these candidates should now practise. At the same time, there was a greater than usual number of candidates who chose merely to move blocks of text around, rather than to attempt their own words

Questions 2, 3 and 4 tested 'Reading for Ideas', Assessment Objective 4 in the syllabus, where candidates were to demonstrate their ability to respond to the ideas of the whole text or a section of it. **Question 2** asked them to decide which of three statements, based on information in the first paragraph of the passage, was true. A straightforward question, almost all candidates correctly ticked the third box: 'The writer thinks that the information about the origins of coffee cannot be proved.'

Question 3 required candidates to give, from their own knowledge or experience, two examples of places which are 'a magnet for tourists', as is the original Café Florian coffee house in Venice. Some thoughtful responses included famous events rather than buildings or areas and these were accepted as almost certainly drawing crowds of tourists when they occur: 'The crossing of the River Mara by the wild beasts during specific times of the year' and 'the running of the bulls in Pamplona' were both seen as valid. In many cases, answers were much too generalised: 'historical sites which are well known'; 'places with beautiful landscapes'; beaches, museums and parks. Better efforts referred to famous national parks by name, such as the Serengeti and Masai Mara; others chose what were clearly huge tourist attractions within their country, such as the frequently offered Great Zimbabwe ruins. Whether from personal experience or general knowledge, other good answers included world famous tourist hotspots such as the Great Wall of China, the Eiffel Tower, the Taj Mahal and the Great Pyramids of Giza. The weakest responses were those which were too generalised or clearly only locally popular, or which ignored the instruction to avoid any example from the text and suggested such places as 'coffee houses', 'the Smooth Café' and 'the Hot Coffee Place'.

In **Question 4** candidates were to select and write down two opinions from Paragraph 6. As suggested in the Key Messages, above, to answer this type of question they should home in on words or phrases which are subjective rather than objective. In this case the subjective clues were 'is a must' and 'is a nightmare'. Recognising the difference between factual statement and opinion is something which still challenges the majority but is a skill which will improve with practice. Here, many chose to copy the words 'people drink coffee because its caffeine drives away lethargy'; others selected the idea that 'instant coffee has made the drink convenient and easy to make'. Both of these statements are proven facts. What makes an opinion of the second one is the addition of the words which follow and which may be true in the writer's subjective opinion, but not necessarily in the view of everyone: that coffee, or the development of instant and freeze-dried varieties, 'is a must for the pace of life in the twenty-first century'. While hardly any recognised this first opinion, a few more candidates spotted the exclamation that 'choosing from the menu in a modern coffee house is a nightmare!' Obviously the writer thinks so (his subjective view) but others would disagree that it is quite such a frightening experience. Occasional attempts to rephrase the opinions in the candidate's own words rarely worked because, in doing so, the subjectivity was lost, as in 'It is difficult to choose from the menu in a modern coffee house because there are so many to choose from.' Only a few individuals still chose to give their own opinion e.g. 'Coffee keeps one up and this is not healthy; one needs to rest'. Only the writer's opinion was asked for in the rubric.

Section 2 Reading for Meaning

As is usually the case, this narrative text proved more challenging than the first, non-fiction text, candidates having to deal with less familiar vocabulary and a narrative style, but there were still some good responses which demonstrated an ability to deal with the more demanding questions of interpretation.

The two parts of **Question 5** were based on Paragraph 1 of 'The Locusts'. **Question 5(a)** was introduced with the statement from the passage that Richard was always 'gloomy, a pessimist', reinforcing for candidates the meaning of the word 'pessimist'. It went on to ask for 'one example of Richard's pessimistic behaviour' and this could be answered with either of two examples to be found in the paragraph: that he thought the car had broken down when it had only run out of petrol, or that whenever he saw a dark cloud he assumed it was locusts. Answers in the candidates' own words or in the words of the passage were equally acceptable and the vast majority scored with one or other example. Some of those who chose to quote from the passage stopped short of the complete answer, giving no mention of locusts: 'Whenever he saw a dark cloud on the horizon he would groan.'

Question 5(b) was a challenging one, candidates having to make an inference from the final sentence of the paragraph which tells us that Richard did not 'shirk the truth', and asking 'What, according to Richard, is the truth?' We had been told he was a pessimist and been given two examples of how he always expected the worst to happen. The final sentence admits that 'Occasionally ... the pessimist is right, and something

terrible does happen'. This is what Richard thinks is 'the truth' and lifting those words (but no more) was an acceptable answer. The question was inevitably a good discriminator and, though few, the very best candidates used their own words to explain that Richard saw 'the fact that bad or dreadful things do happen', or that 'life is full of negativity' as 'the truth'. Frequently, incorrect attempts seemed almost a repetition of an answer to the previous question e.g. 'The truth was that dark clouds meant locusts.' Other wrong answers seen were based on the idea that Richard told the truth 'rather than lies' or that 'the truth was whatever Richard said it was.' Neither of these made sense in the context.

Question 6(a) was more straightforward, requiring the candidates to recognise what the people in Paragraph 2 thought the 'small cloud' meant. The writer tells us they were excited to see it 'because rain was not expected' as it was the dry season. Very few were confused by the reference to the dry season, virtually every candidate picking up on it as a clue and saying, correctly, that the cloud meant 'rain'. Those who thought the dry season was at the root of the answer offered responses such as 'They thought it was the dry season and rain was not expected'; this obviously did not answer the question in any direct way.

Question 6(b) asked why the people 'laughed when Richard said: "Looks like locusts to me."' At least half of the candidates saw that the inference here related to Richard always saying this 'whenever a dark cloud appeared'. The better candidates expressed this in a number of ways, some referring to his '*habitual* pessimism', others to him 'behaving in his *usual* negative way' or 'as he *always* did'. Weaker answers suggested that they thought he was 'joking' – not something the pessimist is known for – or looked to the previous question and reiterated that 'It was rain, not locusts'. Candidates should realise that it is unlikely that much the same answer would be expected from consecutive questions. Laughing because the clouds 'had what looked like wispy tails' was another incorrect answer, as was 'because they did not believe him.'

Still in relation to Paragraph 2, **Question 6(c)** asked why they stopped laughing 'when the wispy bits began to whirr'. Most candidates explained that the people now realised the cloud was not rain but locusts, or phrased it in terms of realising that Richard was right. That was enough, given the words of the previous question rubric. There were those whose reference to locusts was too general and did not suggest anything to do with the 'whirring' of the question, or to Richard's earlier words, for example the bald statement: 'There were locusts'. The lift of '*These* were the locusts which came ahead of the main swarm' identified the creatures well enough and could score.

Question 7(a) was a good example of how carefully candidates should read all questions, even when they sound straightforward. Using information given in Paragraph 3, they were to 'explain exactly why the sky was dark'. There were a number of answers which referred to the air being 'filled with the staccato beating of myriad locust wings', a description of the sound heard and not of the visual experience of the 'dark' sky which the question asked about. A surprising number of candidates did not appreciate this difference. Others missed the mark because they omitted one of two crucial elements, both of which were required to explain 'exactly'. To say that locusts 'filled' or 'covered' the sky was not enough; they had to cover the sun or the light. To say that 'the sun was blotted out' was equally insufficient; it had to be done by 'locusts' – though the incidental inclusion of the birds as well did not deny the mark.

Question 7(b) was another inferential one, candidates being asked why they thought 'the birds were excited'. The answer that they were going to feed on the locusts was straightforward and given by the majority. A few did not include reference to the insects, saying merely that the birds were 'predatory' or that their 'prey' had arrived. These answers did not sufficiently explain their excitement at this particular time.

Probably the most challenging question on the paper, **Question 7(c)**, was prefaced with the introduction that previously the farm had 'managed somehow' to survive, going on to ask what these words 'tell us about how the family had been affected by locust swarms in the past'. The question was successfully answered by only a handful of the most able candidates who offered excellent responses such as: 'The family had been affected greatly before and it was a surprise that the farm could survive such massive destruction'. Other good responses were more succinct: 'The family had just about barely survived'; 'They had stared hunger and starvation in the face because of the swarms.' Most candidates concentrated on the final clause in the question: '...how the family had been affected by locust swarms in the past'. This resulted in answers which took no account of the introductory statement and its importance for the whole question: 'Previously the farm had "managed somehow" to survive'. The two quoted words were crucial to the answer. The majority simply said the family had been 'affected badly' or 'greatly' before. A few realised that the reference to the farm possibly carried some importance and suggested that their 'crops' had been badly affected but often presented the idea in quite positive terms, feeling that the addition of 'but not too badly' or 'but not completely; they still had some left' would explain how the family survived. The word 'somehow' was the real key to where the answer lay: they 'had managed to survive' 'in some way' or 'by some means'; but in *what* way, or by *what* means? The idea of only narrowly or barely surviving, of only just avoiding total destruction,

of being lucky to survive was required, or that they had to work hard to survive, survived only with difficulty or struggled to survive. That sense of a 'near miss' or of 'almost' having to close down the farm was rarely in evidence.

Question 7(d) was the first in this section of the paper which asked candidates to answer 'fully in your own words'. The children in the passage were sent out 'to make a racket' and candidates had to 'Explain fully the purpose of this racket'. The key words to be substituted were clearly flagged in the statement that the racket was to 'unsettle' and 'deter' the locusts from landing. Most located these two words though some mistook 'racket' for a sports 'racquet' and consequently offered 'hit', 'beat' or 'kill' as synonyms for 'unsettle' rather than the required notion of 'disturb', 'startle', 'distract', 'fluster', 'make restless' and so on, all of which were seen, among other correct answers. 'To scare the locusts' was valid, but those who extended that to 'scare away' were not quite accurate as a synonym for 'unsettle'. Substituting for 'deter' seemed slightly the easier of the two with many candidates offering 'stop', 'prevent', 'discourage' or 'not let them land'. There were a few who merely gave a one word definition, as in 'Deter – stop; unsettle – scare'. While the key words were substituted accurately, this sort of response hardly fulfils the requirement to 'Explain fully... the purpose of this racket' and such answers are to be discouraged in favour of, a contextualised response e.g. 'This was to startle the creatures and prevent them from landing on the crops.'

An image from Paragraph 4 had to be de-coded in **Question 8(a)**, where the countryside was said to be '...muffled, as after a heavy snowstorm'. It asked: 'What does the word 'muffled' tell us about the effect of the locusts on the countryside?' The writer's image was one of deadened sound, of the locusts making the countryside quiet, hushed or silent by their huge presence. Very few understood the word in that sense and many offered instead an acceptable alternative: that the countryside was 'covered' by the locusts. This idea was possibly also inspired by the first line of the paragraph which contained another simile of the swarm being like a vast blanket over the farm. A common error occurred when candidates focused not on the given word but on the locusts 'eating' the vegetation, saying that the effect was one of destruction. There were a few instances where candidates merely tried to define the word 'muffled'; this is not a satisfactory response when asked to 'explain *the effect*' of something and is a further example of the question not being read carefully enough.

Question 8(b) was introduced with the quotation that the birds 'had gorged themselves so much that they were unable to take off'. It was the second question which required candidates to answer in their own words, being instructed to explain 'without copying from the passage' '... exactly the problem the birds were having.' Once again key words had to be located and recast within a context which would explain the situation 'exactly'. 'Gorged' and 'take off' were the focus and most candidates were able to explain the birds' excessive feasting on the locusts and, in many cases, to link this to their inability to fly. 'Gorged' required the notion of excess in some way and was adequately expressed in answers such as 'They had overeaten...', 'They had been greedy...' 'They had eaten so many locusts that ...' Surprisingly, there were many who failed to substitute for 'take off', simply using that phrase to complete their explanation: '... and so they could not take off'. Others seemed determined to avoid the obvious word 'fly', choosing inaccurate and often clumsy alternatives such as '... and could not lift themselves' or '...so could not move away'. There were no instances noted, here, of candidates simply defining the words; all tried to include their synonyms in a context within a sentence. Answers which did not score were those few which seemed to be confused about how the birds and locusts were linked, suggesting that the locusts were so many that the birds' wings were squashed or that there was no room for them. The snow distracted a small number who thought that it weighed down the birds' wings.

Question 8(c) was a straightforward one which asked for the two effects that the locusts had on the car, both effects being easily located in the paragraph by most candidates. A number thought that the first effect – 'the locusts smothered the radiator grill and made the engine overheat' was in fact two effects. Not realising that it was all one problem they offered the smothering of the radiator at (i) and the overheating engine at (ii). Either clause could score, or both together, as long as it was all offered on one line, but splitting it as two answers could still only score one mark. The second effect was that the tyres or wheels were choked with crushed locusts and many candidates gained a second mark with this answer. A few looked further, to the result of the choked tyre treads and gave good own versions of what caused the feeling of being on an icy road: that the locusts made the wheels lose traction, or that they made the car, the wheels or the tyres slip on the road.

Another inference had to be drawn in **Question 8(d)**, which asked for a full explanation of 'what caused the cracking noise' mentioned in Paragraph 4. Better candidates correctly and succinctly identified the cause as the weight of locusts in the trees which resulted in the trees breaking, but others linked the cracking to the car engine, the locusts being squashed on the road or the occasional fierce animal being shot while invading the farm. There was no penalty if candidates included in their answer some of the words from line 30 – the

trees would 'break with a loud explosion', but those who lifted in whole lines 28 – 30 'Then we saw the trees. They were bent break with a loud explosion' could not score; the words had to be distilled, otherwise the inference of the locusts' weight was lost. This question differentiated amongst candidates well.

Paragraph 5 referred to the family having 'waited for the swarm to wing its way to further destruction'. In **Question 9**, candidates were asked to pick out and write down the single word used later in the paragraph which continued the idea of 'destruction'. Nearly all candidates successfully identified 'devastating'.

Question 10 asked for the two ways in which the large number of hoppers, described in Paragraph 6, were an additional threat to the farmers. The two ways were the astonishing rate at which the hoppers grow and the fact that they eat as they move. The information was there to be picked up and the majority did so, using the words of the passage as their answer. This was perfectly acceptable, as long as they did not include too much which made nonsense of their response, e.g. 'Each one grows at an astonishing rate and together with millions of others.' When 'together with millions of others' was added to the second way, the mark could be awarded as it usually still made perfect sense, as in: 'Together with millions of others they formed one unit in a monstrous carpet which eats as it moves.'

Question 11 was the customary vocabulary question. Candidates were required to show their understanding, in context, but not necessarily in direct synonyms, of five words or phrases from a choice of eight. Candidates did not score particularly well here, full marks being extremely rare, showing the need, as with own words questions, for work on vocabulary building. Attempts to offer synonyms for more than five words appears to be a thing of the past and only one or two candidates still hope to gain marks – without success – by using the selected words in a sentence. Most of those who attempted *popped* scored the mark for either 'landed' or the even more suitable 'dropped'. 'Descended' and 'fell' were not quite appropriate as alternatives. While *stone* was attempted relatively often, the context was often ignored, resulting in answers such as 'small' or 'very hard'. Correct alternatives were, most commonly, 'absolutely' and 'completely', while one candidate clearly understood its meaning in offering: 'could not hear at all'. Those who chose to recast *bewildered* usually knew its meaning, much the preferred synonym being 'confused'; 'surprised' was the only occasional incorrect attempt. *Occasionally* was a popular choice and one of the more successfully attempted with synonyms such as 'sometimes', 'now and then' 'from time to time' and 'once in a while'. Oddly, its complete opposite was seen, though rarely, with the antonyms 'always' and 'all the time'. *Succulent* was best recast as 'juicy' and, very occasionally, 'fleshy'; a popular wrong answer was 'fresh'. Probably the most difficult word in the list was *swathe*, which hardly any candidate attempted, though one or two correctly offered 'area'. *Opted for* was another popular choice and candidates regularly gave 'chose' or 'preferred'. *Miniature* was perhaps the most frequently chosen word and, probably, the easiest to recast with 'small', 'smaller' and 'little' being obvious and correct synonyms.

Because understanding only is being tested in the vocabulary question, grammatical form was not insisted upon. Candidates can improve their performance by offering only one synonym for each word or phrase as, where more than one is given, only the first will be considered.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/22

Reading

Key messages

In **Question 1(a)**, some candidates are still not recognising the necessity to complete a point within one bullet; frequently a mark was lost because the point was split across two or more bullets, with no sensible contextual link between them.

In **Question 1(a)**, candidates need to be encouraged to write within the frame.

In a few cases in **Question 1(a)**, the use of slashes where key words needed to be, or the use of ellipsis, as in, instead of writing out the points in full, led to the loss of such points and it is important that teachers draw their candidates' attention to the fact that this is not an acceptable form of communication, even in note-form, in an examination.

Previous PERTs reported that some candidates wrote the content points in **Question 1(a)** in pencil, before writing over the pencil in pen, often leading to scripts which were difficult to read. It seems that this practice has been discontinued.

In **Question 1(b)**, candidates could improve in the area of noun-verb agreement, the omission of definite or indefinite articles, or intrusive use of the article where none is required.

In **Question 1(b)**, many candidates often used introductory adverbs, e.g. 'hence' and 'thus' to precede ideas that have nothing at all to do with what has gone before. Still more work needs to be done on correct use of 'however', 'nevertheless', 'moreover' and 'furthermore'; sometimes it seems that these words have been learned but their use is not understood and they impede rather than assist the flow of writing. Such candidates might be better advised to use simpler words like 'also', 'similarly' and 'yet', although in many cases connectives might not be necessary at all.

Candidates in general seem to find it difficult to answer questions in which they were required to answer in their own words in that they seemed able to select the key words to be re-cast; however, limited vocabulary often prevented them from offering accurate synonyms.

Candidates should remember that the second passage is literature, and that some questions will revolve around nuances in language, inferences and writer's craft.

The final vocabulary question was not generally done well, suggesting the need for candidates to work on widening their vocabulary through dictionary exercises as well as through increased reading of both fiction and non-fiction material.

General Comments

Candidates were to answer questions based on two passages of around 700 words each, the first being non-fiction and the second being fiction, with answers written in a common answer booklet. As has happened with previous examinations, Passage 1 seemed to be more accessible than Passage 2, as Passage 2 required understanding of nuances of language, and some aspects of writer's craft.

There were very few incomplete scripts and even the weakest candidates seemed to engage with the tasks and the texts. Where there were no response they tended to be in **Questions 5(c), 5(d), 7(b), 8(a), or 8(e)**. Most candidates appeared to have been well prepared by their teachers, showing themselves to be familiar with the types of questions likely to be asked. In general they coped well with the layout of the answer booklets.

Both passages, the first entitled 'Water' and the second entitled 'A Devoted Son' seemed to engage the interest of the candidates and to stretch and discriminate amongst them, and this was reflected in a very wide range of scores.

The first passage explored the candidates' ability to read for ideas and the second tested their reading for meaning. 20 marks were available for the summary question, with 15 of these marks being awarded for the assessment of the candidates' ability to select content points from the text of 'Water' and 5 marks for the assessment of their ability to express these points fluently in their own words. Further questions tested candidates' ability to read for main ideas, in this case to distinguish true from false statements and to relate the information in the passage to their own knowledge or experience.

The second passage tested the candidates' literal and inferential comprehension, their understanding of vocabulary, their use of own words and their appreciation of the writer's craft.

The format of the summary question, both **Question 1(a)** and **Question 1(b)**, largely prevented candidates from writing to excess, copying verbatim at length or producing both fair and rough copies. There was very little irrelevance noted or evidence of candidates diverging from the rubric. The most common fault was omitting an element of an answer or using a separate bullet point unnecessarily. There were only one or two candidates who answered any points in the wrong box.

In **Question 1(b)**, where candidates were to write up their note form content points in formal, continuous prose, there were some commendable results among those who made a sustained attempt to use their own words and original structures; there seemed to be fewer assured and stylish writers gaining full marks than in previous sessions. Some candidates are very skilled at moving around the text, but offer no original vocabulary. This seemed to be a matter of technique rather than understanding sometimes and Centres could be advised that candidates need to consider the content when they lift and ensure it addresses the question.

Both spelling and punctuation were good. The overall standard of written English was in some cases impressive. As indicated in 'Key Messages', candidates can improve on the problem of noun-verb agreement, the omission of definite or indefinite articles, e.g. 'Nile' instead of 'The Nile' even by the best candidates, or intrusive use of the article where none is required, e.g. 'a scarcity of the water' or 'The Mesopotamia'. Some common errors were with plurals, e.g. 'a mean of transportation', with prepositions, e.g. 'access of water'. The distinction between 'use' and 'used' created frequent errors.

In parts of the world where French is spoken, there was unfortunately some confusion over possessive adjectives, with 'her mother' (sa mere) instead of 'his mother' when referring to Rakesh's mother, and his son (son fils) when referring to Rakesh. 'Potable' for 'drinking' water was also seen where the French word overlapped with the English one.

Comments on specific questions:

Section 1

Question 1(a) was the first part of the summary question, carrying 30% of the total marks for the paper. Candidates were asked to identify the points in the passage which described the uses of water down through the ages, and the problems and solutions associated with ensuring an adequate supply of water to everyone in the world. They could produce these content points in sentences or in note-form, and they were free to use either the words of the text or their own words. One content point under each heading of the rubric was given by way of illustration, although these given points were not rewarded with a mark. Where marks were denied it was usually because key ideas, or possibly agents, were missing rather than that the attempted point was not relevant, although sometime irrelevance crept in. Some responses were able to reach the maximum 15 marks – indeed some candidates identified in excess of 15 content points although only 15 marks could be awarded; the exercise was discriminating as almost the whole range of marks could be found.

Excluding the provided content points, which were not rewarded with marks, there were 19 content points, of which candidates could identify any combination up to a maximum of 15 points, carrying one mark each. Most candidates expressed the points either in note form or in short sentences; few candidates presented long, verbatim copies of the text for each content point, understanding that there is little evidence to suggest that such a strategy yields more marks. Candidates were not instructed to use bullet points, although the sample points given to assist them used bullets; however, most candidates used bullet points, seeming to realise that it would help them to focus more clearly on identifying content points if they were presented

under bullets. If more than one content point was made under a single bullet, both marks (or all marks in the unlikely event of there being in excess of two points under a single bullet) were awarded.

Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 described the uses of water down through the ages, and there were 11 points (excluding the first, which was given) which the candidates could make. In Paragraph 1, there were 5 content points, (excluding the provided first point) outlining these uses. People settled near running water, and Mesopotamia used the Tigris and the Euphrates, or simply rivers, to irrigate its crops. There were two points associated with Egypt: the Nile was used, or the Egyptians used the river, to transport goods for trade, and benefitted from the fact that the river flooded its banks which provided free or natural irrigation. Many candidates got off to a bad start with these opening points: Mesopotamia had to be referred to, and not just 'the cradle of civilisation' and, although this point was about irrigation, the important fact about irrigation in Egypt was that it was free or natural. Candidates had to refer to Mesopotamia using rivers, and not simply copy 'used them' which was ambiguous and inexact. Some candidates omitted to make the point about the free irrigation in Egypt because they did not establish the link with either Egypt or the Nile. Thus these points served to differentiate between candidates who lifted from the passage with little real understanding and those who in fact understood what they had read. The final point in Paragraph 1 was that people built ports or trading Centres on rivers.

In Paragraph 2 there were a further 4 content points, and most candidates scored well here. Water was considered by the Greeks to be one of the elements used to create all living things, it is seen as a purifier in many religions, God or gods used it as a punishment, and either it is used for recreation, or it is relaxing. Most candidates found it easy to retrieve the 2 content points in Paragraph 3, which were that water can be used to make electricity and for washing and cleaning.

The second section of the rubric asked for the problems and solutions associated with ensuring an adequate supply of water to everyone in the world, and there were 8 available content points, (excluding the first, which was given) to be found over Paragraphs, 4 and 5. In Paragraph 4, candidates could make 4 points (excluding the provided first point) which explained the problems associated with ensuring an adequate supply of water: it sometimes has to be transported long distances, flooding causes homelessness and disease, drought causes starvation and misery, as the population rises, so too will the need for water to produce food. There was much success with the first 3 of these points, but little success with the fourth, as most candidates who attempted it thought that there would be an unspecified water shortage rather than a shortage of water to produce food.

Paragraph 5 outlined 4 solutions to the problems outlined in the previous paragraph. The leaders of the world's most affluent countries, or the G8, pledged to halve the number of people with no access to safe water, the World Health Organisation is working to reduce waterborne diseases, drinking water can be produced by desalination and countries can borrow water from neighbouring countries. There were many incomplete or inaccurate attempts at these points. The agents of world's most affluent countries, or the G8, and the World Health Organisation, had to be specified. The target of '50%' or 'half' had to be accurate, and the water involved had to be safe, or drinking or pure water, where the adjectives 'safe', 'pure' and 'drinking' were synonymous and interchangeable.

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were asked to use their notes to write a summary, in their own words, of the uses of water down through the ages, and the problems and solutions associated with ensuring an adequate supply of water to everyone in the world. They were asked to write no more than 160 words (the first ten of which were given), within the space available in the answer booklet. Most candidates completed the exercise and most were able to do so comfortably within the given space. There were a number of candidates who used their own words in a sustained manner and in a style which was always accurate, containing original complex structures. The general use of own words was often noticeable, with many candidates being innovative or original in their use of English; many others selected from, edited and restructured the text well, while others moved blocks of text around rather than re-wording detail, or copied from the text. There were occasional examples where attempts at use of own words proved unwise in that the over-ambitious vocabulary did not entirely match the meaning of the original, and connectives and adverbs were often used in an artificial or unhelpful manner, for example beginning sentences with 'on the other hand' or 'furthermore' where these were not always appropriate.

Encouragingly, nearly all candidates attempted the question and adhered to the rubric. Candidates are advised that very short answers cannot justify a high mark, since they cannot demonstrate a sustained use of own words or completely accurate use of English.

Although Examiners were not checking the number of content points in **Question 1(a)** against the number produced in **Question 1(b)**, if many fewer points were made in **Question 1(b)** than in **Question 1(a)**, this

would be reflected in the language mark. Writing only, for example, 6 content points would be unlikely to be described as 'sustained' use of own words, whereas, conversely, writing 15 content points might be sustained use of own words, though not necessarily. The best responses came from candidates who were competent and confident enough to grapple with the original text, re-shaping and re-casting it in original complex sentences, and therefore able to gain many, or full, marks for style.

Questions 2 and Question 3 were the questions testing the new assessment objective in the revised syllabus, Assessment Objective 4, responding to main ideas, where candidates are being tested on their ability to respond to the ideas of the whole text or a section of it.

Question 2 asked candidates to write against each of three statements whether it was true or false, where the first and second statements were false and the third was true. The full range of marks was seen here, but the statement most commonly labelled wrongly was the second 'Civilisation began in Egypt'. Very many candidates indicated that this was true, despite the fact that the passage described Mesopotamia, and not Egypt, as the 'cradle of civilisation'. This was a clear example of candidates answering a question based on knowledge from outside the text, whereas it was clear from the rubric that this question was based on a 'reading of Paragraph 1'.

In **Question 3**, candidates were asked to give an example from their own knowledge or experience of a social or economic concern, and to write what steps are being taken to deal with that concern. The rubric specified that their example should not be related to water. Surprisingly, despite this caveat, very many candidates chose one of the concerns in the passage associated with water, or an example from their own knowledge or experience which was connected to water. Acceptable social or economic concerns which were given were, for example, pollution (but not water pollution), fuel shortages, poverty, population growth, the Ebola crisis, global warming, deforestation; both the problems given and, in many case, the mature solutions offered showed candidates aware of world issues and what is happening around them, combined with an ability to link these to what they had read and process that information.

Comments on specific questions:

Section 2

As is usually the case, most candidates seemed to find the second, narrative, text of the examination more challenging than the non-narrative Passage 1 and in general fewer marks were scored in this section than in **Section 1**.

Question 4(a) asked what good news Rakesh received that morning, the answer being that he had received his examination results and he was top of the list, or first in the country. This was a relatively searching opening question to **Section 2** in that candidates had to refer both to the examination result and to being top; many candidates did not score the available mark because one of these essential references was missing from their answer, usually the reference to examinations.

In **Question 4(b)**, candidates were asked to give the mark of respect shown by Rakesh to his father. The majority of candidates wrote, correctly, that he bowed down to touch his father's feet, although some omitted the reference to bowing down and so were not awarded the available mark. A few candidates wrote, incorrectly, that the mark of respect was passing his examinations or being first in the country. Some candidates seemed to confuse the use of 'mark' in 'mark of respect' and the mark Rakesh got in his examinations.

Question 5(a) asked for the most surprising gift given to Rakesh. This question was very badly done: the key lay in homing in on the word 'even' before 'watches', and seeing that 'even' indicated surprise. Most candidates merely copied the text: 'clothes, garlands, fountain pens and watches'. Perhaps they were misled by the word 'gifts' in the question, thinking that, if a plural was indicated, that plural could only be a list of four items, whereas 'watches' was the plural word required for a correct answer.

In **Question 5(b)**, candidates were asked to pick and write down four consecutive words which showed that Rakesh's future was likely to a happy one, the answer being 'shining vistas newly opened'. This proved to be a discriminating question, the most popular wrong answer being 'fruits of the sacrifice', which was incorrect because it referred to past events and not the future referred to in the question. Other incorrect answers offered were 'bedlam broke loose then' and 'multicoloured whirl of pride'. It seemed that some candidates did not know the meaning of 'consecutive'; some gave four random words from the paragraph.

Question 5(c) was the first of the questions on the Paper where candidates were asked to answer in their own words. They were to describe the neighbours' reaction to Rakesh's 'exemplary filial behaviour' which first required them to identify the key words to be re-cast, namely 'wonder' and 'approval'. Acceptable synonyms for 'wonder' were 'amazement', 'admiration' and 'astonishment'; alternatively, the point could be made in 'they couldn't believe it'. Popular incorrect answers were 'shock', 'surprise' and 'pride'. There was much success with this part of the answer but less success with the second, where acceptable synonyms for 'approval' were 'respect', 'agreement' and 'assent'. Many candidates seemed to fail to notice this part of the answer, and referred instead to the irrelevant section of the text about Varma's giving himself airs; such an answer was not relevant to the question, which asked for their reaction to Rakesh's behaviour, not for a reference to their attitude to his father. Where 'respect' was offered as a synonym, it had to be linked to the neighbour's respect for Rakesh's behaviour and not to Rakesh's respect for his father.

Question 5(d) proved to be a very discriminating question. Candidates were asked why the writer tells us that 'Varma had never seen the inside of a school'. Some candidates thought they were being asked why Varma had not gone to school and made references to poverty. Very many candidates merely explained what the phrase meant – that Varma had never gone to school, or that he was illiterate - rather than answering the question, which was asking why the writer gave that information in the first place, the answer being to show a contrast with Rakesh. Although Varma was illiterate, his son had gone to school or had done well in his examinations. Candidates who failed to give the reason *why* the information was given failed to see that this was a question about writer's craft, not literal comprehension.

In **Question 6** candidates were asked what kind of girl Rakesh's mother thought he would marry, and most candidates picked up on the idea that the word 'fully' in the question and the allocation of 2 marks were significant. Correct responses involved manipulating the text to conclude that she thought he would marry a foreign girl, or a girl from another village, and that this girl would not want him to set up home independent of his parents or family. There were many correct answers to the 'foreign' aspect, but many candidates seemed to think that 'fully' involved giving an elaborate justification of why a foreign woman might be perceived to be attractive; she might be beautiful, independent (alone), have a good job or be wealthy. These ideas were too far from the information in the text. The idea of 'independent living' was not often identified. There was a lot of lifting from the text, particularly when attempting the second mark. Others struggled to understand or manipulate the text to get a valid answer. A few candidates spoiled their answer by writing that a foreign wife was what his mother wanted rather than what she expected. The evidence from the text was that she did not want him to marry a foreign girl.

The answer to **Question 7(a)** was that Rakesh's mother died contented because her son looked after her in her last illness, or when she was dying, and required candidates to manipulate the negative rhetorical question: 'Was it not her son who looked after her in her last illness?'. Some candidates were confused by this word order in the text and asserted that she was content because Rakesh had not looked after her in her last illness. A common misconception was that she died contented due to the achievements and success of her son, Rakesh. It seemed that some candidates did not know the meaning of 'contented'.

Question 7(b) was the second of the questions on the Paper where candidates were asked to answer in their own words, the key words to be identified being 'significance' and 'figment of (his father's) imagination' in response to the question of the two ways in which Rakesh viewed his father's mysterious diseases. Acceptable synonyms for 'significance' were 'importance', 'seriousness' and 'major'. There was limited success with this part of the answer. Acceptable synonyms for 'figment of imagination' were 'unreal', 'made up' and 'pretend'; very many candidates simply lifted 'imagination', which, being the key word, was not acceptable as a correct answer. Some candidates perhaps did not know what was meant by 'viewed'. Suggestions included the facts that Varma was old, and had retired, or that he was stretching out, lying still, and suddenly sitting up.

The answer to **Question 7(c)** was that the family thought that Varma was dead. Some candidates came close to a correct answer but spoiled it with the wrong verb form, writing 'he was dying'. Others misunderstood and merely described Varma's behaviour: 'he stretched out very suddenly' or 'he lay absolutely still'. It seemed that some other candidates did not know the meaning of the expressions 'in a flap' and 'flew around'.

In **Question 8(a)**, candidates were asked to explain the effect created by the inclusion of the expression 'of course' in the sentence. As with **Question 5(d)**, many candidates did not see that this was a question on writer's craft and not a vocabulary question. Acceptable correct answers had to include the idea of 'continuing', 'additional' or 'unsurprising' e.g. 'it was obvious that Rakesh would look after his father' or 'Rakesh had always looked after his father' or 'Rakesh cared a lot about his father'. A popular wrong answer

was 'Rakesh was the only one who looked after his father'. Some candidates focused, incorrectly, on the fact that Rakesh was a doctor, or on the idea of looking after his father being a duty or an obligation.

Question 8(b) asked candidate to pick and write down the single word which continued the idea of 'dramatic', the answer being 'theatrically'. There was a reasonable degree of success here, with popular incorrect answers being 'martyred', 'melancholy' or 'darkened' and occasionally 'disbelief' or 'supervise'.

In **Question 8(c)** candidates were asked for the two ways in which Rakesh supervised Varma's diet. Very few candidates answered this completely correctly. The first part of the answer was that Rakesh would not let Varma eat rich or oily food, or butter, or cream. Most candidates picked up on this idea, although some spoiled their answers by writing that Varma was allowed 'less' rather than 'no' cream or oil or butter. The second part of the answer was that Rakesh would not allow Varma second helpings or an extra portion of food. Very many candidates gave as the second part of the answer that Varma was refused the food he craved, not seeing that this was merely a re-casting of 'no rich / oily food'. Alternatively, 'he gave him pills and medicine' was sometimes offered for the second part of the answer; as this was this answer to **Question 8(d)**, offering it as an answer to **Question 8(c)** clearly confused candidates when it came to answering **Question 8(d)**. Many candidates who focused on 'helping', clearly did not know the meaning, interpreting it as help or assistance. 'Bringing his tea' was sometimes given as the answer to the second part of the question, being taken as a reference to diet rather than the care that Rakesh gave his father. This was a discriminating question which demonstrated the need for candidates to read the entire section of text before reaching a conclusion as to what the answers to a two-part question might be.

Question 8(d) asked candidates what Varma's diet eventually became, the answer being pills or powders or medicine. Weaker candidates lifted, incorrectly, powders and pills 'became a regular part of his diet', an answer which lacked the precision required.

Question 8(e) asked for the evidence that Varma's daughter-in-law was hypocritical, the answer being either that she was trying to hide her cruel smiles, or that she smiled when Varma was being refused food; many candidates successfully offered the first alternative here, while weaker candidates referred to the backache caused by the piled-up pillows.

In **Question 9**, candidates were asked to infer the reason why Varma 'tucked his feet under him'. The correct inference was that he wanted to prevent his son from seeking his blessing, or he thought his son no longer respected him, that he did not like the way his son was treating him, or that he was angry with Rakesh. Very many candidates gave an incorrect, very literal response that he did not want Rakesh to touch his feet; correct answers required the candidate to go beyond that to inferring the reason why Varma did not want Rakesh to touch his feet. A few candidates wrote, incorrectly, that Varma was dead, while some wrote, incorrectly, that he was angry with his daughter-in-law.

Question 10 was the customary vocabulary question, in which candidates were required to show their understanding in context, not necessarily in direct synonyms, of five words from a choice of eight. Because understanding only is being tested in the vocabulary question, grammatical form was not insisted upon. Very few candidates made five correct attempts here. A reasonable degree of success was gained by candidates who correctly offered 'results' for 'fruits' and 'suddenly' or 'quickly' for 'in the wink of an eye'; popular wrong synonyms for 'fruits' included 'work' or 'success', while popular wrong synonyms for 'in the wink of an eye' included the word 'time', e.g. 'in a short period of time'. Such answers were considered not to give the effect of speed, as in 'in a moment' or 'in a second'. Correct synonyms for 'apparently' were 'seemingly', 'looked as if' but this was rarely answered correctly; correct synonyms for 'gratifying' were 'pleasing', 'pleasant' or 'satisfying', while correct synonyms for 'prestigious' were 'renowned', 'acclaimed' or 'high status'; although 'prestigious' was a popular choice from the eight possibilities in the question, it was often incorrectly answered with 'famous' or 'best'. By far the most difficult words to re-cast seemed to be 'streamed' and 'reproach'. Correct synonyms for 'streamed' were 'went in one after the other' or 'went in continuously'; wrong answers here were often 'crowded' or 'rushed'. Some candidates ruined an almost correct answer with the idea of going in and out. Correct synonyms for 'reproach' were 'blame', 'criticism' or 'reprimand'; a popular wrong answer here was 'approach again'. There were very few attempts at 'bedlam' where correct synonyms were 'chaos', 'confusion' or 'havoc'. There were, as usual, a few candidates who included the word in a sentence, with no explanation of its meaning, but this approach.