

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

---

Paper 0500/11  
Reading

## Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- followed instructions carefully, responding appropriately to the command words in the question
- read the texts carefully
- understood the different requirements of the extended response questions
- paid attention to the guidance offered to help them focus their answers
- considered the marks allocated to each question and focused their response accordingly
- avoided unselective copying and / or lifting from the text where appropriate
- considered the ideas, opinions and details in the text rather than inventing untethered material
- used their own words where required
- returned to the text when necessary to check understanding of an idea or important detail
- planned the ideas to be used and the route through extended responses before writing
- selected only the material that was most appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition
- checked and edited their responses to correct any careless errors, incomplete ideas or unclear points.

## General comments

Candidates seemed to find all three texts accessible and the majority demonstrated engagement through their responses. Occasionally a failure to follow the rubric or complete a task fully limited opportunities to demonstrate understanding. This was most common in **Question 1(f)** where a very limited range of the ideas in the text were considered, in **Question 2(c)** where a candidate did not select an example from the text provided, or in **Question 2(d)** where some candidates offered three choices of language in total rather than three choices from each paragraph as specified in the task.

In **Question 1**, the most successful approach taken by candidates was to work through the tasks in the order presented paying careful attention to the number of marks allocated and the space provided for their responses as helpful indicators of how detailed their answers needed to be. They also referred carefully to the lines or paragraph specified in each question moving carefully through the text as directed. Most candidates remembered to base their responses on evidence from the text to evidence their reading skills, but a few offered unsolicited opinion or comment that could not be rewarded. Less successful responses to **Question 1** tended to lack focus on the text or lacked relevance to the question. At times candidates used the language of the text where they had been asked to use own words – for example in **Question 1(f)** where some candidates copied phrases (or whole chunks of text) rather than remodelling the language of the text in their response.

In **Question 2** candidates were required to explain carefully selected words or phrases from the text. **Question 2(c)** supplied a short section of the text to select from as a preparation for the longer response in **Question 2(d)**. More effective answers were able to consider meanings in context and as well as the effects of the powerful language identified, often further demonstrating understanding of the writer's purpose in an overview. Middle-range answers tended to focus on the meanings of the language choices showing mostly clear understanding. Less effective responses struggled to develop viable explanations, sometimes repeating the language of the text in the comments. These answers did not always choose appropriate language to discuss or only selected three examples in total.

In **Question 3** the majority of responses addressed all three bullets in the question, although some candidates found it challenging to develop ideas for the third one. Most candidates wrote as Jose, with the best responses developing a convincing voice and tone for his journal demonstrating understanding of the reflective element of the task. More effective responses used the ideas and details in the text selectively to work through the bullets logically. They were able to describe the challenging events of the journey using details carefully to explore Jose's impressions, capture his frustration and fatigue but also imaginatively use the clues in the text to develop convincing ideas about his attitude to their findings at the end. Responses in the middle range tended to use the text rather mechanically, often paraphrasing closely rather than selecting ideas and details to use in their own writing to demonstrate understanding. Less effective responses tended to lack focus on the text, covering only the main ideas and sometimes inventing material that lacked close tethering to the text. Some responses copied unselectively thus providing little evidence of understanding.

Paper 1 is primarily an assessment of Reading, however 15 of the 80 marks available are for Writing – 5 marks in **Question 1(f)** and 10 marks in **Question 3**. In these questions, candidates need to pay attention to the quality and accuracy of their writing to maximise their achievement. Candidates are advised to plan and review their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style and to correct errors that may impede communication.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1 Comprehension and summary task**

##### **Questions 1(a)–(e)**

In response to Text A, candidates were asked to answer a series of short answer questions. Effective responses paid careful attention to the command words in the instructions as well as the number of marks allocated to individual questions. These responses demonstrated sound understanding by selecting appropriate details and evidence from the text in concise, focused answers. Less effective responses tended to write too much or failed to follow the instruction to use own words. Some candidates offered several possible answers thus using time inefficiently and diluting evidence of understanding.

##### **(a) Re-read paragraph 1 ('Ecuadorian legends tell ... in the area.').**

**Give two reasons why locals believe an ancient race of giants once existed, according to the text.**

In **Question 1(a)** candidates needed to provide two examples of evidence from paragraph 1: the existence of legends *and* the tribes' recollections or memories of them. Where candidates did not achieve the mark for this question, they either tended to look at the wrong section of text providing evidence such as the oversized bones and tools mentioned in paragraph 3, or they only provided one of the pieces of evidence required from paragraph 1. More careful reading of the question would have paid dividends for a number of candidates.

##### **(b) Using your own words, explain what the text means by:**

- (i) 'thriving cities' (line 3)**
- (ii) 'ancient structures' (line 5)**

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were instructed to use their own words to evidence understanding of the phrases in the question. Where answers failed to achieve both of the marks available for each phrase it was usually due to the candidate's partial use of the words from the text. For example, in **Question 1(b)(i)** a number of candidates used the word 'cities' in their explanation of 'thriving' thus only partially addressing the task. More successful responses were able to explain the full phrase as used in the context of the text by demonstrating understanding of a largely populated area which was successful, growing or developing. In **Question 1(b)(ii)** more candidates successfully explained the meaning of the whole phrase and gained both marks with many using phrases such as 'very old' or 'very long ago' to explain 'ancient' and 'buildings' or 'constructions' to explain 'structures'.

(c) **Re-read paragraph 3 ('The largest structure is ... to wield them.').**

Give **two** reasons why it might be assumed that the giants worked hard.

To achieve both marks for this question, candidates were required to offer two distinct reasons based on the size of the pyramids, the tools that were found, or the boulders used in the construction. The majority of candidates were able to score both marks for selecting appropriate details such as the height of the pyramid and the weight of the boulders, or the heavy tools found, and the large number of boulders used. Where candidates failed to gain both marks, it was usually because they only focused on one piece of evidence such as the boulders.

(d) **Re-read paragraph 4, ('This evidence has ... artificial origin.').**

(i) **Identify two pieces of evidence that the Ecuadorian authorities did not want to believe the findings.**

(ii) **Explain why researchers believe that these are man-made pyramids.**

To answer **Question 1(d)(i)** candidates needed to identify two pieces of evidence from paragraph 4 to demonstrate the idea that the authorities did not want to believe the findings presented to them. A significant number of candidates did not read this question carefully and misinterpreted what they were being asked to do. These candidates offered details from the researchers' evidence instead of noting that the inspection was brief, the evidence in front of them deliberately ignored, and / or the conclusion drawn by the authorities was unsupported.

In **Question 1(d)(ii)** candidates tended to be reasonably successful at gaining two of the three marks available by referring to the precision of the cut of the blocks and the way that they had been assembled but fewer candidates were able to get the third mark by referring to the regular shape of the blocks. Some candidates did not offer three distinct points.

(e) **Re-read paragraph 5 ('Furthermore, several other ... leader is buried.').**

**Using your own words, explain why it is possible that the researchers are wrong in their theories.**

This question required candidates to show both explicit and implicit understanding from their reading of paragraph 5. Most candidates were able to achieve one mark, a reasonable number gained two marks, but few gained all three. The most common correct inference was that there may be nothing under the mounds due to the coverings of mud and foliage. A number of candidates also correctly suggested that the researchers desire to believe the stories may make them more susceptible to being misled, and a few candidates pointed out that as the mounds hadn't been excavated the evidence simply didn't exist. Again, it is possible that some candidates did not look at the number of marks available for this question and therefore offered a less developed response than required.

(f) **According to Text B, why are the existing theories about how the Crooked Forest was formed unlikely to be correct?**

**You must use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible. Your summary should not be more than 120 words.**

This question was based on Text B and required candidates to select relevant ideas to use from the text and organise them into a focused summary which addressed the task. The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of the text and offer some relevant ideas to demonstrate understanding of why the theories put forward to explain the crooked forest were unlikely to be correct.

The most successful responses were carefully planned and coherent, focusing sharply on the task by referring to a wide range of theories and offering full explanations for why they were unconvincing according to the text. These responses were often preceded by a bullet-pointed plan in which ideas from the text were noted briefly before being included in a fluent own-words response. Responses in the middle range tended to consider the validity of a more limited range of theories, the most

common being the Second World War tanks, genetic mutation, gravity and aliens. These responses often missed the effects of snowfall and the idea that the trees were manmade. Candidates at this level of performance usually considered why the theories were unlikely to be true but often missed the more subtle points. Some less successful responses focused too heavily on the theories and did not refer to the text's suggestions of why they were unreliable or unlikely, thus missing the focus of the task. Other candidates offered their own reactions to and comments about the ideas, for example, citing that aliens do not exist or that the supernatural is nonsense rather than picking out the idea that this theory was deliberately invented to fool tourists.

Length was often an indicator of the level of the response with some responses being too short and others very long and wordy due to unnecessary information and comments. The most effective responses tended to adhere to the advised length through adopting a concise and focused approach to the task. Less effective responses were either very brief due to a very limited number of ideas being considered or were excessively long and unselective. Occasionally less effective responses adhered to the advised word count but took far too long to consider a few ideas by including unnecessary details and / or comments. In most responses, there was an attempt to use own words although some candidates did rely on lifting phrases from the text. In less effective responses, there was some misreading of the text, most commonly when trying to explain the theory of genetic mutation and attributing the whole tree being affected to the trees in the crooked forest rather than the aspen trees in Canada. There was also a tendency to include too much introductory and irrelevant detail about the crooked forest in less effective responses.

#### Advice to candidates on Question 1(f):

- re-read Text B after reading the question to identify potentially relevant ideas
- plan your response using brief notes to ensure a wide range of ideas from the text is selected
- avoid including unnecessary details which do not address the question
- organise the ideas, grouping them where relevant, to ensure that your response is coherent
- avoid repeating ideas
- use your plan rather than the text as you write your answer to avoid lifting
- write clearly and make sure you express yourself fluently in your own words
- do not add comments or your own views
- try to keep to the guidance to 'write no more than 120 words'.

#### Question 2

(a) **Identify a word or phrase from the text which suggests the same idea as the words underlined:**

- (i) The adventurers were fed up of constantly roaming around.  
(ii) Jose unwillingly trailed Manoel.  
(iii) Manoel had not expected the deer to have such speed and sprightliness.  
(iv) Raposo tried to encourage and sweet-talk the men.

The most successful answers to **Question 2(a)** focused on the underlined word or phrase, located the correct version in the text and gave it as the answer. Other responses copied the whole sentence from the text and then identified the answer within it. This was acceptable but likely took candidates more time than was necessary. Answers that used the text more widely than in the equivalent phrase / sentence could not be rewarded even if the correct word / phrase was included. Most candidates were familiar with the demands of this question but a few over-looked the specific instruction to identify a word or phrase from the text and attempted to offer own words equivalents of those underlined in the question instead, missing the opportunity to evidence relevant skills and understanding.

(b) **Using your own words, explain what the writer means by each of the words underlined:**

Camp was pitched and the party was resting, when confused shouting and crashing in the bush brought them to their feet. Manoel burst into view. 'We've found it!' Manoel cried. 'We've found the way up!'

- (i) resting
- (ii) confused
- (iii) burst

In **Question 2(b)** the most successful answers considered the meaning of each word as it is used in the text. For example, the word 'confused' refers to the shouting rather than to the men's reactions to it, so successful answers offered words such as 'chaotic', 'jumbled' or 'unclear'. Less successful responses focused on the men's confusion about the general situation and could not be rewarded.

(c) **Use one example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests the feelings of the leader, Raposo, when the adventurers enter the cleft.**

**Use your own words in your explanation.**

**Clusters of rock crystals and frothy masses of quartz gave the wide-eyed leader the feeling of having entered a fairyland, and, in the dim light filtering down through the tangled mass of creepers overhead, his anticipation of a wondrous citadel on the other side was palpable.**

In **Question 2(c)** candidates were required to select one example of language from the specified section of the text and explain how it suggested Raposo's feelings as he entered the cleft. A significant number of candidates did not follow these instructions but instead offered a very general response. Where a paraphrased version of a language choice was offered it was usually possible to reward some of the comments, but they often lacked focus on the specific words used by the writer. The most successful responses offered a concise quotation then considered how the writer was able to convey Raposo's feelings through the language used. The most popular example was 'the feeling of having entered a fairyland' and many responses explored the connotations of a fairyland fully considering his amazement and sense of having entered a magical world as well as his child-like wonder at the sights before him. Other responses considered the 'wide-eyed leader' and were able to explain his awe, disbelief and amazement at the sights in front of him as well as a sense of innocence and naivety about the discoveries in the cleft. Many candidates were able to offer convincing explanations of 'a wondrous citadel' and show full understanding of the writer's use of 'palpable' as offering a sense of Raposo's dream being so close that he feels it is within touching distance, and the overwhelming feelings of hope and expectation he is experiencing at this point in the text. Some less effective responses tried to do too much, selecting several examples. Only one example could be rewarded so offering more used examination time that could have been spent on **Question 2(d)** where more developed responses would have helped candidates to target higher marks.

(d) **Re-read paragraphs 2 and 4.**

- Paragraph 2 begins 'These were no ordinary mountains ...' and is about the sight of the mountains to the weary adventurers.
- Paragraph 4 begins 'Next morning ...' and is about how the adventurers try to ascend the mountain in daylight.

**Explain how the writer uses language to convey meaning and to create effect in these paragraphs. Choose three examples of words or phrases from each paragraph to support your answer. Your choices should include the use of imagery.**

The most successful responses to **Question 2(d)** offered clear analysis of three appropriate language choices from each of the two paragraphs indicated in the question. The most successful approach was to consider the meanings of carefully chosen phrases in the context of the text and then consider the effect in terms of connotations and the atmosphere or attitudes created by the writer's language choices. These responses often offered a clear overview of the writer's intentions in each paragraph. Less successful responses were sometimes written in note form and offered

less developed analysis or repeated the same ideas about effects, often making rather generalised assertions rather than considering specific words more closely. Middle range responses were usually more successful when explaining meanings but struggled to explore the effects, and the least effective responses tended to offer quotations but struggled to find anything relevant to say about them. A significant number of candidates chose three language choices in total rather than three from each paragraph as clearly stated in the question. This led to some under-developed responses to this question.

The most effective responses selected phrases but also considered the individual words within them suggesting how they worked within the context of the whole language choice. Rather than just identifying literary devices they engaged fully with the language, considering its impact and connotations fully and linking each choice to a coherent and developed consideration of the paragraph. In paragraph 2 many were able to explore their individual choices within the context of the mountains at sunset offering the men hope and lifting their spirits. They considered phrases such as 'no ordinary mountains', 'lit up in flame' and 'rich in colour and light' as representing the beauty and awe of the mountain but also containing promises of the wealth and success anticipated by the adventurers. They could successfully develop these ideas through other phrases such as 'studded with gems' and also 'a rainbow beckoned' as symbolising the end of their quest where they may discover their pot of gold after all. These choices could all be linked successfully yet considered independently. In paragraph 4 many responses were able to draw an obvious contrast citing the bleak and hostile view of the same mountains in the morning light. Phrases such as 'black and menacing', 'unscalable precipices' and 'vast' enabled candidates to consider the enormous challenges posed and the impossibility of their task as well as the threatening nature of the environment the men have set out to conquer. Phrases such as 'struggled over' and 'glossy sides' also contributed to the sense of despair and hopelessness created by the writer at this point in the text.

There was very little evidence of misreading in the two paragraphs specified in the question, but some candidates found it challenging to move beyond the beauty of the mountains in paragraph 2 and the enormous size of them in paragraph 4. They tended to repeat these general ideas for every language choice selected sometimes using the wording of the text in their explanations. Less effective responses also included very long quotations with general explanations rather than engaging closely with specific words. Very rarely no quotations were included at all with a brief description of the paragraphs offered instead. Such responses did not address the question at all.

Candidates are reminded that it is the quality of their language analysis which attracts marks. Listing of literary devices or the selection of plain language from the text is unlikely to lead to a successful response. Candidates need to exercise care when selecting their language choices to maximise their opportunities for developed discussion.

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

- select precise and accurate language choices from the specified paragraphs
- make sure explanations of meanings make sense within the context of the text
- avoid very general explanations such as '*this creates a strong visual image*', '*this makes us want to read on*' or '*this makes the reader feel part of the story*'
- try to engage with the language at word level by considering connotations / associations of words and why the writer has selected them
- when considering chosen examples start with the contextualized meaning then move on to the effect created by the language in terms of how it helps our understanding of the events, characters, atmosphere, for example.

### Question 3

You are Jose. A day later you write an entry in your journal, in which you:

- describe where you have been and what you have seen in the final stages of your adventure
- explain how you have felt during the recent days about the expedition and your leader, Raposo
- describe what has happened since you saw the broken remains of the human settlement.

**Write the words of your journal.**

**Base your journal entry on what you have read in Text C, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullets.**

This question required candidates to write a journal entry documenting Jose's experiences and feelings about the expedition. The three bullet points in the question offered guidance to candidates to help them identify relevant ideas for their journal entry. The first and second bullets required candidates to retrieve relevant information from the text and adapt it to fit Jose's perspective, as well as develop his feelings about the events and Raposo's leadership. The third bullet required candidates to infer what may have happened after discovering the remains of the human settlement using ideas and clues in the text to support the inferences.

The majority of candidates were able to show general understanding of the text addressing the task by using some of the main ideas in the text to support the response. Many of the responses were also able to develop the ideas by creating a convincing voice for Jose and interpreting the events from his perspective, evaluating the ideas and adapting them accordingly. Where candidates had followed the bullets carefully, they were often able to develop explicit and implicit ideas effectively to include convincing articulation of Jose's mixed feelings about Raposo's leadership and charting his reactions to different stages of the arduous journey undertaken to search for the lost city. Some candidates interweaved the first and second bullets by charting the events of the journey and adding Jose's feelings at each stage. This proved to be an equally successful approach to the task where some prior planning had occurred. Less successful responses tended to track the text often paraphrasing it closely and therefore lacking development of Jose's perspective on the events. The least successful responses used the ideas in the text thinly, sometimes muddled Jose and Manoel and / or misread some of the details such as the discovery of the cleft in the precipice and the discovery of the remains of a human settlement.

The first bullet of the question invited candidates to describe Jose's journey with the adventurers focusing on the final stages. This offered opportunities to look at the arduous nature of the journey, the difficult terrain, the initial hope then insurmountable obstacles provided by the mountains, the discovery of the cleft through the precipice where they discovered the quartz, and the three-hour climb resulting in the discovery of human activity evidenced by the tools and remains of a settlement. The most successful approach to this bullet was one where candidates extracted the relevant stages of the journey and adapted them to fit with Jose's perspective, including his negativity when faced with challenges and his assumption that the expedition was doomed to failure. These responses tended to adopt a reflective tone suitable for a journal exploring the events in hindsight rather than describing them as immediately happening. In responses where candidates just repeated ideas from the text without considering Jose's perspective they tended to be rather mechanical (or even thin and general) rather than reflective hence the more subtle ideas were often missed. There was little evidence of misreading in response to the first bullet but some responses did not consider many stages of the journey. Sometimes there was confusion about the time taken to explore the cleft and the eventual climb up to the ledge where they could see the plain, and some candidates were confused about whether they camped overnight before attempting it.

The second bullet offered many opportunities to explore Jose's feelings about his experiences and about the leader of the expedition, Raposo, using the many clues in the text about his negativity and resentment. The best responses picked up on the more subtle details such as the adventurers' lack of belief in the lost city at the beginning of the text, the hope symbolised in the rainbow at sunset contrasted to the despairing struggles the following morning, the resentment at being asked to collect firewood, the frustration with Manoel's excitement on discovering the cleft, the 'mutinous expressions' of Jose and a group of adventurers when they are forced to pack up the camp to explore the cleft, and Jose's close observation of Raposo's growing sense of anticipation as they discover more evidence that they are close to their goal. All of these ideas could be developed through convincing explorations of Jose's feelings. Many responses explored his mixed attitude to Raposo by expressing irritation with his insistence on continuing the expedition rather than camping for the night but also admiration for his determination, positivity and leadership. Less successful

responses failed to focus on Jose instead offering a rather bland description of his reactions to the events. Some less effective responses missed the difference between Manuel and Jose's reactions when asked to gather firewood and when returning to the camp with the news about the discovery of the cleft. They also failed to appreciate Jose's conflicting views of Raposo's leadership. Close reading of the text is required to provide evidence of more than reasonable or general understanding.

When responding to bullet 3 the most successful responses focused on the discoveries already made such as the crystals and quartz, the axe head, and the remains of a human settlement developing these ideas by exploring the reactions of Jose, Raposo and the other adventurers, their next steps and their visions of a future changed by the fame and fortune they may enjoy. Many responses focused on Jose's warmer response to Raposo and his acknowledgement that his optimism and determination had paid off. Many good responses interpreted Raposo's disbelief as a sign that the discoveries were a disappointment and this was equally acceptable if the textual details were used to support it. Less successful responses often added new material about the actions of the men in the following days without attempting to connect it to textual details. In some responses, the candidates did not attempt to address the third bullet at all instead ending the journal entry with Raposo gazing at the remains of the human settlement. There was some misreading here with some responses confusing the human settlement with human remains, but this did not necessarily detract from the response to bullet 3 if other ideas had been fully explored.

Candidates seemed comfortable and familiar with the format of a journal entry with most adopting an appropriate tone. The less successful responses tended to be too narrative as they relied too heavily on the sequencing of the original text and did not offer reflections to adapt the material to Jose's perspective. A few responses wrote as Raposo or Manuel or thought that Jose and Manuel were the same person. The language used was mostly appropriate and some more successful responses created a wholly convincing voice as Jose reflecting on his adventures. In less successful responses the language and voice were rather plain but rarely inappropriate for the character. Generally, accuracy was good with some skilfully written responses. Others struggled to maintain fluency resulting in some awkward expression caused by errors in grammar and punctuation. Candidates are advised to check through their work carefully to correct errors where possible. There were few instances of wholesale lifting from the passage but some candidates were over-reliant on lifted phrases and sentences.

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

- read Text C carefully, more than once, to ensure sound understanding
- pay careful attention to the perspective required for the task – for example, the voice being created and whether you are looking back at the events
- keep the audience and purpose firmly in mind
- do not invent information and material that is not clearly linked to the details and events in the text
- give equal attention to all three bullet points
- briefly plan your response to ensure that you are selecting ideas relevant to all three bullets
- avoid copying from the text: use your own words as far as possible
- remember to use ideas and details from the text but to adapt and develop them appropriately to create a convincing voice and new perspective
- leave some time to check through your response
- the suggested word length is a guide, not a limit.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

---

Paper 0500/12  
Reading

## Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- worked through questions in the order set
- followed task instructions carefully, responding appropriately to the command words in the question
- considered the particular evidence of skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate for each of the three questions
- paid attention to the guidance offered to help them focus their answers – for example, explaining six examples overall in **2(d)** and using just one example from the text extract in **2(c)**
- avoided unselective copying and / or lifting from the text
- considered and used relevant ideas, opinions and details in the response to reading task rather than inventing untethered material
- used their own words where instructed to do so
- returned to the text when necessary to check understanding of an idea or important detail
- planned the ideas to be used and the route through longer answers before writing
- gave equal attention to all aspects of each question
- selected only the material that was most appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition
- checked and edited their responses to correct any careless errors, incomplete ideas or unclear points.

## General comments

Candidates appeared to find all three texts equally accessible and engaging. Occasionally, a failure to follow the rubric and / or complete all aspects of a task limited the evidence of understanding and skills offered – for example, by explaining the whole extract rather than choosing an example from it in **Question 2(c)** or writing far more than the maximum of 120 words advised for the selective summary **Question 1(f)**.

In **Question 1**, candidates scoring highly had worked through the tasks in the order presented and made efficient use of their time, for example by paying attention in **Questions 1(a)–(e)** to the marks and space available as a helpful indicator of the length and detail they needed to offer in their response. They did not add further unnecessary material and focused on answering each question as set. Most candidates followed the line or paragraph references in the questions carefully to help them to move down Text A in order and to direct their attention. Most, but not all, remembered that in a test of comprehension their responses to these initial short answer questions needed to be derived from the text in order to evidence their Reading skills. The majority of responses avoided offering unsolicited personal opinion or comment.

Less successful responses often attempted to include extra guesses in response to **Questions 1(a)–(e)**, diluting evidence of understanding by doing so. Some offered circular answers, repeating the language of the question where own words were specified as required; such responses provided little evidence of understanding as a consequence. In **Question 1(f)** some candidates relied heavily on the language of the text and / or copied whole chunks of texts, limiting the available evidence of their own skills and understanding as a result.

In **Question 2** candidates needed first to identify and / or explain words and phrases from the text, moving towards an explanation of how language was being used by the writer via **Question 2(c)** and on to the language task, **Question 2(d)**. More effective answers were careful to refer back to Text C to locate specific relevant choices and consider meaning in context. To aim for higher levels in **Question 2(d)**, candidates

should explore and explain in some detail the precise meanings and effects of the examples of interesting or powerful language use they have identified, demonstrating understanding of the writer's purpose. Most were able to suggest three potentially useful examples for analysis in each half of the **2(d)** task and offer basic effect / meaning in context, though a number of candidates were not sufficiently clear, careful or detailed in the examination of their choices. In less successful responses, generalised comment or labelling of devices without explanation of how these were working meant opportunities to target higher levels were missed.

In **Question 3** responses for the most part had attempted to include ideas relevant to all three bullets of the task. Most candidates had remembered to talk from Maria's perspective, with the best remaining focused on the evidence in the text and keeping in mind their audience throughout. Responses across the cohort covered a wide range of levels of achievement, with mid-range responses often missing opportunities as a consequence of uneven focus and / or offering a narrow range of ideas from the text. Less successful responses either included only brief reference to the passage and / or repeated sections from the text with minimal modification. Along with unselective copying, reliance on the language of the text in order to communicate ideas is an indicator of less secure understanding and to be avoided.

Whilst Paper 1 is primarily a test of Reading, 15 of the 80 marks available are for Writing – divided between **Questions 1(f)** and **3**. In these questions, it is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing. It is advisable to plan and review responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, errors that impede communication of ideas and awkward expression. Candidates should be aware that unclear and / or inaccurate writing is likely to limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Leaving sufficient time to edit and correct responses is advisable.

### Comments on specific questions

#### **Question 1 Comprehension and summary task**

##### **Questions 1 (a)–(e)**

Short answer **Questions 1(a)–(e)** required candidates to read and respond to Text A. More effective responses paid careful attention to the command words in the instructions to demonstrate effectively and efficiently the evidence of understanding required. Some mid-range responses missed opportunities to target higher marks, for example through overlong explanations and / or striving to offer own word answers where these were not needed. Candidates should note that where use of own words is required task guidance makes that clear. Less well focused answers on occasion diluted the evidence of understanding by including additional unnecessary material and / or extra guesses – an inefficient use of examination time.

Successful responses provided evidence that candidates had understood the need to interpret and use details in the text carefully to answer each of the comprehension questions to show what they could do and understand. They followed the order of the sub questions to work through the text from the beginning, picking up on pointers where appropriate to help them to identify relevant material.

##### **(a) Give two examples of animals that have been culled, according to the text.**

In **Question 1(a)**, candidates reading closely recognised that the text identified grey squirrels specifically and deer as examples of animals that have been culled. Some candidates made use of the question stem to help focus their answer, whilst others simply wrote the key words of the answer – either approach was acceptable. Candidates reading less carefully suggested incorrectly that red squirrels and / or blue-tits had been culled.

##### **(b) Using your own words, explain what the text means by:**

- (i) 'appropriate method' (line 1):**
- (ii) 'Large numbers' (line 4):**

In **Question 1(b)** task guidance made it clear that use of own words was required to evidence understanding. Simply reorganising all / some of the phrase was a feature of less effective answers. Where answers failed to score both marks it was sometimes the result of having explained just one aspect of the phrase, for example in **Question 1(b)(i)** explaining 'appropriate' only and repeating the word 'method'. More effective answers were able to indicate that they had securely understood the meaning of both aspects of the question in the context of the text – for example, in **1b(ii)** that the huge amount of deer meant there were far too many of them.

**(c) Re-read paragraph 3, ('This type of conservation ... and the environment.').**

**Give two reasons why people might be against cutting down trees.**

Candidates who paid attention to command / key words in the question were best placed to offer creditworthy responses and avoid spending excess time on overlong answers to lower tariff questions. For example, in **Question 1(c)** candidates following the instructions in the task did not try to suggest ideas from their own experience about why people might be against cutting down trees (including environmental arguments such as 'they give us oxygen') but instead re-read paragraph 3 to identify the two reasons offered in the text, giving these as their answer. Well focused answers showed that both the objection to the interference with natural progression and the subjective nature of the decision had been understood – either by careful selection of relevant quotation from the text, or through precise use of own words.

**(d) Re-read paragraphs 4 and 5, ('However, we must ... in their movements.').**

**(i) Identify two reasons why cutting down trees is important.**

**(ii) Explain how mammals once helped to maintain the natural balance in the woodlands.**

In **part (i)** of **Question 1(d)** successful answers were careful to identify two separate and distinct reasons from the three available, rather than simply repeating the idea of 'restoring balance' expressed in different ways, and focused their explanations on three specific actions of mammals in **part (ii)** to outline efficiently their behaviours that had contributed to maintaining natural balance. Less well focused answers sometimes repeated the question – for example asserting that 'mammals helped to maintain natural balance' – and / or offered just one similar / general idea for each part of the question.

**(e) Re-read paragraph 7, ('It can seem ... insects and berries.').**

**Using your own words, explain why birds like blue tits and nightingales are not usually found in dense woodland areas.**

In **Question 1(e)** the most successful explanations showed that candidates were able to derive three distinct reasons from the specified paragraph and had not misread details of the text or task. Candidates who recast the relevant information using their own words as instructed were best able to demonstrate that they had noted and understood the three aspects of the explanation – related to sunlight, vegetation and access to food sources. Additional unsupported comment on occasion blurred evidence of understanding in mid-range answers – for example, overlooking the need to tease out answers from the text a few candidates suggested that the main problem of access to food sources was because the dense woodland was too thick for the birds to fly through. Similarly, unsupported assertions that there was no food, rather than less food, to be found in dense woodland areas diluted evidence of understanding. Where candidates had paid less careful attention to the question, opportunities were missed to demonstrate close reading skills. For example, a few candidates attempted unsuccessfully to answer the question by simply copying unselectively from the paragraph and a smaller number tried to speculate about why 'birds might like blue tits or nightingales' and / or attempt to discuss why 'nightingales **are** usually found in dense woodland'.

**(f) According to Text B, what makes the cherry blossom season in Japan so popular?**

**You must use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible.**

**Your summary should not be more than 120 words.**

In their responses to **Question 1(f)** most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of some relevant ideas from Text B and some understanding of the requirements of the task. All points on the mark scheme were covered over the range of answers seen, though repetition of the same idea and / or inclusion of material not relevant to the focus of the question meant opportunities were missed by some candidates to target higher marks.

Where responses were most effective, candidates had made a consistent attempt to use their own words, to keep explanations concise and to organise their ideas helpfully. Less well-focused responses copied from the text, with minimal or no rewording or reorganisation of the original. Whilst candidates are not expected to change all key words or terms in their prose response, they should not rely on lifting whole phrases and / or sentences from the text. Indiscriminate copying of the passage, repetition and adding comment or example should all be avoided as these do not allow candidates to successfully address the selective summary task.

The most effective responses to the selective summary task often showed evidence of candidates having planned the content and organisation of their answer before writing their response. There were some extremely effective and well-crafted responses that demonstrated both concision and precise understanding of an impressively wide range of relevant ideas.

The majority of candidates showed at least some awareness of the need to avoid excess and did not make reference to any of the more obviously redundant material such as Japan's dazzling technology, curfews enforced by city councils or environmental degradation. Less effective responses tended to repeat ideas – most commonly in relation to parties or celebrations. They also often included extraneous material about the 2007 anime film. Candidates who had spent time reviewing their initial selection of ideas were best placed to recognise similar examples of the same idea – for example points related to all of the various types of food and / or cherry-blossom-themed items available – and were often able to group those examples usefully together under one umbrella point, avoiding repetition of ideas or inclusion of unnecessary detail.

More effective responses were not dependant on the structure or language of Text B to communicate their ideas. Less effective responses sometimes relied on trying to offer a précis of the whole text in the order it was presented. In these answers excess material, often through repetition, was commonplace and evidence of understanding more limited. In low to mid-range answers, some candidates indiscriminately lifted longer sections of text, occasionally substituting words and / or altering word order, without careful selection of a central idea – diluting evidence of understanding of both task and text. Candidates need to be aware that simply rearranging words within a sentence, slotting in substituted words here and there, is not a short cut to providing secure evidence of reading skills and understanding. This kind of approach is likely to result in confusion and / or errors that further betray weaknesses in candidates' comprehension – for example that 'most people live in crowded flats' or that cherry blossom season 'takes its title from a bittersweet tale of a young man and woman who became separated over the years.' More effective responses evidenced careful reading of the text and showed candidates successfully identifying both explicit and implicit ideas. They avoided the misreading of details evident in less secure responses – for example, that cherry blossom season was 'a time when all your family, friends, lovers and colleagues would all meet up together'.

The least effective responses copied sections from the text with little modification and / or were almost entirely reliant on the language of the original – candidates are reminded that lifting sections of text and splicing them together is likely to evidence little understanding of either the ideas in the passage or requirements of the task. The least effective responses often included strings of unnecessary details, again frequently copied from the text. One common example of this was the reference to cherry blossom season inspiring the arts being followed by the list of art forms, the song being sung in schools and details of the anime film.

Most candidates appeared to be aware of the need to try to use their own vocabulary where feasible without changing or blurring the original idea and organise points helpfully for their reader. On occasion, candidates overlooked the need for concision in a selective summary task and significant excess arose as a result of lengthy explanation, with some candidates continuing to write far more than the maximum of 120 words advised in the task guidance. Others adhered to the advised length of the response but were verbose in explaining a few ideas. Candidates producing effective answers were able to demonstrate that they had understood a fairly wide range of relevant ideas, communicating these accurately and concisely in their own words.

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

- after reading the task instructions, re-read the text to identify potentially relevant ideas you can use in your answer
- plan the ideas you are going to include ahead of writing your response – draw a neat line through your planning afterwards
- identify and discard any ideas or extra details which are not relevant to the focus of the question
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted in your plan, checking that they are distinct and complete
- return to the text to check any ideas you are unsure of before you try to use them
- organise and sequence your ideas helpfully for your reader; do not rely on repeating ideas in the order of the original text
- explain ideas in a way that someone who had not read the passage would understand
- write informatively and accurately in your own words, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- do not add details, examples or comment to the content of the passage
- though it is not necessary to count every word, you should keep in mind the guidance to write ‘no more than 120 words’ and aim for concision.

**Question 2**

(a) **Identify a word or phrase from the text which suggests the same idea as the words underlined:**

- (i) The **very loud noise** of the waterfall.
- (ii) Maria **keeps turning around very quickly** to point out crocodiles.
- (iii) Some of the group **bravely and willingly** cross the river without footwear.
- (iv) Maria walks at a **quick pace**.

Focused responses to **Question 2(a)** clearly identified in each part the correct word or phrase from Text C to correspond with the meaning of the underlined example – simply giving the word or phrase as their answer. Other responses added unnecessary time pressure by copying out the entire sentence in each case, substituting the word or phrase and then bracketing their answer. Marks were sometimes missed where answers were incomplete or unfocused. Very occasionally, the specific instruction to identify a word or phrase from the text was overlooked and candidates attempted to explain the meaning of words underlined in their own words, missing the opportunity to evidence relevant skills and understanding.

(b) **Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words underlined:**

Howler monkeys **groan** from treetops on either side of the river. We also pass a temple with dark tunnels where fruit bats **huddle** and squeak above us, and eventually reach a wide **shaded** area where 30-metre-tall trees share space with temples well over a thousand years old.

- (i) **groan**
- (ii) **huddle**
- (iii) **shaded**

In **Question 2(b)**, successful answers had considered carefully the precise meaning in context of each of the words underlined, recognising for example that ‘groan’ described the nature of the sound made by the monkeys and ‘shaded’ meant that the area was protected from the sun rather than simply dark. Less effective answers sometimes appeared to have confused ‘groan’ with ‘growl’ suggesting incorrectly that the monkeys were angry, or appeared to be guessing in general terms when suggesting that ‘groan’ referred to the noise monkeys make in the same way that bark might refer to the noise a dog makes, or that ‘huddled’ meant hanging upside down or flying.

- (c) Use **one** example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests what the jungle coffee was like.

**Use your own words in your explanation.**

To demonstrate, she chops off an arm-size branch of a native tree, letting us sip the sweet, running sap. She whittles the bark and boils fragrant shavings of the branch, soon producing a bubbling gold broth. ‘Jungle coffee,’ she says. I have two cups’ worth. It’s delicious.

In **Question 2(c)** where candidates had focused clearly on using just one example taken from the text extract they were best placed to demonstrate their understanding. Successful responses often centred on the image of a ‘bubbling gold broth’ and were able to exploit it to good effect; many were able to offer full explanations just through discussion of the associations of ‘gold’ and what those implied about this jungle coffee. Some considered the suggestions of a natural delicacy through discussion of ‘sip the sweet running sap’. Some explored the contrast between the writer’s expectations of jungle coffee and its unexpectedly ‘delicious’ taste. Many cited ‘I have two cups’ worth’ as evidence that the ‘coffee’ was particularly good, with more successful answers not relying on recycling words from the text such as ‘delicious’ and ‘sweet’ to do so. A number of successful responses had noted carefully the number of marks available and focused their response to make three distinct points in relation to their one chosen example. Less successful responses often attempted to discuss more than one example – time that might have been more profitably spent in **Question 2(d)** where there were up to 15 marks available. Some less effective responses did not pay careful attention to the instruction to select from the given extract and attempted unwisely to paraphrase the whole extract and / or discuss it in very general terms. On occasion there was some evidence of misreading, meaning opportunities were missed to consider the writer’s perspective – for example, by suggesting that it was Maria who had said ‘I have two cups’ worth. It’s delicious.’

- (d) Re-read paragraphs 5 and 10.

- Paragraph 5 begins “‘You have to jump’ ...’ and is about how the party decide to reach the pool and their experience in it.
- Paragraph 10 begins ‘The darkness is all-encompassing ...’ and is about the final moments in darkness at the camp.

**Explain how the writer uses language to convey meaning and to create effect in these paragraphs. Choose three examples of words or phrases from each paragraph to support your answer. Your choices should include the use of imagery.**

Successful responses to **Question 2(d)** offered clear analysis of three relevant selections in both parts, often beginning with explanations of meaning and moving on to consider effect. Such responses demonstrated understanding of how the writer was using language in each case through detailed discussion of sharply focused choices. Where candidates considered all of the key words in slightly longer choices they were able to avoid those more generalised comments of less effective responses. Candidates responding in note form and / or relying on repeating the language of the text within their explanation were less well placed to demonstrate understanding fully and often offered only partially effective explanation as a result. The most effective responses considered words within their choices individually, as well as suggesting how they worked within the longer phrase and / or in the context of the description as a whole. Rather than selecting the first three choices in each half they came across, or the most ‘obvious’ literary devices, successful responses often set out to identify those relevant selections that they felt best able to explain. Some of the most effective responses explored how their judiciously selected choices worked both individually and together to influence the reader’s impression, building to an overview, with the best responses offering an almost forensic analysis of each. Responses at level 5 frequently showed imagination and precision when discussing choices, for example in relation to the other-worldly beetle.

In **part (a)**, many answers had identified ‘frothy azure luxury’ as a potentially interesting example to discuss, with most able to offer at least a basic explanation of the sense of indulgence it suggested and / or recognition that ‘azure’ was the beautiful blue-green colour referred to earlier in the text when describing the ‘frothy’ pool at the base of the powerful waterfall. A number of answers missed

opportunities to target higher marks by limiting their comments to explanation of just one or two words of the three – for example through repetition rather than explanation of ‘frothy’ and/or ‘luxury’. Others reasonably treated ‘cradled in frothy azure luxury’ as one image though did not discuss ‘cradled’ and overlooked the possibilities it offered for demonstrating understanding of effect. The least successful offered empty comments such as ‘cradled and frothy azure luxury – here the writer talks about how it feels and their experience so that with these 2 phrases we can see and or imagine how it looks and feels’. More secure responses went on to explore what use of the image suggested about the experience of being in the pool, and on occasion were able to offer some interesting analysis of how this might be seen to be working in contrast to other choices that suggested the challenge of arriving there.

Some candidates selected one or more less-interesting choices such as ‘agrees to an alternative’, ‘swim upstream’ or ‘the best swimming hole’ that did not engage them in a productive discussion about how language can convey meanings and effects. In **part (b)**, many responses suggested that there were ‘scary images’ or ‘images that really helped you to imagine what it was like to be there’ though did not always go on to outline or explore the details of how or why. The simile ‘like a penlight’ was a popular selection, though not always fully exploited in the explanation offered. Where responses were most successful, candidates had often considered it in relation to the whole description of the beetle, for example picking up on various suggestions of mechanical movement and / or an artificially bright/directed light source in contrast with the darkness surrounding them. More effective answers were often able to visualise the image, using explanation of the meaning in context as the starting point for their explanation of effect.

Careful reading might have helped some candidates avoid errors and opportunities for precise and imaginative explanation of images were sometimes missed where candidates attempted to explain the meaning of words without considering how they were being used in context. Repetition of the vocabulary of the text to communicate ideas in the explanations offered was common in less effective responses, whilst more convincing responses were able to offer explanations of precise meaning in their own words which then lead them on to consider effect. Candidates are reminded of the need to ensure that their explanations in **Question 2(d)** are in their own words and can be clearly understood. Whilst the task does not assess writing skills, encouraging candidates to explore their choices fully and operate at the very edges of their vocabulary, it is nevertheless important that candidates read back their explanations to check that what they have written is what they mean and evidences their understanding.

Candidates are reminded it is the quality of their analysis which attracts marks. Answers which simply list literary devices used and / or copy from each paragraph without careful consideration of the examples to be discussed are not likely to evidence the skills and understanding necessary to target higher marks in a language question. Selections in **Question 2(d)** need to be clear and deliberate, helping to focus the analysis which follows. Long quotations with only the first and last words identified are less likely to be useful and result in very thin general comments at best.

Opportunities were missed in some answers where task guidance had not been followed, such as where a chosen phrase was not from either of the specified paragraphs and / or choices were from one paragraph only. Mid-range answers often showed better understanding in the half of the question they tackled first, sometimes appearing to be incomplete. Some of the least successful answers to **Question 2(d)** were very short or offered only general outlines of each paragraph without selecting choices. The most successful answers were often able to ‘talk through’ their understanding of words within relevant choices, considering different possibilities of meaning, associations and connotations, ahead of arriving at an understanding of how and why they might have been used by the writer in this context.

### Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- make sure that the quotations you select from the text are precise and accurate – do not copy out lines or chunks of text, miss out key words or include only part of the choice
- where you are trying to explain meaning check that your explanation makes sense
- when explaining how language is working say how and in what ways a chosen example works within the context of the text to show understanding
- consider each of the key words within an identified choice separately as well as how they work together
- when you are trying to suggest effect and are unsure, start by explaining the precise meaning in context of the word(s) in the choice

- when you are trying to explore and explain images, consider the connotations and associations of the words within choices to help you to suggest the effect the writer might have wanted to create
- allow time to edit your answers – for example, to add in further detail and / or correct errors to help show you have read carefully and understood.

### Question 3

**You are Maria. You are interviewed for a television programme about people with interesting jobs. The interviewer asks you the following three questions only:**

- **What do your clients particularly enjoy about the jungle trip?**
- **What skills and qualities make you a good guide?**
- **How do you advise your clients to prepare for the challenges of the jungle?**

**Write the words of the interview.**

**Base your interview on what you have read in Text C, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullet points.**

Already familiar with Text C having worked through **Question 2**, candidates following the order of tasks as set were best placed to think their way into the ideas, attitudes and opinions of the tourists' guide, Maria, as distinct from those of the narrator. The question offered candidates three questions in the bullets to help them identify relevant ideas in relation to Maria and her job which they might use in their answer to show that they had read closely and understood the passage. Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had understood the text and task in at least general terms. Many had engaged with both task and text to offer competent responses, evidencing some evaluation and interpreting ideas from the perspective of the experienced guide accompanying the party on an organised trip rather than simply repeating the descriptions and viewpoint of the inexperienced tourist narrator. Where candidates had paid careful and equal attention to each of the questions they were often able to develop ideas (explicit and implicit) from the text to create a convincing voice for the character of Maria.

Whilst the task guidance specified that only these three questions were asked many answers added further exchanges between the host and interviewee. On occasion this did help to demonstrate awareness of suitable register / orientate at the beginning of a response, but ran the risk of taking the focus away from the text itself. Where responses attempted to rely on just tracking back through the text, replaying the passage, answers were less well placed to offer Maria's perspective and target higher marks. Such mechanical answers often also became over reliant on the language of the text to communicate ideas, signalling insecure understanding of both task and text.

The least successful responses copied sections of text with minimal modification and / or included inaccuracies as a result of misreading of key details and information. The most convincing responses to **Question 3** indicated that candidates had revisited the passage to examine carefully the details of the narrator's account and make judgements based on the evidence in the text about how Maria had ensured that her clients enjoyed their trip. They were able to think their way into the role of Maria, making explicit for their imagined viewing audience those underlying ideas and attitudes only hinted at in the.

The first bullet invited candidates to revisit the narrator's description of events to offer an evaluation through Maria's eyes of what her clients enjoy about these trips – more effective answers provided an explanation of the potential highlights rather than replaying the whole narrative. Bullet 2 required candidates to reflect on the skills and qualities Maria displayed and consider how she might present these as relevant or important to her role of guide on an organised trip. Similarly, to evidence close reading of Text C when answering the third question candidates needed to offer advice that would be suitable for members of this kind of party on this kind of trip based on details of the narrator's account.

Where candidates' responses relied on simply working through the text in order, opportunities to offer and develop a range of ideas across all three bullets were missed. The most effective answers did more than list the activities of a trip, often going on to comment on how and why exactly these activities might appeal to Maria's clients and sometimes distinguishing between the more adventurous in the group and the more cautious or nervous. Many noted the implication that the experiences on the jungle trip were new / contrasted with their usual lifestyle for her clients and developed ideas based on detail in the text to make explicit some of their reactions, for example to the beetle, pool and food.

Where candidates had considered the audience and purpose for their response, they were often able to capitalise on that to integrate details and sustain development. Aware that the television programme was about 'people with interesting jobs' some candidates set out from the start to persuade their viewing audience of Maria's fascination and delight in the job, often leading usefully onto ideas for bullet 2.

In relation to the second bullet, almost all answers recognised the significance of Maria's jungle skills and knowledge to an extent – for example citing her ability to make jungle coffee, find their way and point out animals of interest. Responses evidencing otherwise reasonable reading often missed opportunities to aim for higher levels through filling their response with repetition of unfiltered narrative details rather than interpreting or developing them. Where information was lifted from the text with limited modification this often diluted evidence of understanding. On occasion detail was misread. Likewise, suggestions that clients 'enjoyed seeing elephants in the wild' indicated some details needed more careful checking ahead of inclusion.

Some of the most effective answers picked up on Maria's 'impish' laughter to suggest that she enjoyed gently teasing her clients and linked this to hints that she may have been orchestrating and organising events and experiences throughout the trip for effect. Some mid-range responses on occasion lost sight of the text or task – for example blurring the distinction between Maria's voice and that of the narrator (missing opportunities for development) and / or moving away from the evidence in this particular text.

In dealing with ideas related to bullet 3 most answers were able to recognise that carrying too much equipment in your backpack was not a good idea and offered advice to 'take only essentials' – not all however read closely to note that the waterproof jacket was something clients were 'never going to need' or that as food was provided by Maria 'chocolate cookies' and 'hard-boiled eggs' might be unnecessary too. A number of more effective answers offered well related development in relation to relevant ideas for bullet 3, suggesting for example that appropriate clothing for the trip might include anything light enough to swim in / to dry off quickly. Many advised physical preparation or some training in advance of the trip to ensure that clients could keep up with the pace and challenge, as well as the varied terrain and swimming upstream. A number also recognised the need to be open to new experiences and willing to try new things – recognising the narrator's delight for example having tasted the jungle coffee. Candidates need to remember that any development offered has to be rooted in the facts and details of passage to be creditworthy as evidence of their reading skills and understanding. Where candidates moved into more speculative suggestions they were often missing opportunities to target higher marks.

On the whole, candidates seemed familiar with the requirements of an interview and were guided by the task to ask and answer three questions only, with most either providing just Maria's answers or adding only minimal extra dialogue from the programme's imagined host – both of which worked well as approaches. Whilst setting the scene for the interview was outside the passage and task, and candidates should be wary of moving too far away from the text by doing so, short orientations focused on introducing Maria, the exact nature of the trips she guided and the questions to be asked were used to good effect by some candidates as a way to think themselves into the context. Sometimes more effective answers were able to carefully develop points relevant to the text and integrate supporting details through more extended contributions and reactions of the host during the body of the interview. Some less successful answers however were drawn away from the text and evidence of reading by their enthusiasm to imitate TV hosts they were familiar with and/or the inclusion of overlong preambles of pleasantries which diluted Maria's voice / limited her contributions.

On occasion, unforced errors with punctuation and grammar detracted from otherwise more effective writing. Candidates are advised to leave sufficient time to read back through their response to correct any mistakes or inconsistencies in their use of language – for example to ensure that meaning is clear and the register sounds appropriate. Where responses lapsed into more mechanical reproductions of ideas and / or tended towards lifting, the audience had often been forgotten and opportunities to use language convincingly were overlooked.

In the least effective answers, lifting in relation to all three bullets was an issue, with copying of whole sections of text not uncommon in these responses. This affected evidence of both Reading and Writing skills. Meanwhile, answers at the top end were often presented in a polite, relaxed and reflective style.

**Advice to candidates on Question 3:**

- read Text C carefully, more than once, and reconsider any points that you are unsure of
- remember to base your answer on the ideas in Text C
- keep the audience and purpose for your response in mind throughout your answer
- decide on the voice and style you want to create and maintain that in your answer
- do not invent information and details beyond the scope of the passage; look for the clues and evidence in the text to help you make judgements about characters and situations
- give equal attention to each of the three bullet points: the bullet points are designed to help you to identify a wide range of relevant ideas you can use in your answer
- plan a route through your answer beforehand: you can choose not to follow the order of the bullet points and / or link ideas from each
- do not copy directly from the text: use your own words as far as you can to express ideas
- try to do more than just repeat details of what happened: developing ideas allows you to better show your understanding, for example by explaining feelings or commenting from the point of view of the character you are writing as
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response
- remember that the number of words suggested by the question is a guide to help you plan your time, not a limit.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

---

Paper 0500/13  
Reading

## Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read all three passages thoroughly
- followed instructions precisely, responding appropriately to the command words
- gave equal attention to all aspects of each question
- considered the evidence of skills and understanding they needed to show for each of the three questions, selecting only appropriate material in their response
- planned the ideas to be used, particularly in longer answers, before writing
- allowed time to complete extended response questions in sufficient detail
- used their own words where required, avoiding unselective copying and / or lifting from the text
- include relevant ideas based on details in the text and avoided repetition
- returned to the text when necessary to check understanding of an idea or important detail
- paid attention to the guidance offered - for example, writing no more than 120 words in the summary and using just one example from the text extract in **2(c)**
- edited their responses carefully to correct errors of spelling and grammar affecting meaning.

## General comments

Candidates appeared to find all three texts equally accessible and engaging, and the majority were able to finish the paper within the time allowed. Occasionally, a failure to follow the rubric and/or complete all aspects of a task limited the evidence of understanding and skills offered – for example, by explaining fewer than six choices in **Question 2(d)**.

In **Question 1**, candidates scoring higher marks had worked through the tasks in the order presented and made efficient use of their time, for example by paying attention in **Questions 1(a)–(e)** to the marks and space available as helpful indicators of the length and detail they needed to offer in their response. They focused on answering each question, following the line or paragraph references in the questions carefully to help them work through Text A in order and to direct their attention. Attempting to use own words for short answer questions where not required often resulted in loss of focus on the key ideas or clouded the sense of the answer. Less successful responses often repeated the language of the question or attempted to include extra guesses in response to **Questions 1(a)–(e)**, diluting evidence of understanding by doing so. In **Question 1(f)** some candidates relied heavily on the language of the text and / or copied sections. Candidates should use their own words as far as possible in this summary task, otherwise it suggests that they do not understand the wording of the original and limits the evidence of their own writing skills

In **Question 2**, candidates needed first to identify and / or explain words and phrases from the text, moving towards an explanation of how language was being used by the writer via **Question 2(c)** and on to the language task, **Question 2(d)**. Successful responses referred back to Text C to locate specific choices and consider meaning in context. To aim for higher levels in **Question 2(d)**, candidates should explore and explain in some detail the precise meanings and effects of the examples of interesting or powerful language use they have identified, demonstrating understanding of the writer's purpose. Many responses included a sufficient number of appropriate examples from the relevant paragraphs, some accurate explanations of meanings and the identification of some linguistic devices, but only partially explained effects.

Most **Question 3** responses were focused on the rubric and generally all parts of the task were attempted. Good responses displayed a sound understanding of the ideas in Text C by including a range of relevant ideas that were often developed effectively and supported by appropriate detail to explain Helmuth's thoughts and feelings about the journey. Most candidates had remembered to sign off their letter as Helmuth, with the best keeping in mind their audience and purpose throughout. Responses covered a wide range of levels of achievement, with mid-range responses often missing opportunities as a consequence of adopting a more mechanical treatment of the text, leaning heavily on the order and structure of the original passage. Less successful responses either included only brief reference to the passage and / or repeated sections from the text with minimal modification. Candidates are reminded that lifting or copying from the text, even of relatively short phrases, can be an indicator of less secure skills and understanding, and should be avoided.

Paper 1 is primarily a test of Reading, however 15 of the 80 marks available are for Writing – divided between **Questions 1(f)** and **3**. In these questions, it is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing. It is advisable to plan and review responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, errors that impede communication of ideas and awkward expression. Candidates should be aware that unclear and / or inaccurate writing is likely to limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Leaving sufficient time to edit and correct responses is advisable.

### Comments on specific questions

#### **Question 1 Comprehension and summary task**

##### **Questions 1(a)–(e)**

Short answer **Questions 1(a)–(e)** required candidates to read and respond to Text A. Effective responses paid careful attention to the command words in the instructions to demonstrate effectively and efficiently the evidence of understanding required. Opportunities to target higher marks were missed by mid-range responses, through overlong explanations and / or offering own word answers where these were not required; task guidance states where use of own words is required. The inclusion of additional unnecessary material and / or extra guesses, which dilutes understanding, is often a feature of less well focused answers. Successful responses provided evidence that candidates had understood the need to interpret and use details in the text carefully to answer each of the comprehension questions to show what they could do and understand. They worked through the text from the beginning, following the order of the sub questions, to help them to identify relevant material.

- (a) Give two examples of the ways in which the Sun and Moon have been viewed, according to paragraph 2.**

In **Question 1(a)**, candidates reading closely identified efficiently the ways the Sun and Moon had been viewed according to the text. Where candidates chose to use their own words to express these ideas accurately the mark could still be awarded – for example, in the second strand of the question, some suggested 'others viewed them as places we longed to visit', or 'dreaming of visiting them'. The use of own words was not however a requirement and on occasion in less secure answers attempts to rephrase the idea clouded evidence of understanding, such as suggesting that these were places that they could already visit, rather than 'dream' of visiting.

- (b) Using your own words, explain what the text means by:**

- (i) 'reflect humorously' (lines 8–9)**  
**(ii) 'Improbable narratives' (line 9)**

In **Question 1(b)** task guidance made it clear that use of own words was required to evidence understanding; reorganising all / some of the phrase was a feature of less effective answers. Where answers failed to score both marks, it was sometimes the result of having explained just one aspect of the idea, for example explaining 'humorously' or 'narratives' only, or misinterpreting 'improbable' as 'impossible'. More effective answers were able to indicate that they had securely understood the meaning of both aspects of the phrase in the context of the text.

**(c) Re-read paragraph 4 ('Despite fictional excitement ... a flight of fancy.').**

**Give two reasons why space travel became more likely in the twentieth century.**

Candidates who paid attention to key words in the question were best placed to offer focused responses and avoid spending excess time on overlong answers to lower tariff questions. For example, in **Question 1(c)** these candidates simply gave two reasons why space travel became more likely in the twentieth century – using the bullets to help them – to ensure they had addressed the question. Responses such as 'flight of fancy', and 'technology catching up' on its own, did not demonstrate sufficient understanding of the question.

**(d) Re-read paragraphs 5 and 6 ('However, since ... government cash.').**

- (i) Identify two reasons why probes have been an advantage to space exploration.**
- (ii) Explain why humans have not so far been to Mars.**

In **Question 1(d)**, candidates understood in a test of Reading that to 'identify two reasons' and to 'explain why' they needed to recognise why probes have been an advantage to space exploration and why humans have not so far been to Mars. Some candidates blurred the requirements of **Questions 1(d)(i)** and **1(d)(ii)**, and needed to distinguish more carefully between the advantages of using probes and the point of view of human space travel.

**(e) Re-read paragraph 7 ('Whether by public ... twenty-first century.').**

**Using your own words, explain why there is a good chance that humans will land on Mars in the twenty-first century.**

In **Question 1(e)** the most successful explanations were able to derive three reasons clearly from the text and did not stray into speculation and / or misread details. Candidates used their own words, as instructed, and were able to demonstrate that they had noted and understood why there is a good chance that humans will land on Mars in the twenty-first century. A few offered empty responses, recycling the language of the original question and suggesting that 'there is a good chance that humans will land on Mars'. Most understood that there was a 'will' and the challenge of the moon landing had been overcome but more successful responses additionally identified the historical elements or the available funding.

**(f) According to Text B, what were the challenges that Sacha Dench experienced during her journey?**

**You must use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible.**

**Your summary should not be more than 120 words.**

In their responses to **Question 1(f)** most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of some relevant ideas from Text B and some understanding of the requirements of the task. All points on the mark scheme were covered over the range of answers seen, though repetition of the same idea and / or inclusion of material not relevant to the focus of the question meant opportunities were missed by some candidates to target higher marks.

Successful responses often showed evidence of having planned beforehand both the content and route through their answer. Where responses were most effective, candidates had made a consistent attempt to use their own words, to keep explanations concise and to organise their ideas helpfully. Less well-focused responses copied from the text, with minimal / no rewording; they used only syntactical rearrangement or reorganisation of the original. Whilst candidates are not expected to change all key words or terms in their prose response, they should not rely on lifting whole phrases and / or sentences from the text. Indiscriminate copying of the passage, repetition and adding comment or example should all be avoided as these do not allow candidates to successfully address the selective summary task. There appeared to be a number of candidates this session who lifted excessively from the passage, limiting their Writing mark.

Most candidates understood the task and selected relevant ideas, with only a few indiscriminately reproducing more general ideas from the passage that were not conceivably 'challenges'. The most effective responses to the selective summary task were well crafted and demonstrated concision and accurate reading of the passage and question. Candidates who had spent time reviewing their initial selection of ideas were best placed to recognise similar examples of the same idea and were often able to group those examples usefully together, such as the weather, physical and emotional struggles, avoiding repetition of ideas or inclusion of unnecessary detail. Less effective responses tended to repeat ideas or provided excess particularly in relation to trying to think like a swan or avoiding a collision, or included a lengthy introduction, which affected cohesion.

More effective responses did not rely on the structure or language of Text B to communicate ideas. They were able to demonstrate that they had understood a wide range of relevant ideas, communicating these accurately and concisely in their own words. They were able to recast information, organise it helpfully, and use their own vocabulary where feasible without changing the original idea. Less effective responses often relied on trying to offer a précis of the whole text. These included excess material and evidence of understanding was often limited. In low to mid-range answers, where lifting was present, some candidates tended to concentrate on substituting words and / or altering word order without careful selection of the central idea, which diluted evidence of reading skills and understanding. For example, errors included that the children were attempting to shoot Sasha rather than being taught to shoot at the birds. More effective responses evidenced careful reading of the text that showed candidates successfully identifying both explicit and implicit ideas. They avoided the misreading of details evident in less secure responses and they demonstrated concision, avoiding excessive, lengthy explanation, writing within the 120 words guidance.

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

- re-read Text B after reading the task instructions, in order to identify potentially relevant ideas
- plan your ideas ahead of writing your response
- explain ideas in a way that someone who had not read the passage would understand
- take time to the relevance of the ideas you select
- be careful to give only information from the passage that answers the question, avoiding examples or comment on the content of the passage
- avoid repetition of points
- write informatively and accurately in your own words, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- it is not necessary to count every word, though you should keep in mind the guidance to write 'no more than 120 words' and aim for concision.

#### Question 2

(a) **Identify a word or phrase from the text which suggests the same idea as the words underlined:**

- (i) Max and Helmuth had **great hopes** for their journey.  
(ii) The sun **was very hot and strong**.  
(iii) The radiator **overheated and made a high-pitched noise**.  
(iv) Max and Helmuth were **buried in deep and unhappy thoughts**.

Focused responses to **Question 2(a)** clearly identified in each part the correct word or phrase from Text C to correspond with the meaning of the underlined example. Simply, a word or phrase was required.

Copying out entire sentences, substituting the word or phrase and then underlining or bracketing their answer resulted in a loss of considerable time on these low tariff responses. Marks were sometimes missed where answers were incomplete, unfocused or provided excess.

(b) **Using your own words, explain what the writer means by each of the words underlined:**

Our weight was at the root of our whole problem. ‘We’ll have to downsize,’ I said. ‘We’ll have to jettison some of our luggage.’

- (i) root
- (ii) whole
- (iii) jettison

In **Question 2(b)**, successful answers considered carefully the context for each of the words underlined, though some candidates gave more than one answer or long phrases,

(c) **Use one example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests the feelings of the men about camping out in the open on this particular night.**

**Use your own words in your explanation.**

**At eleven o’clock we gratefully pitched camp. Sleeping on camp beds in the open with the gentle warm breezes caressing our faces was wonderful.**

In **Question 2(c)**, where candidates focused clearly on using one example from the text offering denotation followed by connotation, they were best placed to demonstrate their understanding. Effective responses often centred on one of the images, highlighting in their explanation the feelings of the men about camping out in the open on this particular night. Some explored how thankful they were and the relief that the long, hot day was over. Many explored an aspect of the gentle breeze image, with more successful answers offering a full explanation likening it to feelings of comfort or the loving movements of a motherly touch. A feature of less successful responses was repetition of the language of the text, for example explaining ‘gratefully’ as grateful or ‘gentle’ as gently. Some of the least successful responses attempted to paraphrase the whole extract, without selecting a precise example.

(d) **Re-read paragraphs 2 and 14.**

- **Paragraph 2 begins ‘In front of us lay ...’ and is about Max’s expectations and experience in the Dead Sea.**
- **Paragraph 14 begins ‘Easier in our minds ...’ and is about what Max and Helmuth see while driving in the evening.**

**Explain how the writer uses language to convey meaning and to create effect in these paragraphs. Choose three examples of words or phrases from each paragraph to support your answer. Your choices should include the use of imagery.**

Successful responses to **Question 2(d)** offered clear analysis of three relevant selections in both parts, often beginning with explanations of meaning and moving on to consider effect. Such responses demonstrated understanding of how the writer was using language through detailed discussion of sharply focused choices. Rather than selecting the first three choices in each half they came across, or the most ‘obvious’ literary devices, successful responses often identified relevant selections and then explained them. Having selected relevant examples to discuss, the focus needs to be on the quality of the analysis. Responses to **Question 2(d)** are expected to take the form of continuous prose in order to allow candidates to explore their choices fully and consider how language examples are working in context. Some of the most effective responses explored how the judiciously selected choices worked both individually and together to influence the reader’s experience. In a number of instances, incorrect paragraphs were selected. Candidates should allow sufficient time to plan their responses, including underlining key words in the question, such as the numbers of the paragraphs and the number of examples required from each paragraph.

The most successful responses considered the motivation of the author for making word choices within the context and avoided simply feature spotting without explaining the image or how it is created. The responses considered words within choices individually, as well as suggesting how they worked within the longer phrase and / or in the context of the description as a whole. Some candidates were better able to recognise images in the second part than in the first part of the question, which was often a feature of Level 3 responses. In **part (a)**, effective responses recognised the visual humour of the scene and the wry tone. Many answers had identified 'motionless, like a cork' as a potentially interesting example to discuss, with most able to offer at least a basic explanation of stillness or floating on the surface without effort. More secure responses went on to explore this strange contrast of moving without making any movements and made links to the lack of control and an inability to be able to swim in a 'conventional sense'.

However, a number of answers missed opportunities to target higher marks by limiting their comments to labelling of the device only. Opportunities were missed in some answers, such as where a chosen phrase contained more than one word of interest and the answer moved on too quickly, offering a more general explanation of the phrase as a whole and / or only considering one of the words it contained. For example, 'expanse' was often understood as vast or extending over a large area, while 'leaden' was often ignored.

In **part (b)**, the most successful responses about paragraph 14 discussed the contrast between the stars and the storks with the night sky and the dark rocks using high quality comments. Many commented on the beauty of the night with understanding. Comments also considered the power of nature, calm and intelligent, looking over (amused or protectively) the tired, inexperienced young men, drawing the connections between the two paragraphs. Successful comments on 'the long, serious gaze of philosophers' and their observations of the travellers included comments indicating a sense of the storks' wisdom. These answers were often able to visualise the image, using explanation of the meaning / what you could 'see happening' in context as the starting point for their explanation of effect. Less successful responses sometimes adopted a 'technique spotting' approach by identifying literary techniques. This approach often led to generic comments about the effects of the techniques rather than the words themselves which limited the response. Other candidates repeated the same explanation after each choice, for example, that the scenery was beautiful. Some candidates simply repeated the words of the original choice in the explanation. Imprecise choices, selecting whole sentences and repeating the words of the passage without explanation were all features of less successful responses. There was some misreading that it was the rocks that were shining, rather than the reflection of the light on the storks. Careful reading might have helped some candidates avoid such errors. Some candidates selected one or more less interesting choices such as 'easier in our minds', 'night journeys' or 'long journey' that did not engage them in a productive discussion about how language can convey meanings and effects.

Selections in **Question 2(d)** need to be clear and deliberate, helping to focus the analysis which follows. Candidates are reminded it is the quality of their analysis which attracts marks. Answers which simply list literary devices used and / or copy from each paragraph without careful consideration of the examples to be discussed are not likely to evidence the skills and understanding necessary to target higher marks in a language question. Candidates are reminded of the need to ensure that their explanations in **Question 2(d)** are in their own words and can be clearly understood. Whilst the task does not assess writing skills, encouraging candidates to explore their choices fully and operate at the very edges of their vocabulary, it is nevertheless important that candidates read back their explanations to check that what they have written is what they mean and evidences their understanding.

### Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- focus on the question carefully to ensure that the quotations you select for comment are relevant – do not copy out lines or chunks of text, miss out key words or include only part of the choice
- where you are trying to explain meaning check that your explanation makes sense and is correct in context
- avoid repeating the wording of the choice as an explanation of effect
- when explaining how language is working avoid generalised comments: explain how and in what way your chosen example does work within the context of the passage
- to explain effects, think of how the reader's understanding is enhanced by the use of language when reading the word or phrase, because of its connotations and associations
- consider each of the key words within an identified choice separately as well as how they work together
- allow time to edit your answers – for example, to add in further detail and / or correct errors to help show you have read carefully and understood.

### Question 3

Imagine you are Helmuth from Text C. Straight after the evening that you and Max pitch camp, you write a letter to your mother.

In your letter you should comment on:

- the most enjoyable parts of your journey so far and why they were enjoyable
- the challenges you and Max faced and how you overcame these challenges
- the problems you foresee for the rest of the trip and how you might have been better prepared for them.

Question 3 requires candidates to consider an alternative viewpoint to the passage, writing from the perspective of Helmuth. More effective responses to this question selected and condensed the events in the passage, modifying and adapting the ideas to create a suitable style for a letter from Helmuth to his mother about his journey, straight after the evening that they pitched camp, using a highly convincing voice. Though the task instruction stated the letter to be 'straight after' the men pitched camp, some included incorrect details of the luggage being abandoned or left on the side of the road prior to setting up camp. The question offered candidates three guiding bullets to help them identify relevant ideas for their letter which they might use to show that they had read closely and understood regarding the enjoyable parts of the journey, the challenges and any foreseeable problems. Each bullet point contains a second strand which indicates that an explanation is required for each. Where candidates had paid careful attention to each aspect of each of the bullets, they were often able to develop ideas, both explicit and implicit, in the text to include convincing, well related suggestions of Helmuth's feelings, judgements, opinions and attitudes.

The letters tended to adopt an appropriate register, though some used the text in a 'mechanical' way, addressing the three bullet points in corresponding paragraphs that did not always sound natural. Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had understood the text and task in at least general terms. Many had engaged with both task and text to offer competent responses, evidencing some evaluation and interpreting ideas rather than simply repeating them. A number of candidates wrote from Max's viewpoint, rather than Helmuth's, which resulted in some misreading, particularly in relation to the description of floating in the Dead Sea and the heavy luggage that had been '*lovingly packed*' by Helmuth's mother. Others wrote superficially as Helmuth, but described Max's actions as Helmuth's, suggesting some confusion and diluting evidence of understanding – for example detailing incorrectly Helmuth swimming in the Dead Sea and suffering discomfort either as well as or instead of Max.

On the whole, candidates seemed familiar with the requirements of an informal letter with most adopting an appropriate style. A feature of better responses was even attention paid to the three bullet points with clear modification of the ideas, but always remaining firmly tethered to the passage, demonstrating that they had revisited the text to plan their response from Helmuth's viewpoint. Where the route through the answer had been considered carefully beforehand, candidates were often able to include a good range of relevant ideas – both explicit and implicit – over all three bullets, making and exploiting links between ideas where useful. Where responses relied on just tracking through the text, replaying the passage, answers were less focused and often became over reliant on the language of the text to communicate – signalling insecure understanding of both task and text. The least successful responses copied sections of text with minimal modification and / or included inaccuracies as a result of misreading.

The first bullet point invited the candidates to comment on the most enjoyable parts of the journey so far for Helmuth and why they were enjoyable. Where candidates had identified key details related to the enjoyable parts and challenges of the journey to explain them in their own words, they were better able to evidence understanding and evaluation. For example, whilst many were able to suggest that the experience of swimming in the Dead Sea was enjoyable, better answers went on to develop the sense of an adventure and how exhilarating it was to camp out in the open at night. This was sometimes addressed with erroneous details, most notably Helmuth swimming in the Dead Sea. In successful responses, development would often consist of how entertaining Max was, with some candidates commenting on the humour of the scene and how comical Max looked, or the effect the night sky had on Helmuth, including the quiet, ethereal majesty of the storks. Although the enjoyable parts were listed, the development about why they were enjoyable, occasionally posed a challenge to candidates. Some mid-range responses only hinted at the experience of swimming in the Dead Sea through passing detail and opportunities for development were not taken.

In relation to the second bullet, almost all answers recognised the difficult terrain, and problems associated with the weather, their car and luggage. The second bullet point often the most fully addressed, elicited a reproduction of the section about the car going up the mountain which became quite pedestrian. Responses evidencing otherwise reasonable reading often missed opportunities to aim for higher levels through filling their response with repetition of unfiltered narrative details – listing for example the track was *'stony and steep'*; *'the May Sun blazed fiercely'*; *'the radiator thermometer was already showing over 90 degrees'* and *'the radiator boiled and whistled'*. Where information was lifted from the text with limited modification this often diluted evidence of understanding. More interesting development was offered by a number of candidates about the tension between Max and Helmuth over the luggage. More successful responses recognised Helmuth and Max's disagreement and disillusion and handled the reference to Helmuth's mother being the cause of too much luggage delicately and with tact.

In dealing with ideas related to bullet three most answers were able to recognise that the car might break down or Helmuth wanted a better camera, though some relied on lifting phrases and / or replaying incidents such as having to *'jettison'* some of their luggage, rather than making his reflections and feelings on those details explicit. A number of more effective answers offered well related development suggesting for example that they exhibited a sense of false optimism or anticipated an emotional strain during the remainder of their long journey. The third bullet point was often an afterthought with many candidates struggling to produce cogent ideas that were linked to the text. Some comments tended to be rather generic about taking a journey and included a fear of not having enough supplies, such as food, water, appropriate clothing, sun cream or a lack of air conditioning. Less successful responses that moved away from the task as set to speculate about encountering wild animals or bandits were not rooted in the passage. Candidates need to remember that any development offered has to be rooted in the facts and details of passage to be creditworthy as evidence of their reading skills and understanding.

On occasion, unforced errors with punctuation and grammar did detract from otherwise more effective writing, resulting for example in some awkward expression. Candidates are advised to leave sufficient time to read back through their response to correct any mistakes or inconsistencies in their use of language – for example to ensure that meaning is clear and the register sounds appropriate. The Writing mark reflected the clarity, fluency and coherence of the response and how well it used language to write an effective letter to a family member. Though examples of formal valedictions such as *'Yours sincerely'*, indicated some loss of focus in relation to the intended audience, most candidates had set out remembering that they were writing to a parent, with the best keeping this in mind throughout the response. Where responses lapsed into more mechanical reproductions of ideas and / or tended towards lifting, the audience had often been forgotten and it was not unusual for such responses to be signed off in the candidate's own name. In the least effective answers, lapses into narrative, often accompanied by copying chunks of the passage, indicated an inconsistency of style, whilst copying directly from the text was often the most frequent feature of the least effective writing; this affected evidence of both reading and writing skills. Meanwhile, answers at the top end were often presented in an appropriately warm and friendly tone for an informal letter from a son to his mother and carefully structured for the benefit for the reader.

**Advice to candidates on Question 3:**

- read Text C carefully, more than once, including any information given in the introduction, and reconsider any points that you are unsure of
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition – your answer should be based on the ideas in Text C
- keep in mind the new perspective required for the task – for example, writing from a different character’s point of view
- answer clearly, in your own words, creating a suitable voice and tone for the persona of your response
- develop and extend your ideas by considering the perspective of the given persona at the time of writing, including explaining feelings or commenting from the point of view of the character you are writing as
- think carefully about audience and purpose
- give equal attention to each of the three bullet points, answering in reasonable detail
- look for the clues and evidence in the text to help you make judgements about characters and situations and do not invent information and details beyond the scope of the passage
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response
- you do not need to count the exact number of words in your answer – the number of words suggested by the question is a guide to help you plan your time, not a limit.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

---

Paper 0500/21  
Directed Writing and Composition

## Key messages

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

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

- use an appropriate form, style and register in both questions
- structure ideas and organise their writing effectively to persuade and engage the reader
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct varied sentences accurately, with a clear attempt to influence and interest the reader
- use precise and wide-ranging vocabulary, appropriate for the task and style required.

## General comments

Examiners found that in most cases a secure understanding was shown of what was expected in both directed writing and in composition writing. A large majority of responses were sustained and there were few very brief scripts or responses which showed significant misunderstanding of the task or question. Similarly, nearly all candidates understood the instructions for the examination and attempted **Question 1** and either a descriptive or narrative writing task. In **Question 1**, only a few responses were mostly or wholly copied from the texts in the Reading Booklet Insert, although some lifting of phrases or sentences was fairly common.

Nearly all responses showed a clear understanding of and engagement with the topic of the reading texts in **Question 1**. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and format for a speech to give to a specific audience of mainly young people and there was in many a clear attempt to consider the different aspects of the subject represented in the texts. The majority of candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the passages. More effective answers here also tended to structure responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the texts in a coherent response, often concluding with some more specific advice to the audience. Comments were anchored in the ideas given in the reading texts. In the middle of the mark range, responses tended to reproduce the points made in the texts, sometimes with an opinion given about some of the points made. A substantial number of responses at this level made some comments about the ideas in the texts but were less successful in probing or offering judgements about them.

Less successful responses tended to repeat the ideas in the texts, rather than selecting points and commenting on them. In some responses at this level, this resulted in a lack of cohesion and some simple reflection without comment on competing ideas.

Candidates generally made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure their response and the ideas in the texts were scrutinised thoughtfully in more effective responses. Sometimes, insufficient use was made of the reading material and opinions on the appropriateness of proposals for the curriculum were offered with limited reference to the specific ideas in the texts, or sometimes limited acknowledgement of the specific audience for the speech. There was, however, often a clear adaptation of style and register to appeal to an audience of young people and their teachers, with some understanding shown of how speeches are structured and presented.

The most effective responses paid specific attention to the audience and style required for the task. These were lively but evaluative in style, using ideas from the texts to create and structure arguments and often

employing rhetorical devices such as questions and exclamations or humour. Most in the middle range of marks wrote in a more straightforward style and there was less focus on arriving at a clear judgement based on the texts. Less effective responses relied more on the sequence of the points made in the texts with less selection and reordering of points from the originals. This sometimes resulted in responses which had less overall coherence.

In **Section B**, effective responses to the composition questions were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected, descriptive or narrative, and of the features of good writing in each.

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and most responses gave a range of descriptive detail without resorting to narrative. Many responses to the descriptive writing questions were very effective and sustained. There were some imaginative evocations of camping experiences which had been significant in various ways to the writer in the first descriptive writing question which Examiners found engaging and effective. A wide range of approaches was employed in the second task, with some highly effective and detailed evocations of the sights, sounds and atmosphere of a wet day observed from a window. In both cases, these descriptions were more effective when there was specific detail and where the description created an atmosphere which evoked the scene credibly and engagingly. Less effective responses to both descriptive writing questions tended to stray too much into narrative and lose some descriptive focus, particularly in the first task. In the second, less successful responses tended to offer a more generalised townscape or storm scene which did not carry the same emotional impact and resonance as the more specific and effective descriptions.

The best narrative writing engaged the reader with well-drawn and interesting characters and scenarios which were credible. Both narrative questions elicited a very wide range of approaches and interpretations and Examiners awarded marks across the range here. Effective and engaging responses to the first question, which required the inclusion of a given phrase, used the phrase to help give shape and purpose to the narrative while less successful pieces included it in only an arbitrary or disjointed fashion, sometimes reducing the coherence of the narrative. While some included more mundane events, other less successful narratives were less credible or were simple, chronological accounts, under-developed in style and less cohesive in structure.

Some composition responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in specific genres. The best descriptive writing was specific, used some original and thought-provoking imagery and effectively evoked the atmosphere of the time and place described. The conscious shaping of narratives to interest and intrigue the reader and the creation of credible characters were features understood by the most effective writers who chose narrative writing options.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section A**

**Imagine you are a candidate at a school which is considering introducing eSports as part of the sports curriculum.**

**Write the speech you give to your school community, giving your views.**

**In your speech you should:**

- **evaluate the views and attitudes about eSports given in both texts**
- **give your own views, based on what you have read, about whether eSports should be offered in schools.**

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

**Write about 250 to 350 words. Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 25 marks for the quality of your writing.**

Examiners awarded high marks for Reading where there was some probing and evaluation of the ideas in the reading material, rather than a straightforward listing and reproduction of the points in the texts. Where the speech was also both accurate and ambitious in vocabulary and style, with a clear understanding of the appropriate style and register for the specific task, the highest marks for Writing could be awarded.

More effective responses here focused carefully on the arguments in the texts, with the highest marks awarded for those which handled the different, sometimes conflicting views with confidence and perceptive evaluation. The extent to which the implicit ideas and opinions contained in the texts were probed and scrutinised tended to determine the level of candidates' achievement. These implicit ideas often involved, for example, some discussion of the possible impact on candidates' physical health of the essentially sedentary nature of eSports, and what was seen as already excessive dependence on technology. In responses given marks in Level 6 for Reading, Examiners often rewarded some careful grasp of the implications suggested by the texts: analysis of the comments on the nature and definition of sport itself and the writer's dismissive attitude to gaming in Text A elicited some focused commentary and thoughtful evaluation of possible generational prejudice regarding the concerns of young people; there was some probing of the suggestions in Text B of vested interests driving the popularity of eSports, and the degree to which educational establishments might be seen as complicit in this aspect of their growth. More effective responses homed in on the appropriateness of including eSports in the school curriculum, as directed in the task, and often showed some perceptive evaluation of the responsibilities of educators in this area.

Responses given marks in the middle range tended to be more straightforward, with some reflection, perhaps, on both the benefits and pitfalls of eSports in schools or whether they can be considered sports at all, and the inevitability of acceptance simply because of their global popularity and reach. Responses at this level often included some opinion or reaction to the ideas in the texts, such as comment on whether the inclusion of eSports in the curriculum would lead to obesity or other indicators of poor health, or whether they should be included simply because young people liked them.

Responses given marks in Level 4 often showed an understanding of the main ideas in the texts and offered sensible views on them while not always examining or probing them consistently. Examiners also noted that the focus of the comments was more general and missed some of the opportunities afforded by the task to allow young people to express their views of the choices offered to them by their schools and by education in general.

Less effective responses showed some understanding of the ideas in the passage but there was reference to a narrow range of points or there was some misunderstanding of the details. The statistics offered by Text B in rebuttal of the 'gamer stereotype', for example, were often reproduced without comment and where there was some opinion or discussion, there was some tendency to offer the popularity of gaming as sufficient reason to include eSports in the curriculum. Weaknesses in organising ideas coherently were characteristic of responses in the lower levels. The sequence and organisation of ideas often reflected closely the order of ideas in the texts and this sometimes resulted in contradictory or disconnected

responses. Responses at this level also often had fewer characteristics of a speech or the information in the texts was not well adapted in terms of register and style for the purpose and audience required.

### Marks for reading

The most effective responses adopted a consistently evaluative, critical stance and read effectively between the lines of the texts, drawing inferences and making judgements about whether the inclusion of eSports in the curriculum would be largely beneficial or detrimental to young people. Most responses included the evidence in Text A of the global reach of eSports and the cited arguments for its recognition as an Olympic sport, with more effective responses demonstrating awareness of the writer's dismissal of them. Most responses also included the evidence from Text B of the exponential growth of eSports' popularity and the huge scale of video game tournaments and the streaming of them.

The majority of responses at all levels of achievement argued in support of the proposal to include eSports in the curriculum, the most successful ones often subverting the same arguments used by its opponents for their own ends. Thoughtful responses recognised the drawbacks to the proposal, such as parents' and more traditional employers' likely objections, often suggesting ways in which they could be mitigated which went beyond simple 'fixes' and were in themselves evaluative. The possibility of employment in the games industry mentioned in Text A was a source of discussion in responses at various levels of achievement, and while less effective ones were content with asserting that 'lots of money' could be made, some high-level responses explored the potential of young, inventive minds in entrepreneurship reaching to the highest level. At all levels, the idea of inclusiveness was promoted.

In some responses in the middle range, the discussion centred on the right of everyone to enjoy the benefits of success and acceptance usually reserved for those involved in traditional sports; 'I dread sports periods! I'd love to be able to show them what I can do with video games.' Some higher level responses probed the idea of diversity being at the very heart of modern education and asserted that to deny such opportunities to less athletic candidates was deeply prejudicial. Often citing the evidence in Text B of 'massive global brands' sponsoring tournaments, there were also responses at varying levels of effectiveness which strenuously rejected the proposal to include eSports in the school curriculum: some high level responses probed the moral implications of schools appearing to validate the actions of fast-food and energy drink sellers in exploiting young people through their extensive involvement in the industry; the essentially 'unhealthy' nature of the activity in reducing the time both in and out of school available for more health-giving pursuits was claimed to be inimical to any philosophy of education.

While supporters of the proposal often argued that funding support for the move from commercial companies could bring great benefit to the whole school, opponents saw this as '... bringing the marketplace into the school. Our teachers and governors should be protecting us from that!' Those in the middle range also based their objections on the potential effect on candidates' health and weight of spending many hours with no more physical exertion than moving a joystick but in a much more prosaic, limited way. The task specified the audience for the speech to be the school community and most responses reflected this in both the style of the response and the ideas selected from the texts.

A common approach in Level 5 and 6 responses was that video gaming and eSports were part of the irresistible march of technological progress, and that educational establishments should have the vision to embrace that if they were truly serving their candidates' interests. Responses given Level 6 marks for Reading showed a confident grasp of the underlying ideas and implicit views shown in the texts, and the material was assimilated into a coherent argument, often based on demonstrating how the skills of high-level gaming were inseparable from those required for academic and career success. Responses awarded marks in Level 5 characteristically covered the material with some degree of overview and thoroughness, offering some clear evaluation of the proposed inclusion of eSports in the curriculum. There was often too some assertion of financial and other gains for the school and some appreciation of the possibilities of commercial exploitation.

Where some comment or opinion was offered, mostly without specific reference to particular points in the texts but generally relevant to the ideas in them, marks in Level 4 were usually awarded. These comments usually focused on the popularity of eSports and the need to reflect their importance in the sports curriculum.

Examiners usually awarded marks in Level 3 for Reading where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the texts, and some selection of ideas from them, but without the more implicit meanings mentioned above or with less scrutiny of the points made in the passages. There was often less argument and focus on using the texts to arrive at a judgement about the proposal, though some simple opinion based on personal preference was often given. These comments tended to be more general in nature, such as the observation that

'Everybody knows that teenagers love video games', or 'There are good jobs in eSports.'. While such ideas were derived from a reading of the texts, they were often more general and not as well anchored in the specific ideas in them.

Comments made at this level were given mostly in candidates' own words, although there was usually some minor 'lifting' from the texts. Less successful responses showed some misunderstanding of the statistics offered in Text B and a failure to grasp the writer's point of view in Text A. A few drifted away from the passages or addressed the material thinly, and many given marks in low Level 3 and below contained much copied material. A small number of responses did not address the task as it was given, but rather focused only—and sometimes at length—on proving that eSports should be recognised as an Olympic sport, occasionally without any mention of schools at all. Where a mark of 6 was awarded, some firmer links with the passages were needed, whereas 5 was generally given for very thin or mainly lifted responses in which there was an insecure grasp of the ideas in the passage.

### **Marks for Writing**

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

### **Style and audience**

Candidates could adopt a range of appropriate styles and registers for their speeches and could show their understanding of the intended audience of young people in a variety of ways. Across the ability range, an apt, fairly conversational but standard English style allowed for Examiners to consider marks for Level 4 and above where a 'sometimes effective style' was required. Although not always sustained, many articles began with a suitable greeting and a lively introduction to the topic of the speech which engaged the interest of the reader.

Some high scoring responses used a more rhetorical style, presenting their arguments in a light-hearted way but making their case effectively and with some impact. At the highest level responses demonstrated an unswerving attention to their audience — the whole 'school community' — not only in the appropriateness of their register but also in the selection of points for their argument. Here, the direction of the case for or against the inclusion of eSports in the curriculum was clear from the beginning; counterarguments that might be expected from the audience were then courteously considered and dealt with, sometimes by subverting them to the speech-writer's own purpose. Some adopted the voices of candidates who had personally suffered from the 'exclusive yet mandatory' provision of the 'traditional' sports curriculum. One awarded very high marks was an impassioned appeal on behalf of the 'nerds' of schools everywhere whose talents are 'neither recognised nor valued' and who are 'forced to suffer through drills when we could instead be enhancing and putting into practice our true skills of intellect, reflexes and technology.' This response showed a sophisticated awareness of the concerns of parents, teachers and governors, anticipating and responding to them in a highly persuasive manner. This tone of authority acquired through values shared with a young audience was a subtle and successful adaptation of style and register for many high-level responses.

In the middle range of marks, Examiners could sometimes award marks in Level 4 even where more technical writing skills were lacking and suggested a Level 3 mark, if the style and register adopted were appropriate for the task and the audience. A clear, consistent attempt to engage a young audience rather than make straightforward statements based on the texts could sometimes compensate for other elements of style such as weak spelling or insecure grammar.

Level 3 marks were usually awarded where the reading material was largely reproduced so that the organisation and sequence of sentences and paragraphs reflected the original and were not adapted to create a coherent article.

### **Structure**

Responses awarded high marks for Writing handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined so that the judgements which emerged were clearly derived from the ideas in the texts but the response was not dependent on them for its structure and sequence. At the highest level, the lines of argument were set from the first paragraph and the issues in the two texts were addressed as a whole rather than a disjointed response to two quite different texts. The opening and concluding paragraphs of these effective speeches tended to introduce and sum up the main points, with the intervening sections arguing a coherent case.

Responses given Level 5 marks for Writing tended to reflect a range of points made in each text but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed so that conflicting ideas were addressed separately. The main disadvantages of eSports in the curriculum were often addressed first, being derived from the material in Text A, with some discussion of the stereotypes of gamers and some deliberate selection of points about the huge popularity of eSports mostly derived from Text B following. An overall coherence and structure were required for this Level which was usually less evident in responses below Level 5.

Less successful responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more tied to the sequencing of the texts. In most cases the information given in the texts was offered with some rewording but not reordering of ideas and there was limited awareness of how the information in the texts could be used to marshal an argument for or against offering eSports in schools.

### **Accuracy**

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled as well as appropriate in tone and register was given a writing mark in Level 6. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. There was a range of precisely selected and complex vocabulary, and sentence structures varied and were consciously used to create specific effects. Rhetorical devices, such as the use of contentious, challenging questions or assertions, were often used at this level, such as 'Do not you want a curriculum which is inclusive, important and imaginative?' or, in comparing eSports with 'traditional' sports, 'Both will teach perseverance and integrity. Both will allow us to maintain full-time jobs. Both will allow us to turn a passion into a future.'

Some complex sentences structures were chosen which helped to balance and weigh up contending views and complex clauses were controlled by careful punctuation.

Level 5 responses were usually purposeful and clear, though perhaps not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary or as precise in register or style as those given higher marks. Level 4 responses, as described in the marking guidelines, were 'sometimes effective' but not consistently so. Although the style was usually fairly plain with fewer consciously created effects or rhetoric, the language used was apt and generally accurate. A range of quite basic errors was made at this level which limited the effectiveness of the style but did not affect clarity of meaning. Commonly used words were also wrongly spelled in responses at this level, especially homophones and some words used in the passages such as curriculum, tournaments and athleticism, and inconsistent use of personal pronouns was quite common. There were occasional lapses in the use of definite and indefinite articles (usually omission) and some grammatical disagreement, often between plurals and verb forms.

Faulty sentence structures, insecure tense use or too much lifted or copied material often kept writing marks for **Question 1** below Level 4, even where other technical skills such as spelling were more accurate. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation and grammar errors which meant that Examiners could not award marks in Level 4. The omission of definite or indefinite articles, tense errors and agreement errors were more frequent and more damaging to meaning at this level. In rare cases, material from the texts was copied and responses where this occurred more substantially could not be given marks in Band 4 for Writing or for Reading because neither the content or the style of the response was the candidate's own.

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

- be prepared to challenge and disagree with ideas in the passages and always justify and explain the reasons why you agree or disagree.
- make sure the ideas you use are derived from the passages
- think about the purpose of the texts in the reading material and how that affects what is being said.
- aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passages as well some depth in evaluating them.
- be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly. Think carefully about the kind of style which suits your task and the audience.
- check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing definite or indefinite articles, weaknesses in grammar or misspellings of key words which are in the passage.

## Section B

### Descriptive Writing

**2 Write a description with the title, ‘Camping Out’.**

**3 Describe the view from a window on a wet day.**

Both descriptive writing questions were equally popular choices for candidates. There was some range of scenarios evident in responses to the first question, including beaches, fields, and even a family’s back yard, but the majority were woodland and forest, and very often a clearing with a campfire. There were often strongly evocative descriptions of companionable endeavours and youthful mischief from the candidate’s own experience, the importance of friendship being a significant theme. Although there were some detailed and effective responses featuring family camping trips, most descriptions centred on small groups of friends camping out, giving opportunities for the evocation of intense early experiences of first independence from parental control.

In the second question, most responses made good use of the direction in the task to focus their descriptive gaze quite narrowly, often producing effectively specific and detailed images. In responses to this question a narrative structure was almost always avoided in focusing on what could be seen from a particular perspective rather than recounting experience that the writer was involved in, although nearly all responses to both questions employed a first-person narrator.

In responses to the first question, at all levels of achievement, certain tropes became familiar: hotdogs and marshmallows being roasted on the campfire, ‘s’mores’ being devoured, tents collapsing or weather suddenly worsening. Some very effective description focused on the urban writer’s thoughts and feelings in response to a first exposure to the sights, sounds and smells of nature, and also to the conviviality of a campfire gathering. One high-level response conveyed the misery of an unwilling camper most effectively: after successfully evoking the torrid heat of the night and the fetid and mosquito-ridden atmosphere of the tent where he lay sleepless, assaulted by the loud snoring and malodorous breath of his ‘hung-over’ companions, he escapes the tent but finds no relief. ‘Flies continued to buzz in my ear, like an annoying alarm clock that would not switch off no matter how many times you pressed it. Trees rustled, whispering and gossiping about my misfortune, while every other sound made my heart race: a stick snapping, a branch falling, an owl hooting—I jumped at every one of them.’ Here, with unostentatious but perfectly judged vocabulary, was the ‘convincing overall picture’ required by Level 6 of the Mark Scheme.

The scenario created for another effective response was of a family weekend with the narrator being a most unwilling participant; everything about it is resented, colouring the experience gloomily, but when an argument drives the narrator out of the tent to wander beyond the clearing, that experience undergoes a transformation as the sulky city-dweller begins to observe the natural world in close detail. At first the images reflect the writer’s sour mood: ‘Tall, pointed strands of jade ... lime razors of grass ...’, but the purposeful scurrings of a beetle first intrigue and then enchant the observer; ‘The round shiny exterior was almost shell-like, a strong protective coating. I grinned. It was just like me, its defensive layer of armour as much a protection as my systematic layering of coats and clothing was for me.’ There were many other responses which successfully created a picture of the campsite and its environment, often with some closely observed detail, but which were perhaps less successful in evoking the experience of camping for the reader. Unusual or apparently insignificant but closely observed details created an impression of reality in the best responses. Most were constructed in a fairly straightforward way, with each paragraph devoted to some aspect of the scene. Most responses at all levels of achievement were sustained and developed. At the highest level, responses showed skill in building a detailed, often emotionally charged scene. These consciously crafted pieces held the reader’s attention by linking the different elements described in an engaging, cohesive response. Level 6 responses were characterised by this cohesive structure as well as carefully chosen detail.

Level 5 responses tended to use a wide range of details and were well-constructed, if a little less effective and cohesive overall. At the bottom of Level 5 and in Level 4, responses were generally sustained and competently organised but usually a little more predictable. Selected scenes and details at this level tended to involve more stereotypical ideas, such as towering oak trees or ‘cotton candy’ clouds; the beauty of the landscape was often asserted though sometimes lacked the sense of a specific, clearly observed place seen in more effective pieces, although the transition from day to night, or the coming of dawn, was often well-managed. Level 4 descriptions for Content and Structure tended to become unbalanced or included over-long narrative introductions such as packing for the trip, or picking up the other members of the group. In both Level 4 and Level 5 some catastrophe, of varying proportions, often overtook the group. This often provided for lively or humorous description, but in less effective responses could lead the writer into

extended and inappropriate narrative. The description sometimes became a more straightforward list of what was seen and heard and lacking any emotional engagement, did not present the 'mostly convincing picture' or the 'well-chosen images' required for a mark in Level 5.

Less effective responses given marks in Level 3 or below often included less well organised lists of details briefly given rather than developed. Other responses at this level became a series of events, often outlining the activities undertaken on the camping trip with limited focus on description beyond some more clichéd elements. Most responses to this question were organised and paragraphed but at this level the descriptions of each feature were brief and general rather than developed and specific. At this level too a few responses lost sight of the requirements of the genre and offered 'spooky' stories almost devoid of description.

The second question produced some effective and highly skilled descriptions. At differing levels of achievement responses made good use of the specific perspective provided by the task, often with closely observed detail. Elsewhere descriptions of stormy landscapes and widespread devastation which would not be visible from a single viewpoint undermined the cohesiveness of the description, reducing the marks for Content and Structure. More effective descriptions focused on the ways in which the outlook affected the observer's mood, with many responses being sombre or muted, often very effectively. At the higher levels a double perspective was sometimes successfully employed, minute details of the window such as flaking paint or a vision-distorting crack in the glass framing the view of the rainy and more distant exterior. There were familiar tropes here too: raindrops racing each other down the windowpane, the horns of congested traffic outside, the colours of hurrying umbrellas. At the higher levels of achievement these enhanced evocative and well-drawn exterior scenes. Sometimes the generally sombre mood of responses was relieved by flashes of brilliant colour against a monochrome background. In another response, a suddenly happier vision appeared as the joy of a child puddle-jumping in bright yellow rubber boots was observed. In several responses, the external weather was a catalyst to the description of the writer's emotional landscape, and here sometimes the clearing of the weather and 'watery sunlight' brought a lifting of the mood in the conclusion.

Examiners gave marks in low Level 5 or Level 4 where there was limited organisation of the details described or where strings of details were listed with less overall cohesion. At this level also there were some responses where the picture was confusing rather than convincing, with waterfalls and tsunamis intruding upon what had appeared to be an urban landscape. Most also included some relevant detail and description of feeling, although sometimes only stated rather than conveyed in more effective, engaging ways. Some ideas and images tended to be more predictable, although most pieces were quite sustained and paragraphed appropriately.

Less effective responses given marks below Level 4 were generally characterised by confusion between features of descriptive and narrative writing or they were, in a very few cases, extremely brief and undeveloped.

High marks for Style and Accuracy often reflected the precise and varied vocabulary used as well as the technical accuracy of the writing. In both descriptive tasks, similar details were often included but better responses had a much wider range of vocabulary, precisely deployed to create specific effects. Highly effective responses showed an ability to use both simple and complex language and sentence structures to create subtle, complex atmospheres. In less successful responses, vocabulary was sometimes wide-ranging and complex but used with less precision. In a few cases, this insecure use of language resulted in a style which was difficult to follow and the credit which could be given for a wide ranging vocabulary was lost by its imprecise use and consequent lack of clear meaning.

As is often the case in less secure descriptive writing, tenses switched between past and present, sometimes within sentences. Incomplete or verbless sentences also affected marks given in the middle range, even where other technical aspects of style were more accurate. Lapses in grammar, perhaps minor in isolation but more damaging when persistent, also kept responses out of Level 4 for Style and Accuracy. These included misagreement and the omission of definite and indefinite articles.

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

- try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content. Choose a scenario which gives you a range of details on which to focus.
- keep your focus on details which will help you evoke a particular atmosphere.
- write sentences with proper verbs and do not switch tenses.
- use vocabulary precisely: complex words used wrongly do not help your style.

## **Narrative Writing**

**4 Write a story which includes the words, ‘... that was not very successful ...’.**

**5 Write a story with the title, ‘An unexpected meeting’.**

Both narrative writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range, the second question particularly, and there was a very wide range of plots, characters and scenarios in these responses. Examiners sometimes saw narratives which did not comfortably fit with either title or where the given title or the quotation in the question was not used or the story did not really use these ideas. Occasionally, narratives seemed to be answers to previously set questions rather than those on the current paper and in some cases the Content and Structure marks were lower as a result.

Effective responses, as is often the case in narrative writing, were well organised and thoughtful interpretations of the title which used engaging, credible ideas to create developed stories. An ability to shape the narrative, to produce moments of tension or drama and to vary the pace of the story were credited by Examiners as essential elements of narrative writing, as was the use of characterisation to create believable protagonists and characters.

There were various structures employed in effective responses to the first question, as well as more straightforward chronological recount. The idea of success or failure was central to the plot of more effective stories, rather than those where the given phrase was included in an arbitrary manner or the lack of success was of very minor significance in the narrative. Some responses where there were structural flaws such as an abrupt or partly unexplained ending could still be awarded a mark in Level 6 because of the quality of other narrative skills such as the gripping tension created or the engaging characterisation or scene-setting. One such response told a story of violent bullying from the point of view of a victim who turns to face his attackers. The tension created by his attempted flight from his pursuers was gripping. In other top-level responses it was the creation of telling detail that engaged the reader, regardless of the genre of the writing: in one ‘fantasy’ story set in a doomed civilisation plagued by warlords, the protagonist is a young girl trying to protect her little brother as they escape a devastated landscape. The pathos of her fearful love for him was conveyed in the observation of ‘his threadbare boots’, and the last bit of food in their hideout being a ‘decomposing apple core’.

Narratives given marks in Level 5 were usually straightforward in structure and approach but nonetheless engaging for the reader. Examiners could award marks in Level 5 for Content and Structure where the narrative was organised and there was a clear attempt to create a developed story which was relevant to the task. Responses in this range, while often straightforward, chronological accounts, were cohesive and balanced and contained a suitable ending depicting some resolution or conclusion to the story overall. Occasionally the given phrase was successfully used as the conclusion to a story. In one response however, this followed the narrator’s failure to save her friend and herself from a fatal shooting by an intruder and introduced an unintended bathos: as it was also by then clear that the events were being recounted from ‘beyond the grave’ as it were—a very difficult technique to exercise successfully—the ending undermined the effectiveness of a very well-told story which might otherwise have been awarded a mark in Level 6.

Level 4 marks for Content and Structure were awarded for stories which were relevant to the task but were less developed and used fewer elements of good narrative writing. Characters and narrators tended to be more simply drawn and responses were often more dependent on a series of events but sometimes lacked attention to characterisation and setting. A simplicity of content rather than weaknesses in organisation were typical at this level. Often the same kinds of scenarios as in more effective responses were used, such as failure to achieve a coveted trophy or academic qualification, but there was less awareness of the needs of the reader. Characters were identified but there was more time and emphasis given to relating events than creating believable characters. In some responses at this level, stories began promisingly but there was then a loss of control of the narrative or the credibility of the plot: one established a divorce lawyer as a credible protagonist, with some convincing terminology, but then spiralled into a confused tale of multiple murder for no apparent reason. While the majority of less effective narratives had some simple but clear sequence of events, there were fewer features of a developed narrative style. Responses awarded marks in Level 3 for Content and Structure were very simple narratives, limited in ideas and organisation.

The second question was the more popular choice in narrative writing, and the most popular Composition choice overall, producing a very wide range of scenarios and marks at all levels of achievement. The ‘unexpected meeting’ of the task was at least instrumental and usually crucial in the development of the plot, contributing to overall cohesion in most responses. A significant proportion of the narratives were poignant stories of the reappearance of a parent who had abandoned the protagonist in childhood; often this

happened after the death of the other parent. The most effective of these explored the emotional complexities of such a reunion, setting them against a successfully wrought back-story, rather than presenting the meeting itself as the point of the story. Two memorable responses at the top level were tightly plotted and dramatically eventful but also presented completely convincing characters. One told the story of a young woman working in a café in Occupied Paris, who, forced to wait upon leering Nazi officers, recognised the man who had slain her family in front of her as they fled the ghetto. It ended in a shocking revenge which could not be foreseen but was entirely convincing. Another was a gripping story of drug dealers pursuing the protagonist's boyfriend for a debt of which she knew nothing. The plot was very well-managed but the most engaging aspect of the response however was their meticulous characterisation and the growing revelation of the toxic nature of their relationship as she waited for him to appear at a bar as arranged.

Level 5 responses were generally quite effective accounts in which the content was perhaps less ambitious or less tightly controlled but there was still some organisation and shaping of the narrative and a cohesive story was produced. Some straightforward accounts of encountering an intruder or crashing into a passer-by and finding true love were developed and engaging enough for marks in Level 5. Sometimes plots were packed with event, becoming difficult to control, and here settings were more sketchily drawn and characterisation neglected so that marks at the bottom of Level 5 and at the top of Level 4 were awarded.

Responses given marks in Level 4 and lower were usually simple accounts of events and showed limited awareness of the reader or the features of narrative writing which elevate an account into a developed story. Scenarios which quickly became clichéd and unengaging were used and some responses became confusing and muddled.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was engaging and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. The characteristics of Level 6 writing included a fluent and flexible use of language which was subtle enough to create a range of effects which helped to engage the reader. Punctuation within sentences, especially in the use of dialogue, was secure in responses in Level 6 and where coupled with a sophisticated and precise range of vocabulary, the highest marks were given.

Responses awarded marks in Level 5 tended to be less ambitious and complex but still accurate and largely fluent while Level 4 responses were plain in style and lacked some range in vocabulary but had few errors which damaged the clarity of meaning such as weak sentence control, sentence separation and grammar errors. Quite common errors of grammar and expression appeared increasingly in responses given low Level 5 and Level 4 marks, such as misagreements and imprecise vocabulary.

Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, limited otherwise competently told stories to Level 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation or grammar. The omission of definite and indefinite articles, the incorrect use of participles or errors in grammatical agreement contributed to a lack of fluency and accuracy which kept many responses out of Level 5. Similarly, basic punctuation errors and the mis-spelling of simple words and wrongly selected homophones sometimes appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes frequent enough to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy. A frequent reason for keeping an otherwise clearly written story out of Level 5 was weak demarcation of sentences, most commonly the use of commas where full stops were needed, though the mixing of tenses was also prevalent in the descriptive writing.

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

- think about the build-up towards the most important moment in your story.
- make sure you know how your story ends before you begin.
- characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader. Do not rely on events.
- check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes.
- use complicated vocabulary with precision and consider the power of simple words and sentences to create particular effects.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

---

Paper 0500/22  
Directed Writing and Composition

## Key messages

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

- use an appropriate form, style and register in both questions
- structure ideas and organise their writing effectively to persuade and engage the reader
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- be sure you know the different styles of writing required for description and narration
- construct varied sentences accurately, with a clear attempt to influence and interest the reader
- use precise and wide-ranging vocabulary, appropriate for the task and style required.

## General comments

Examiners found that in most cases a secure understanding was shown of what was expected in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. Candidates understood the instructions for the examination and attempted **Question 1** and either a descriptive or narrative writing task, with very few rubric infringements seen by examiners. In **Question 1**, most responses were written mostly in candidates' own words. Only a few responses were mostly or wholly copied from the texts in the Reading Booklet Insert, although some lifting of phrases or sentences was fairly common.

Nearly all responses showed a clear understanding of and engagement with the topic of the reading texts in **Question 1**. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and format for an article for a specific audience of young people and there was in many a clear attempt to consider both sides of the argument represented in the texts. The majority of candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the passages. More effective answers here also tended to structure responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the texts in a coherent response, often concluding with some more specific advice to the readership. Comments made about seeking advice from experts were rooted in the ideas given in the reading texts. In the middle of the mark range, responses tended to reproduce the points made in the texts, sometimes with an opinion given about some of the points made, with some beginning to evaluate. A substantial number of responses at this range made some comments about the ideas in the texts, though not always probing or offering judgements about them.

Less effective responses tended to repeat the ideas in the texts, rather than selecting points and commenting on them. In some responses at this level, this resulted in a lack of cohesion with conflicting viewpoints given side by side.

Most made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response; the ideas in the texts were scrutinised thoughtfully in more effective responses. Occasionally insufficient use was made of the reading material and opinions on the usefulness of technology in seeking advice were offered with limited reference to the specific ideas in the texts. Less effective responses also sometimes showed limited awareness of the specific audience for the article, providing a commentary on the texts and the angles adopted by their writers but without adaptation to the style and format of an article. Overall, however, there was often a clear adaptation of style and register to appeal to an audience of young people, with some understanding shown of how magazine articles are structured and presented and how rhetorical language can be used to engage and persuade readers.

The most effective responses paid specific attention to the audience and style required for the task. These were lively but evaluative in style, using ideas from the texts to create and structure arguments and often

employing rhetorical devices such as questions and exclamations or humour. Most in the middle range of marks wrote in a more straightforward style and there was less focus on weighing up the kinds of advice which could be sought from different sources. Less effective responses relied more on the sequence of the points made in the texts with less selection and reordering of points from the originals. This sometimes resulted in responses which had less overall coherence.

In **Section B**, effective responses to the composition questions were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected, descriptive or narrative, and of the features of good writing in each.

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and most responses gave a range of descriptive detail without resorting to narrative. Many responses to the descriptive writing questions were very effective and sustained. There were some imaginative evocations of the experience of waking up in a strange environment the second descriptive writing question. A wide range of approaches and scenarios was employed in this task, with some highly effective and detailed descriptions as the narrator became aware of their surroundings.

In the first task, many different kinds of structures, workplaces and buildings were described. Derelict factories appear frequently, as well as factories employing armies of workers moving in a uniform, often automaton-like way. Less effective responses to this question were written in a discursive rather than descriptive style. In these responses, candidates often wrote about the importance of factories and factory processes to the modern world and to a nation's economy but without a focus on description or specific detail. Descriptions were more effective when there was specific detail and where the description created an atmosphere which evoked the scene credibly and engagingly. Less effective responses to both descriptive writing questions tended to stray too much into narrative or discussion and lose descriptive focus, particularly in the first task. In the second task, less effective responses tended to offer a more generalised scene.

The best narrative writing engaged the reader with well-drawn and interesting characters and scenarios which were credible. Both narrative questions elicited a very wide range of approaches and interpretations. Effective and engaging responses to the first question, which asked for a narrative involving the solving of a problem, gave purpose and cohesion to the story while less effective pieces wrote about more obvious or more mundane 'problems' which were solved in less interesting ways. Some responses included ordinary events, whereas less effective narratives were less credible or were under-developed in style and were less cohesive in structure.

Some composition responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in specific genres. The best descriptive writing was specific, used some original and thought-provoking imagery and effectively evoked the atmosphere of the time and place described. The conscious shaping of narratives to interest and intrigue the reader and the creation of credible characters were features understood by the most effective writers who chose narrative writing options.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section A**

**Write a magazine article for young people about who they should listen to when faced with decisions in their own lives.**

**In your article you should:**

- evaluate the attitudes and opinions about experts in each of the texts
- give your own views, based on what you have read, about getting the best advice.

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

**Begin your article with a suitable headline.**

**Write about 250 to 350 words.**

### **Question 1**

Examiners awarded high marks for Reading where there was some probing and evaluation of the ideas in the reading material, rather than a straightforward listing and reproduction of the points in the texts. Where the letter was also both accurate and ambitious in vocabulary and style, with a clear understanding of the appropriate style and register for the specific task and audience, the highest marks for Writing could be awarded. More effective responses here focused carefully on the arguments in the texts, with the highest marks awarded for those which handled the different, often conflicting views with confidence and perceptive evaluation. The extent to which the implicit ideas and opinions contained in the texts were probed and scrutinised tended to determine the level of candidates' achievement. These implicit ideas often involved, for example, some discussion of the relative usefulness of the internet, friends and family for advice on different kinds of problems and some grasp of the way 'experts' may not present themselves suitably despite their expertise.

In responses given marks in Level 6 for Reading, examiners often rewarded some careful grasp of the implications suggested by the texts. In Text A, for example, some responses showed some effective challenge to the idea that the internet could not be trusted for advice by suggesting that many common, less significant problems are better dealt with by a quick, convenient and crowd-based source of advice rather than the help of an expert. Even more effective responses homed in on the need for caution in seeking advice from any source, including experts, and often emphasised that the motives of celebrities, friends and experts should be scrutinised before accepting their advice.

Responses given marks in the middle range tended to be more straightforward, with some reflection and comment on the pitfalls of following others' advice in Text A and on the doubts highlighted about the way experts sometimes speak and present themselves in Text B. Responses at this level included some opinion or reaction to the ideas in the texts, with marks in Level 5 given where some comments amounted to 'some successful evaluation'.

Responses given marks in Level 4 often showed an understanding of the main ideas in the texts and offered sensible views on some of them while not always examining or probing them consistently. Examiners also noted that the focus of the comments was more general and missed some of the opportunities afforded by the task to focus on young people as those most likely to need advice on a range of issues with limited experience of life. In Text A, for example, some responses at this level contained some confusion about who the writer considered to be 'experts' or took the illustration of looking for a restaurant as the only kind of problem addressed in the text. In Text B, the characteristics deemed necessary for experts – to show 'expertise, honesty and benevolence' – was often reproduced but with less understanding of how these attributes build trust which plays a part in evaluating advice.

Less effective responses showed some understanding of the ideas in the passage but there was reference to a narrow range of points or there was some misunderstanding of the details. Weaknesses in organising ideas coherently were characteristic of responses in the lower levels. The sequence and organisation of ideas often reflected closely the order of ideas in the texts and this sometimes resulted in contradictory or disconnected responses. Responses also often had fewer characteristics of an article or the information in the texts was not presented as an article.

## Marks for reading

The most effective responses adopted a consistently evaluative, critical stance and read effectively between the lines of the texts, drawing inferences and making judgements about the advantages and pitfalls involved in seeking advice as a young person from the various sources mentioned.

Most responses included the reference in Text A to the newer sources of advice offered by the internet and drew attention to the figure of 20 per cent of reviews which were deemed fake. More thoughtful responses considered carefully whether this figure should render such advice unreliable, pointing out that most reviews were sincere or that some problems were best resolved by quick, convenient searches. In some effective responses, this idea elicited some sensible consideration of the need to examine the motives of any person giving advice and it elicited the need for healthy cynicism when reading reviews. Many responses included some comments about ulterior motives on the part of celebrities or commercial companies which needed to be taken into account when seeking advice.

At the highest level, this probing approach provided a useful route into Text B's more implicit ideas about experts and the trust we have for them. Other effective responses developed the idea of trust and experts' disinterested but informed opinions which should be listened to even if their language is difficult. Many explored the idea, as one candidate put it, that 'different problems need different levels of expertise' and that the knowledge of experts was not necessary in all cases. The advice of family and friends was sometimes characterised as more important than expertise where personal matters were involved or that the life experience of an older family member was to be valued more than cold facts.

The task set specified the audience for the article as young people and more effective responses reflected this in the ideas selected from the texts as well as in the style. Some perceptive responses linked the kinds of problems young people often have with the sources of advice available to them which were mentioned in the texts. A fairly common approach in Level 5 and 6 responses was that trust has to be earned by experts as well as friends and family and that young people tended to rely too much on anonymous internet sources which did not challenge them or their choices. Some responses used the idea implied in both texts that who one trusts has to be evaluated and that decisions should take account of the intentions of anyone giving advice. Young people, some argued, needed to take responsibility for their decisions, whoever gave them advice, and should not avoid decision-making or give away the responsibility to make decisions to anyone else. As one candidate put it, 'Growing up means you have to look for people to challenge your decisions, not just find some random expert who thinks the same way as you.'

Responses given Level 6 marks for Reading showed a grasp of the underlying ideas and implicit views shown in the texts. Most of these saw the idea of trust as underlying all choices of good advice. The most effective responses combined an evaluation of ideas in both texts and arrived at a thoughtful overall judgement about the principles which should underpin the decisions young people make. Responses awarded marks in Level 5 characteristically highlighted some of pitfalls in looking for advice from internet users and celebrities in the first text with some evaluative comment on the nature of expertise and why young people should or should not place their trust in experts.

Where some comment or opinion was offered, mostly without specific reference to particular points in the texts but generally relevant to the ideas in them, marks in Level 4 were usually awarded. These comments usually focused on the need to be aware of the motives of those who offer advice to young people.

Examiners usually awarded marks in Level 3 for Reading where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the texts, and some selection of ideas from them, but without the more implicit meanings mentioned above or with less scrutiny of the points made in the passages. Often, there was a clear paraphrase of both texts but limited comment on the ideas in them. Where there were some brief comments, they tended to be more general in nature and while such ideas were derived from a reading of the texts, they were often not as well anchored in the specific ideas in them.

Comments made at this level were given mostly in candidates' own words. Less successful responses showed some misunderstanding, drifted away from the passages or addressed the material thinly, and many given marks in low Level 3 and below contained much copied material. There was some misunderstanding of who was considered an expert in Text A, with some responses relying on lifted sentences but showing some weak grasp of the idea. The purpose and nature of text B was not well understood at this level and candidates mostly reworded the text. Copying of phrases was also very common, especially in Text B. Where a mark of six was awarded, some firmer links with the passages were needed, whereas five was generally given for thin or mainly lifted responses in which there was some insecure grasp of the ideas in the passage.

## Marks for Writing

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

### Style and audience

Candidates could adopt a range of appropriate styles and registers for their articles and could show their understanding of the intended audience of young people in a variety of ways. Across the ability range, an apt, fairly conversational but standard English style allowed for examiners to consider marks for Level 4 and above where a 'sometimes effective style' was required. Although not always sustained, many articles began with a suitable headline and a lively introduction which engaged the interest of the reader. Some high scoring responses used a more rhetorical style, presenting their arguments in an engaging way but making their case effectively and with some impact. Many adopted the voice of a young writer or a benevolent adult with an interest in young people. Those who chose the voice of a young person could adopt a more familiar tone of shared experience. Other choices were made in favour of a more adult, informative style, guiding young people through their potential choices for advice. Rhetorical questions or exclamations were used judiciously at this level to engage the audience: 'Do you need help to navigate through the maze of decisions you have to make as a teenager? Well, I'm here for you.' Others adopted a more familiar style using the same rhetorical device: 'Who'd be a teenager these days, eh? It's a nightmare of choices, decisions, bear traps and wrong turns that can change our lives in an instant.'

In the middle range of marks, examiners could sometimes award marks in Level 4 even where more technical writing skills were lacking and suggested a Level 3 mark, if the style and register adopted were appropriate for the task and the audience. A clear, consistent attempt to engage a young audience rather than make straightforward statements based on the texts could sometimes compensate for other elements of style such as weak spelling or insecure grammar. Conversely, responses which were accurate in the main but showed little adaptation of style from the original texts to suit the style of an article were sometimes limited in the marks available.

Level 3 marks were usually awarded where the reading material was largely reproduced so that the organisation and sequence of sentences and paragraphs reflected the original and were not adapted to create a coherent article.

### Structure

Responses awarded high marks for Writing handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined so that the judgements which emerged was clearly derived from the ideas in the texts but the response was not dependent on them for its structure and sequence. At the highest level, the lines of argument were set from the first paragraph and the issues in the two texts were addressed but as a whole rather than a disjointed response to two quite different texts. The opening and concluding paragraphs of these effective articles tended to introduce and sum up the main points, with the intervening sections arguing a coherent case. The argument being pursued determined the sequence of ideas in these responses rather than the sequence of the original texts.

Responses given Level 5 marks for Writing tended to reflect a range of points made in each text but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed. This often avoided the clashing of contradictory points from each text. While internet sources of advice were usually considered first, some evaluation of their shortcomings often led more naturally on to a consideration of the role of experts. One common way at this level to combine the ideas in both texts, for example, was to argue that while the internet was often deemed a reliable enough source for less important decisions, experts were needed for more important ones, even if their language was off-putting. An overall coherence and structure were required for this Level which was usually less evident in responses below Level 5.

Less effective responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more tied to the sequencing of the texts. In most cases the information given in the texts was offered with some rewording but not reordering of ideas. While some brief opinion was sometimes given at the end of the response, these views were imposed on the structure of the original texts rather than argued for.

## Accuracy

Effective writing which was accurate and controlled as well as appropriate in tone and register was given a writing mark in Level 6. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. There was a range of precisely selected and complex vocabulary and sentence structures varied and were consciously used, often rhetorically, to engage the reader.

Some complex sentences structures were chosen which helped to balance and weigh up contending views and complex clauses were controlled by careful punctuation.

Level 5 responses were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary or as precise in register or style as those given higher marks. Level 4 responses, as described in the marking guidelines, were 'sometimes effective' but not consistently so. Although the style was usually fairly plain, the language used was apt and generally accurate. A range of quite basic errors was made at this level which limited the effectiveness of the style but did not affect clarity of meaning. There were occasional lapses in the use of definite and indefinite articles (usually omission) and some grammatical misagreement, often between plurals and verb forms.

Faulty sentence structures, fluctuating tense use or too much lifted or copied material often kept writing marks for **Question 1** below Level 4. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation and grammar errors which meant that examiners could not award marks in Level 4. The omission of definite or indefinite articles was very common, as were tense errors, and agreement errors were more frequent and more damaging to meaning at this level. Some confusion between 'experts' and 'expertise' was common, with some candidates thinking of the latter as the plural form of the former. In rare cases, material from the texts was copied and responses where this occurred more substantially could not be given marks in Band 4 for Writing or for Reading because neither the content or the style of the response was the candidate's own.

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

- be prepared to challenge the ideas in the reading texts; always justify and explain the reasons why you agree or disagree as this shows evidence of evaluation
- make sure the ideas you use are derived from the passage
- aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them
- think carefully about the kind of style which suits your task and the audience
- check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing definite or indefinite articles, weaknesses in grammar or misspellings of key words which are in the passage.

## Section B

### Descriptive Writing

**2 Write a description with the title, 'The Factory'.**

**3 Describe waking up to find the scene around you has changed.**

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates and description was generally more often selected than narration. Both questions were interpreted in a wide variety of ways which examiners could reward appropriately.

Responses were more effective if they contained vivid and specific details rather than more general or stereotypical ideas and images. Generalisation and lack of specific detail was a more common weakness in the second question, although there were many highly effective responses which imaginatively evoked the thoughts and feelings of a narrator waking up in a hospital after an accident or in some other unfamiliar place which provoked fear or confusion in the narrator. Some fantasy scenarios also featured in responses to this question, with magically transformed landscapes sometimes effectively described.

Some effective responses to the first question conjured up an eerie picture of decaying industrial machinery in a derelict and unsafe factory structure. In one highly-rewarded response, the factory was a grim, depressing shelter whose atmosphere was intimidating and hostile; this created a dystopian scene of a different, secret world very effectively. In another response, the images used to describe the 'agonised

screaming' of a massive machine as it stirred sporadically in a disused factory vividly captured the sense of dereliction and abandonment. Other responses featured working factories, sometimes with conveyor belt workers whose synchronised movements recalled those of lifeless robots or 'mindless automatons', as one candidate wrote. In happier scenarios, factories producing baked goods were fairly common in which delicious smells pervaded the building and there was banter and cheerfulness among the workers. Sweet factories were also fairly common scenarios and high marks were awarded where original and striking images were used to evoke the atmosphere rather than more clichéd ideas or derivative images.

In the second descriptive writing question, more effective responses were given coherence by some implied or explained reason for waking up in an unfamiliar place. Some successful responses wove together, for example, frightening memories of a car crash which had resulted in the narrator waking up in intensive care. Another recalled half-remembered details of being kidnapped as the writer woke up in a bare, dingy room, frightened and in pain. There were other successful devices employed, such as waking up in a beautiful holiday resort after arriving late the night before in darkness, tired and grumpy.

Unusual, closely observed details created an impression of reality in the best responses. Most were sustained and developed and at the highest level showed skill in building a detailed, often emotionally charged scene. These consciously crafted pieces held the reader's attention by linking the different elements described in an engaging, cohesive response. Level 6 responses were characterised by this cohesive structure as well as carefully chosen detail and striking images.

Level 5 responses tended to use a wide range of details and were well-constructed, if a little less effective and cohesive overall. At the bottom of Level 5 and in Level 4, responses were sustained and competently organised but were more predictable. Selected scenes and details at this level tended to involve less striking images and more stereotypical ideas, such as a factory belching smoke or waking up, often inexplicably, to a beautiful landscape involving 'crystal blue seas' and 'cotton candy clouds'. There was at this level, however, a clear attempt to evoke an atmosphere and to describe some details without slipping into narrative.

Level 4 descriptions for Content and Structure tended to become unbalanced or included over-long narrative introductions about school visits to factories or holiday destinations. Such features often gave way to more specific description though in some, the description sometimes became a more straightforward list of what was seen and heard, rooms visited in turn or sense impressions organised around the different senses. The descriptive content tended to be a little more stereotypical or general than responses given higher marks.

Less effective responses given marks in Level 3 or below often included less well organised lists of details briefly given rather than developed. Other responses at this level became a series of events, often narratively recounted, of a day of work in a factory or a sometimes rather aimless journey to return from an unfamiliar place where the writer had woken up. An approach seen more commonly than is usual involved discursive responses to the first question. Although some of these were organised and paragraphed, they contained very limited description and instead discussed the types of factories that existed and their importance to a country's economy, employment and prosperity. Some lack of awareness of the essential elements of descriptive writing was evident in these responses, although some were well written and accurate.

High marks for Style and Accuracy often reflected the precise and varied vocabulary used as well as the technical accuracy of the writing. In both descriptive tasks, similar details were often included but better responses had a much wider range of vocabulary, precisely deployed to create specific effects. Highly effective responses showed an ability to use both simple and complex language and sentence structures to create subtle, complex atmospheres. In less effective responses, vocabulary was sometimes wide-ranging and complex but used with less precision. In a few cases, this insecure use of language resulted in a style which was difficult to follow and the credit which could be given for a wide ranging vocabulary was lost by its imprecise use and lack of clarity.

As is often the case in less secure descriptive writing, tenses switched between past and present, sometimes within sentences. Incomplete or verbless sentences also affected marks given in the middle range, even where other technical aspects of style were more accurate. Lapses in grammar, perhaps minor in isolation but more damaging when persistent, also kept responses out of Level 4 for Style and Accuracy. These included disagreement, especially between pronouns and verbs, and the omission of definite and indefinite articles was also common and damaging to otherwise quite accurate style at this level.

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

- try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content; choose a scenario which gives you a range of details on which to focus
- keep your focus on details which will help you evoke a particular atmosphere
- write sentences with proper verbs and do not switch tenses
- use vocabulary precisely: complex words used wrongly do not help your style.

### Narrative Writing

**4 Write a story that involves solving a problem.**

**5 Write a story which includes the words ‘... this could not be the present ...’.**

Both narrative writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range and there was a very wide range of plots, characters and scenarios in these responses. Examiners sometimes saw narratives which did not comfortably fit with either title and which, on occasion, seemed more suited to titles set in previous examinations. This lack of relevance affected the mark for Content and Structure.

Effective responses were well organised and thoughtful interpretations of the title which used engaging, credible ideas to create developed stories. An ability to shape the narrative, to produce moments of tension or drama and to vary the pace of the story were credited by examiners as essential elements of narrative writing, as was the use of characterisation to create believable protagonists and characters. In the first question, the ‘problem’ to be solved in the narrative was sometimes prosaic, such as cleaning up after a clandestine house party before the parents arrived home or averting a failure in important examinations by changing one’s mind-set. However, in some cases, highly effective stories were created from these plotlines by dialogue, characterisation and shaping the narrative to create moments of tension or hiatus which were satisfying for the reader.

There were various structures employed in effective responses to the first question, as well as more straightforward chronological recount. The idea of a ‘problem’ to be solved was central to the plot of more effective stories, although these included responses which were written in different genres, including fantasy, science fiction, detective fiction and war stories. More effective responses showed an ability to create credible characters, even if the scenario itself was fantastic or unfamiliar. More commonly, plots involved dilemmas which were derived from more familiar settings, such as school or the family, and these were also amongst the most successful.

Narratives given marks in Level 5 were usually more straightforward in structure and approach but nonetheless engaging for the reader. Examiners could award marks in Level 5 for Content and Structure where the narrative was organised and there was a clear attempt create a developed story which was relevant to the task. Responses in this range, were more usually chronological accounts, but were cohesive and balanced and contained a suitable ending depicting some resolution to the problem identified. The story was resolved to give some moral lesson learned, such as the importance of hard work or loyalty to one’s family or friends.

For the second narrative question, there were varied interpretations of the title, some using the idea of a ‘present’ as a gift with others constructing narratives around the ‘present’ as time. There were effective, skilled responses which used both of these interpretations. One Level 5 response developed a sense of mounting anticipation and excitement for a gift for a sixteenth birthday, ratcheting up the tension as the writer’s family seemed to have forgotten about the birthday before unveiling a disappointing gift in the form of a charitable donation in the recipient’s name. As the story developed, a new and significant friendship between the selfish, materialistic narrator and a homeless girl grew out of this gift, providing a valuable life lesson as a result.

Where the quotation in the title was used differently, it sometimes became an expression of disbelief, such as in one narrative where the narrator strayed off the tourist track in an unfamiliar city into the rundown back streets where life was very different and primitive for the poverty-stricken inhabitants. Elsewhere, the idea of time travel was used, sometimes involving time machines which accidentally set the protagonist out onto a journey into the past. Whichever interpretation was given to the tasks, for Level 5 marks for Content and Structure stories needed to be well-managed with some conscious shaping of the narrative beyond a simple retelling of events.

Level 4 marks for Content and Structure were awarded for stories which were relevant to the task but were less developed and used fewer elements of good narrative writing. Characters and narrators tended to be more simply drawn and responses were often more dependent on a series of events, lacking attention to characterisation and setting. A simplicity of content or a lack of development rather than weaknesses in organisation were typical at this level. Similar plots and scenarios were used as those in more effective narratives – a family dilemma to be solved or a disappointing gift – but at this level there was a tendency to say what happened or to state who the characters were rather than shaping the narrative. Characters were identified but there was more time and emphasis given to relating events than developing characters as credible and rounded. In many responses at this level, the delay itself was the subject of the story. In the first question, problems were resolved by simple actions which were predictable or prosaic, such as resolving to work harder at school or fixing some part of a broken down car. While the majority of less effective narratives had some simple but clear sequence of events, there were fewer features of a developed narrative and the reader was less engaged as a result.

Responses given marks in Level 4 and lower were usually simple accounts of events and showed limited awareness of the reader or the features of narrative writing which elevate an account into a developed story. Scenarios which quickly became clichéd and unengaging were used and some responses became confusing and muddled in attempting to control stories through different times and locations. This was particularly seen in responses to the second question where the tense of the quotation, ‘this could not be the present’ was often reproduced as speech which did not sit comfortably within the story.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was engaging and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. The characteristics of Level 6 writing included a fluent and flexible use of language which was subtle enough to create a range of effects which helped to engage the reader. Punctuation within sentences, especially in the use of dialogue, was secure in responses in Level 6 and where coupled with a sophisticated and precise range of vocabulary, the highest marks were given.

Responses awarded marks in Level 5 tended to be less ambitious and complex but still mostly accurate and largely fluent while Level 4 responses were plain in style and lacked some range in vocabulary. At this level, the writing had few serious errors which affected the clarity of meaning, such as weak sentence control, sentence separation and grammar errors. Common errors of grammar and expression appeared increasingly in responses given low Level 5 and Level 4 responses, such as misagreements, missing articles and imprecise, sometimes over-ambitious vocabulary. Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, limited otherwise competently told stories to Level 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation or grammar. The omission of definite and indefinite articles, the incorrect use of participles or errors in grammatical agreement contributed to a lack of fluency and accuracy which kept many responses out of Level 5.

Basic punctuation errors and the mis-spelling of simple words and wrongly selected homophones sometimes appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes frequent enough to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy. A frequent reason for keeping an otherwise clearly written story out of Level 5 was weak demarcation of sentences, most commonly the use of commas where full stops were needed, though the mixing of tenses and the use of incomplete sentences were perhaps more prevalent in the descriptive writing.

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

- **think about how to interest and intrigue the reader in shaping your narrative**
- **consider imaginative ways to tell your story, apart from a chronological account**
- **characters’ thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader. Do not rely on events**
- **check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes**
- **use complicated vocabulary with precision and consider the power of simple words and sentences to create particular effects.**

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

---

Paper 0500/23  
Directed Writing and Composition

## Key messages

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

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

- use an appropriate form, style and register in both questions
- structure ideas and organise their writing effectively to persuade and engage the reader
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct varied sentences accurately, with a clear attempt to influence and interest the reader
- use precise and wide-ranging vocabulary, appropriate for the task and style required.

## General comments

Examiners found that in most cases a secure understanding was shown of what was expected in both Directed Writing and in Composition. A large majority of responses, regardless of achievement, were sustained and there were few very brief scripts or responses which showed significant misunderstanding of the task or question. Similarly, nearly all responses demonstrated an effective understanding of the instructions for the examination and attempted **Question 1** and either a descriptive or narrative writing task. In **Question 1**, only a few responses were mostly or wholly copied from the texts in the Reading Booklet Insert, although some lifting of phrases or sentences was fairly common.

Nearly all responses showed a clear understanding of and engagement with the topic of the reading texts in **Question 1**. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and format for a speech to be delivered to a specific audience of school leavers and there was usually a clear attempt to consider both sides of the argument represented in the texts. The majority approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the passages. More effective answers tended to structure responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the texts in a coherent response, often concluding with some more specific advice to the audience. Comments were anchored in the ideas given in the reading texts. In the middle of the mark range, responses tended to reproduce the points made in the texts, sometimes with an opinion given about some of the points made. A substantial number of responses at this range made some comments about the ideas in the texts but were less effective in probing or offering judgements about them.

Less effective responses tended to repeat the ideas in the texts, rather than selecting points and commenting on them. In some responses at this level, this resulted in a lack of cohesion and some simple reflection without comment of competing ideas.

Most made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response and the ideas in the texts were scrutinised thoughtfully in more effective responses. Sometimes, insufficient use was made of the reading material and opinions on what represented a 'good attitude to work' were offered with limited reference to the specific ideas in the texts, or sometimes limited acknowledgement of the specific audience for the article. There was, however, often a clear adaptation of style and register to appeal to an audience of school leavers, with some understanding shown of how a speech to such an audience should be managed and presented.

The most effective responses paid specific attention to the audience and style required for the task. These were lively but evaluative in style, using ideas from the texts to create and structure arguments and often employing rhetorical devices such as questions and exclamations or humour. Most in the middle range of marks wrote in a more straightforward style and there was less focus on arriving at a clear judgement based on the texts. Less effective responses relied more on the sequence of the points made in the texts with less selection and reordering of points from the originals. This sometimes resulted in responses which had less overall coherence.

In **Section B**, effective responses to the composition questions were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected, descriptive or narrative, and of the features of good writing in each.

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and most responses gave a range of descriptive detail without resorting to narrative. Many responses to the descriptive writing questions were very effective and sustained. There were some emotive evocations of 'a family home' which had been significant in various ways to the writer in the first descriptive writing question, which examiners found engaging and effective. A wide range of approaches was employed in the second task, with some highly effective and detailed descriptions of the frustration and atmosphere associated with 'waiting in line'. In both cases, these descriptions were more effective when there was specific detail and where the description created an atmosphere which evoked the scene credibly and engagingly. Less effective responses to both descriptive writing questions tended to stray too much into narrative and lose some descriptive focus, particularly in the second task. In the first task, less successful responses tended to offer a more generalised description which did not carry the same emotional impact and resonance as more emotionally engaged and effective descriptions.

The best narrative writing engaged the reader with well-drawn and interesting characters and scenarios which were credible within their context. Both narrative questions elicited a very wide range of approaches and interpretations and examiners awarded marks across the range. Effective and engaging responses to both narrative questions often used a clearly developed and effectively structured and concluded sequence to help give shape and purpose to the narrative, developing characters and setting in interesting ways. Less effective pieces wrote about more obvious, less significant events which were resolved in less interesting ways. While some included more mundane events, other less effective narratives were less credible or were more simple, chronological accounts, under-developed in style and less cohesive in structure. Some responses depended too much on events being delivered mostly through dialogue.

Some composition responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in specific genres. The most effective descriptive writing was specific, used some original and thought-provoking imagery and effectively evoked the atmosphere of the time and place described. The conscious shaping of narratives to interest and intrigue the reader and the creation of credible characters were features understood by the most effective writers who chose narrative writing options.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section A**

**Write a speech for school leavers about attitudes to work.**

**In your speech you should:**

- **evaluate the views and opinions about work given in both texts**
- **give your own views, based on what you have read, about what you consider to be a good attitude to work throughout a person's working life .**

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

**Write about 250 to 350 words.**

### **Question 1**

Higher marks were awarded for Reading where there was some probing and evaluation of the ideas in the reading material, rather than a straightforward listing and reproduction of the points in the texts. Where the speech was also both accurate and ambitious in vocabulary and style, with a clear understanding of the appropriate style and register for the specific task, the highest marks for Writing could be awarded. More effective responses focused carefully on the arguments in both texts, with the highest marks awarded for those which handled the different, often conflicting views with confidence and perceptive evaluation. The extent to which the implicit ideas and opinions contained in the texts were probed and scrutinised tended to determine the level of candidates' achievement. These implicit ideas often involved, for example, some discussion of the possible need to establish a balance between time spent at work and at home in the first text and some qualitative grasp of the values of work for older people in the second text.

In responses given marks in Level 6 for Reading, examiners often rewarded some careful grasp of the implications suggested by the texts. Analysis and discussion of the depth and sustained quality of the work that has to be delivered rather than simply the amount of time that is spent at work in Text A, for example, elicited some focused commentary and there was some thoughtful evaluation of the different aspects of exploitation of older workers in Text B. More effective responses homed in on the impact of being a 'work martyr' on young people's lives and long-term aspirations, as directed in the task, and often showed some perceptive evaluation of their specific vulnerabilities.

Responses given marks in the middle range tended to be more straightforward, with some reflection, perhaps, of both the benefits and pitfalls of over-working in Text A and the impact of working into old age in Text B. Judging that there was a need for a balance between work and home was often made in Level 5, without this evaluative point being sustained or significantly developed.

Responses given marks in Level 4 often showed an understanding of the main ideas in the texts and offered sensible views on them while not always examining or probing them consistently. The focus of comments at this level was more general and missed some of the opportunities afforded by the task to focus on school leavers as they were about to enter the work place and the range of experiences that would be offered.

Less effective responses showed some understanding of the ideas in the passage but there was reference to a narrow range of points or there was some misunderstanding of the details. The different health problems mentioned in Text A, for example, were often reproduced without comment. Weaknesses in organising ideas coherently were characteristic of responses in the lower levels. The sequence and organisation of ideas often reflected closely the order of ideas in the texts and this sometimes resulted in contradictory or disconnected responses. Responses also often had fewer characteristics of a speech or the information in the texts was not well adapted in terms of register and style for the purpose and audience required.

### **Marks for reading**

The most effective responses adopted a consistently evaluative, critical stance and read effectively between the lines of the texts, drawing inferences and making judgements about whether the 'need' to continually

work at full capacity was on balance beneficial or detrimental to workers. Most responses included the evidence in Text A of the dangers, both physical and mental, of 'burning out' because of stress at work. Most showed some understanding of the article's references to the judged benefits in terms of praise, recognition and promotion. More thoughtful responses considered carefully whether having work dominate every waking hour would result in a later life that had any real value for the older worker. In some effective responses, the discussion centred on whether relinquishing control of their individuality to work and the perceived demands of bosses, was in any way worthwhile. In some cases this probing approach provided a useful route into Text B's more implicit ideas – that good work habits and effective management in the workplace could lead to a later life in retirement to be enjoyed and lived fully, looking back on work experiences as development and education that had been enjoyed, rather than pressure and stress that had been suffered. It was also valid to judge that older workers had much to offer in terms of life experience and should be encouraged to continue in work, but only for as long as they themselves chose to continue in the workplace.

Question 1 specified the audience for the article as school leavers and most responses reflected this in both the style of the response and the ideas selected from the texts. Some perceptive responses explored the ways in which young people might be easily exploited as naïve entrants into the world of paid work. A common understanding in Level 5 and 6 responses was that the wish to impress in the world of work was likely and understandable and the dangers of this willingness to sacrifice time could then be explored and developed. Some responses used the implied assumptions in both texts that simply refusing to work long hours, or to refuse to continue working into old age, were not viable options and that a worker would have to work out their own checks and balances throughout their careers. Young people, some argued, were better placed to find solutions to these pitfalls than older workers whose time to initiate change had passed. Others explored the distinction between a genuine interest in how to develop healthy and effective work processes and an obsession with simply trying to impress the boss. The potential for career opportunities was also addressed with some thoughtful evaluations, particularly in contrast with the short-term boost to the ego provided by praise-giving bosses. The goal of intellectual progress was seen by many thoughtful candidates as an important one and that inefficient work regimes would deny this progress.

Responses given Level 6 marks for Reading demonstrated a grasp of the underlying ideas and implicit views shown in the texts. These clearly considered the psychological and sociological dangers implicit in Text A and evaluated the range of responses that were possible to manage these dangers. The most effective responses combined an evaluation of this text with a subtle appreciation of how older workers need to be aware of their later choices in life, based on a close reading of the second text. Responses awarded marks in Level 5 characteristically highlighted some of the personal concerns of the first text with some evaluative comment on the dangers of lost opportunities implicitly referred to in the second text.

Where some comment or opinion was offered, mostly without specific reference to particular points in the texts but generally relevant to the ideas in them, marks in Level 4 were usually awarded. These comments usually focused on the need to be mindful of health concerns while attempting to manage the pressures of work or on the benefits of remaining active as you get older.

Examiners usually awarded marks in Level 3 for Reading where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the texts, and some selection of ideas from them, but without the more implicit meanings mentioned above or with less scrutiny of the points made in the passages. There was often less argument and focus on using the texts to arrive at a judgement about the issues, though some simple opinion based on personal preference was often given. These comments tended to be more general in nature, such as listing the health issues and retirement activities. While such ideas were derived from a reading of the texts, they were often more general and not as well anchored in the specific ideas in them.

Comments made at this level were given mostly in candidates' own words, simple opinions on them were offered. Less effective responses drifted away from the passages or addressed the material thinly, and many given marks in low Level 3 and below contained much copied material, with some responses relying on lifted sentences but showing some weak grasp of the idea. In some responses, Text B was not fully or effectively used to develop the range of ideas. Copying of phrases such as 'hyper-intense desire' 'suffering from mild burnout by sacrificing free time' and 'feelings of social isolation' without any explanation or development was also common. Where a mark of 6 was awarded, some firmer links with the passages were needed, whereas 5 was generally given for very thin or mainly lifted responses in which there was some insecure grasp of the ideas in the passage.

## Marks for Writing

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

### Style and audience

Candidates could adopt a range of appropriate styles and registers for their speech and could show their understanding of the intended audience of school leavers in a variety of ways. Across the ability range, an apt, fairly conversational but standard English style allowed for examiners to consider marks for Level 4 and above where a 'sometimes effective style' was required. Although not always sustained, many articles began with a suitable introduction for a speech and a lively introduction which engaged the interest. Some high scoring responses used a more rhetorical style, presenting their arguments with a focused manner of address and making their case effectively and with some impact. Many adopted the voice of a speaker who understood the pressures and pitfalls of the workplace through their own relevant experience. This tone of authority was a subtle and effective adaptation of style and register for many high-level responses.

In the middle range of marks, examiners could sometimes award marks in Level 4 even where more technical writing skills were lacking and suggested a Level 3 mark, if the style and register adopted were appropriate for the task and the audience. A clear, consistent attempt to engage an audience of school leavers rather than make straightforward statements based on the texts could sometimes compensate for other elements of style such as weak spelling or insecure grammar.

Level 3 marks were usually awarded where the reading material was largely reproduced so that the organisation and sequence of sentences and paragraphs reflected the original and were not adapted to create a coherent article.

### Structure

Responses awarded high marks for Writing handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined so that the judgements which emerged was clearly derived from the ideas in the texts but the response was not dependent on them for its structure and sequence. At the highest level, the lines of argument were set from the first paragraph and the issues in the two texts were addressed but as a whole rather than a disjointed response to two quite different texts. The opening and concluding paragraphs of these effective articles tended to introduce and sum up the main points, with the intervening sections arguing a coherent case.

Responses given Level 5 marks for Writing tended to reflect a range of points made in each text but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed so that conflicting ideas were addressed separately. The main issues concerning working 'at full capacity' and were often addressed first, with some discussion of the range of concerns in the first text and often some deliberate selection from the second text to drive a particular view on the issues. An overall coherence and structure were required for this Level which was usually less evident in responses below Level 5.

Less successful responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more tied to the sequencing of the texts. In most cases the information given in the texts was offered with some rewording but little reordering of ideas and there was limited awareness of how the information in the texts could be used to structure an argument for or against the range of attitudes towards work.

### Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled as well as appropriate in tone and register was given a writing mark in Level 6. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. There was a range of precisely selected and complex vocabulary and sentence structures varied and were consciously used to create specific effects. Structural devices such as the use of challenging statements and phrases were often used at this level.

Some complex sentences structures were chosen which helped to balance and weigh up contending views and complex clauses were controlled by careful punctuation.

Level 5 responses were usually purposeful and clear, though perhaps not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary or as precise in register or style as those given higher marks. Level 4 responses, as described in the marking guidelines, were 'sometimes effective' but not consistently so. Although the style was usually

fairly plain with fewer consciously created effects or rhetoric, the language used was apt and generally accurate. A range of quite basic errors was made at this level which limited the effectiveness of the style but did not affect clarity of meaning. Commonly used words were also incorrectly spelled in responses at this level, especially homophones and some words used in the passage such as 'martyr', 'until', 'benefits' or 'dementia'. There were occasional lapses in the use of definite and indefinite articles (usually omission) and some grammatical mismatching, often between plurals and verb forms.

Faulty sentence structures, insecure tense use or too much lifted or copied material often kept writing marks for **Question 1** below Level 4, even where other technical skills such as spelling were more accurate. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation and grammar errors which meant that examiners could not award marks in Level 4. The omission of definite or indefinite articles, tense errors and agreement errors were more frequent and more damaging to meaning at this level. In rare cases, material from the texts was copied and responses where this occurred more substantially could not be given marks in Band 4 for Writing or for Reading because neither the content or the style of the response was the candidate's own.

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

- be prepared to challenge and disagree with ideas in the passage and always justify and explain the reasons why you agree or disagree
- make sure the ideas you use are derived from the passage
- think about the purpose of the texts in the reading material and how that affects what is being said
- aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them
- be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly; think carefully about the kind of style which suits your task and the audience
- check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing definite or indefinite articles, weaknesses in grammar or misspellings of key words which are in the passage.

**Section B**

**Descriptive Writing**

**2 Write a description of a family home.**

**3 Write a description with the title, 'Waiting in line'.**

Both descriptive writing questions were chosen by a substantial number of candidates with the first task being the one that was more often selected. In the first task there were some strongly evocative descriptions of places from the candidate's own past or childhood, including their own home, or friends' and grandparents' homes, which elicited some sustained, detailed and effective responses. Responses tended to be more effective if the chosen place had some convincing emotional connection with the writer which was relayed to the reader, rather than a fictional 'home' which was described in a less engaging manner.

In the second question, most responses made good use of the direction in the task to focus on describing specific elements while 'waiting in line'. Many kinds of 'line' were represented in the answers, from queues in theme parks, supermarkets or even queuing to evacuate a disaster-stricken city or a queue for an injection. The popular use of a narrator for this question was used to good effect in some responses and most avoided a narrative structure by focusing on the signs and feelings of frustration or anticipation before reaching the front (if this ever happened) and the elation or perhaps deflation after getting there.

Some successful responses to the first question focused on the writer's thoughts and feelings as they thought about or reminisced about their choice of 'family home'. A childhood home or familiar location from the past featured in a number of evocative responses to this question, often partially remembered in subtle glimpses of details which were imbued with emotion and memory. In other scenarios, the location was approached in a more physical way, after a brief introduction which explained how the writer came to be there. As is often the case in effective descriptive writing, closely observed details helped to recreate the place in the reader's mind. Unusual or apparently insignificant but closely observed details created an impression of reality in the best responses. Most were constructed in a fairly straightforward way, with each paragraph devoted to some aspect of the scene. Most responses at all levels of achievement were sustained and developed. At the highest level, many showed skill in building a detailed, often emotionally charged scene. These consciously crafted pieces held the reader's attention by linking the different elements

described in an engaging, cohesive response. Level 6 responses were characterised by this cohesive structure as well as carefully chosen detail.

Level 5 responses tended to use a wide range of details and were well-constructed, if a little less effective and cohesive overall. At the bottom of Level 5 and in Level 4, responses were sustained and competently organised but usually a little more predictable. Selected scenes and details at this level tended to involve more stereotypical ideas, such as meals being prepared in kitchens, or messy teenagers' rooms. Details about the surroundings were sometimes included though sometimes this technique lacked the sense of a specific, clearly observed family home as seen in more effective pieces. Most responses attempted to evoke the atmosphere and often nostalgia that was experienced in the reminiscence.

Level 4 descriptions for Content and Structure tended to become a little unbalanced or included over-long narrative introductions such as a journey getting to the house. In some, the description sometimes became a more straightforward list of what was seen as the narrator went from room to room in predictable sequence and lacked the emotional engagement suggested by the title. The descriptive content tended to be a little more stereotypical or general than responses given higher marks.

Less effective responses given marks in Level 3 or below often included less well organised lists of details briefly given rather than developed. Other responses at this level became a series of events, often outlining the contents of each room with limited focus on description beyond some more clichéd elements. Most responses to this question were organised and paragraphed but at this level the descriptions of each feature were brief and general rather than developed and specific.

The second question was attempted less often than the first although there were some effective and highly skilled descriptions here. Various scenarios worked well for candidates given high marks for Content and Structure here. More effective descriptions focused on the changes in the atmosphere in the 'line' and focused on a range of interesting and clearly developed details. These often included small, closely observed gestures and a range of emotions.

A close focus on the question was handled with confidence by many candidates given high marks for Content and Structure. Descriptions were written in the first or the third person, some skilfully developed responses evoked the atmosphere through first person reflections of thoughts and feelings, an approach which sometimes worked successfully to imbue the scene with a tangible intensity. Some responses effectively focused on the same characters as they moved in time through the 'waiting in line' before and after the end had been reached, giving the response a clear structure and cohesion.

Examiners gave marks in low Level 5 or Level 4 where the writing had some narrative elements at the expense of descriptive focus, where there was limited organisation of the details described or where strings of details were listed with less overall cohesion, although most pieces were quite sustained and paragraphed appropriately. Less effective responses given marks below Level 4 were generally characterised by confusion between features of descriptive and narrative writing and relied on simple narration of events with limited focus on description of characters and how they behaved and reacted. Some ideas and images tended to be more predictable, such as descriptions of queuing at fast food outlets.

High marks for Style and Accuracy often reflected the precise and varied vocabulary used as well as the technical accuracy of the writing. In both descriptive tasks, similar details were often included but better responses had a much wider range of vocabulary, precisely deployed to create specific effects. Highly effective responses showed an ability to use both simple and complex language and sentence structures to create subtle, complex atmospheres. In less successful responses, vocabulary was sometimes wide-ranging and complex but used with less precision. In a few cases, this insecure use of language resulted in a style which was difficult to follow and the credit which could be given for a wide ranging vocabulary was lost by its imprecise use and consequent lack of clear meaning.

As is often the case in less secure descriptive writing, tenses switched between past and present, sometimes within sentences. Incomplete or verbless sentences also affected marks given in the middle range, even where other technical aspects of style were more accurate. Lapses in grammar, perhaps minor in isolation but more damaging when persistent, also kept responses out of Level 4 for Style and Accuracy. These included incorrect agreements and the omission of definite and indefinite articles.

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

- try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content; choose a scenario which gives you a range of details on which to focus
- keep your focus on details which will help you evoke a particular atmosphere
- write sentences with proper verbs and do not switch tenses
- use vocabulary precisely: complex words used wrongly do not help your style.

### Narrative Writing

**4 Write a story involving a group of people working together.**

**5 Write a narrative with the title, 'The Mirror'.**

Both narrative writing questions were more popular choices than either of the descriptive titles for candidates across the mark range and there was a very wide range of plots, characters and scenarios in these responses. Examiners sometimes saw narratives which did not comfortably fit with either title or where the given title or the quotation in the question was not used or the story did not really use these ideas. Occasionally, narratives seemed to be answers to previously set questions rather than those on the current paper and in some cases the Content and Structure marks were lower as a result.

Effective responses, as is often the case in narrative writing, were well organised and thoughtful interpretations of the title which used engaging, credible ideas to create developed stories. An ability to shape the narrative, to produce moments of tension or drama and to vary the pace of the story were credited by examiners as essential elements of narrative writing, as was the use of characterisation to create believable protagonists and characters.

There were various structures employed in effective responses to the first question, as well as more straightforward chronological accounts. The idea of 'working together' was central to the plot of effective stories, such as victims trying to escape from a variety of unpleasant confinements, scientists cooperating on the development of a vaccine, bands of superheroes saving the world, or more realistic combinations such as completing school projects with unlikely team members. Some effective narratives were written in specific genres, such as fantasy, science fiction or war; effective responses showed an ability to create credible characters, even if the scenario itself was fantastic or unfamiliar. Any relevant, focused and developed approach could lead to higher mark Levels.

Narratives given marks in Level 5 were usually more straightforward in structure and approach but nonetheless engaging for the reader. Examiners could award marks in Level 5 for Content and Structure where the narrative was organised and there was a clear attempt create a developed story which was relevant to the task. Responses in this range, whilst often more straightforward, chronological accounts, were cohesive and balanced and contained a suitable ending depicting some resolution or conclusion to the story overall. The title was often developed to give some moral lesson learned concerning the benefits of people working together.

Level 4 marks for Content and Structure were awarded for stories which were relevant to the task but were less developed and used fewer elements of good narrative writing. Characters and narrators tended to be more simply drawn and responses were often more dependent on a series of events but sometimes lacked attention to characterisation and setting. A simplicity of content rather than weaknesses in organisation were typical at this level. Characters were identified but there was more time and emphasis given to relating events than creating characters. In many responses at this level, the 'event' itself was the subject of the story rather than the group working together. While the majority of less effective narratives had some simple but clear sequence of events, there were fewer features of a developed narrative style.

A surprising number of responses were managed in a wholly discursive way, writing about global organisations and why they were successful in business. These responses lacked characterisation, settings and plot and a clearer appreciation of the demands of the narrative genre was required.

For the second narrative question, there were varied interpretations of the title which offered some challenge in terms of structure for many ambitious writers. The mirror was at times a reflective metaphor for a person's changes through their life. There were a number of narratives where sinister revelations offered in the mirror

led to the eventual denouement. Many responses drew upon considerations of self-image and the issues of society's perceptions of idealised beauty and body shape.

Level 5 responses were generally quite effective accounts in which the content was perhaps less ambitious or less tightly controlled but there was still some organisation and shaping of the narrative and a cohesive story was produced. In attempting to control an intricate plot, characterisation was sometimes not as well developed and settings were more sketchily drawn at the bottom of Level 5 and in responses given Level 4 marks.

Responses given marks in Level 4 and lower were usually simple accounts of events and showed limited awareness of the reader or the features of narrative writing which elevate an account into a developed story. Scenarios which quickly became clichéd and unengaging were used and some responses became confusing and muddled in attempting to control stories through different times and locations. The mirror being used for time travel often caused predictable difficulties in terms of the management of different periods of time.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was engaging and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. The characteristics of Level 6 writing included a fluent and flexible use of language which was subtle enough to create a range of effects which helped to engage the reader. Punctuation within sentences, especially in the use of dialogue, was secure in responses in Level 6 and where coupled with a sophisticated and precise range of vocabulary, the highest marks were given. Responses awarded marks in Level 5 tended to be less ambitious and complex but still accurate and largely fluent while Level 4 responses were plain in style and lacked some range in vocabulary but had few errors which damaged the clarity of meaning such as weak sentence control, sentence separation and grammar errors.

Common errors of grammar and expression appeared increasingly in responses given low Level 5 and Level 4 responses, such as incorrect agreements and imprecise vocabulary. Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, limited otherwise competently told stories to Level 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation or grammar. The omission of definite and indefinite articles, the incorrect use of participles or errors in grammatical agreement contributed to a lack of fluency and accuracy which kept many responses out of Level 5. Similarly, basic punctuation errors and the mis-spelling of simple words and wrongly selected homophones sometimes appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes frequent enough to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy. A frequent reason for keeping an otherwise clearly written story out of Level 5 was weak demarcation of sentences, most commonly the use of commas where full stops were needed and the mixing of tenses in the writing.

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

- think about the build-up towards the most important moment in your story
- make sure you know how your story ends before you begin
- characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader
- check your writing for errors, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes
- use complicated vocabulary with precision and consider the power of simple words and sentences to create particular effects.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

---

**Paper 0500/03  
Coursework Portfolio**

## **Key messages**

Candidates did well when they:

- read critically and gave a thorough response to the implicit and explicit ideas, opinions and attitudes they had identified in a text
- assimilated ideas from a text to provide developed, thoughtful and sophisticated responses
- supported their analysis, evaluation and comments with a detailed and specific selection of relevant ideas from a text
- wrote original and interesting assignments which reflected their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them
- sequenced sentences within paragraphs in a way which maintained clarity of arguments, description or narrative
- wrote with confidence using a wide range of vocabulary with precision and for specific effect
- adapted their writing style to demonstrate an understanding of the needs of different audiences and context for each of the three assignments.

## **General comments**

The majority of centres understood the changes in task setting required by the 2020 course syllabus. Most portfolios of work contained work written in three different genres.

The content of much of the coursework portfolios was interesting and related to the personal interests or experiences of the candidates. The moderation team reported that they read some thoughtful and insightful responses to interesting topical articles for Assignment 1, and that some candidates created some engaging descriptions and narratives.

Some centres successfully followed the administration procedures provided in the course syllabus and the Coursework Handbook. However, the whole of the moderation team commented with some concern that a significant number of centres did not follow the procedures outlined in those documents.

## **Administration**

Centres were successful with administration when they:

- indicated all errors in the final draft of each assignment
- carried out a thorough process of internal moderation
- supplied specific comments and marks in relation to the mark schemes at the end of the final draft of each assignment
- ensured that each portfolio of work was securely attached to the Individual Candidate Record Card
- accurately completed the Coursework Assessment Summary Form, including any amendments made during internal moderation.

All moderators reported that when markers had not indicated all errors in the final draft of each assignment there was a tendency to award marks from the higher bands of the assessment criteria, when marks from Level 4 or below would have been more appropriate. Some of the most common errors were typing and punctuation errors, missing articles, awkward or clumsy expression, tenses and verb / subject agreement. Errors such as these are not expected to be particularly evident in writing achieving marks from Level 5 or above. When markers indicate all errors in the final drafts it helps them to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the piece of writing as a whole and to apply the most appropriate 'best fit' mark from the mark scheme. A thorough and careful process of internal moderation also helps to ensure that marks are appropriately and consistently applied by all teachers in a centre. Advice and guidance on how to implement and carry out internal moderation is given in the Coursework Handbook.

Another concern highlighted by the moderation team was that a significant number of centres did not securely attach the completed portfolio of work to their candidates' Individual Candidate Record Cards. Too frequently, moderators received pieces of writing, often unnamed, that had either been placed in plastic wallets, or had simply been placed in an envelope and sent to Cambridge with the supporting paperwork. Such methods significantly increase the chances of work becoming lost or mislaid during the moderation process.

Instructions and guidance on how to mark and present folders of work for submission to Cambridge can be found in the course syllabus and the Coursework Handbook. Centres should pay particular attention to 'Teacher responsibilities' in Section 1 and 'Administration and Moderation' (Section 4) in the Coursework Handbook. Both documents can be found on the School Support Hub via the main Cambridge website.

### **Comments on specific assignments**

#### **Assignment 1**

It was pleasing to note that many candidates responded to a good range of appropriately challenging and topical texts which were of clear interest to them. Candidates successfully responded to texts about veganism, gender equality, childhood obesity and aggressive dogs. Moderators commented that a significant number of centres set old, outdated, inappropriate or unchallenging texts for Assignment 1. Such texts tended to result in uninteresting or formulaic responses, or candidates talked about the topic rather than the individual ideas and opinions presented in the texts.

#### **Reading**

There was a significant trend for centres to award marks from the highest level assessment criteria to work which met the lower level assessment criteria. Candidates who successfully met the higher level assessment criteria were those who demonstrated a consistently evaluative approach to most points in a text, and provided developed, sophisticated responses which made direct reference to, or included quotes from, the text. Candidates who engaged in a general discussion about the topic or subject of a text, or those who did not thoroughly evaluate a text, tended to produce work which more appropriately met the Level 4 assessment criteria in Table B (reading). The most common reasons for adjustments to a centre's marks for reading were when moderators identified a trend for candidates to engage in a general discussion about the topic of a text, or when the number of points covered were 'appropriate' rather than 'thorough'.

#### **Writing**

Many candidates responded to texts in an appropriate form and style. Letters, speeches and articles for newspapers or magazines were the most popular choice of form and many candidates demonstrated some understanding of audience and purpose. Candidates who were able to meet the highest level assessment criteria were those who produced writing which was highly effective, almost always accurate and consistent throughout with their application of form and style. Work which showed insecurity with form and style, such as the omission of an appropriate salutation or valediction in a letter, a limited or inconsistent use of rhetorical devices for speeches, or lack of clarity of the intended audience, tended to meet the assessment criteria for Level 5, Table A (writing) or below. The moderators noted that there was a general trend with many centres to award marks from the highest level assessment criteria to work which more appropriately met the lower level assessment criteria.

Moderators also noticed a general tendency for centres to award marks from the highest level assessment criteria to work which contained quite frequent, and often quite serious, errors which impacted on the overall meaning and effect of candidates' work. Writing given marks from Levels 5 and 6 in Table A should be

'mostly' or 'almost always' accurate. Errors made with sentence construction and grammar, typing, the incorrect selection of vocabulary from spellcheck, or the incorrect use of vocabulary can affect overall meaning and clarity and should be taken into account when awarding marks from Table A. Issues with accuracy was one of the more common reasons for adjustment of marks for Writing in Table A.

Candidates were successful when:

- the form, purpose and intended audience was clear to the reader
- they responded to interesting and relatable texts
- they demonstrated analysis and evaluation with the provision of thoughtful and perceptive responses to the individual ideas and opinions identified within a text
- they wrote in a fluent, accurate and appropriate style.

Candidates were less successful when:

- the form, purpose and intended audience was not clear to the reader
- they wrote about the topic rather than the individual ideas and opinions presented in the text
- they responded to texts which were of limited interest to them
- they analysed and evaluated a writer's literary techniques
- they adopted an aggressive or attacking tone and style towards the author.

Advice and guidance on how to select texts can be found in the course syllabus and the Coursework Handbook.

### **Advice to candidates for Assignment 1**

- be prepared to thoroughly explore, challenge and discuss the ideas in the text
- try to avoid making general comments about the topic or subject of the text, instead, try to make sure that your comments are specifically related to the ideas, opinions or attitudes that you have identified in the text
- look for, and use in your response, inferences made indirectly in the text
- look for contradictions or misleading assumptions in the text and comment on them
- try to develop your points to create a thorough, detailed and clear line of argument or discussion
- make sure that the audience and purpose of your writing is clear and adapt your style accordingly
- make sure that you carefully proof read your work and check that your punctuation, vocabulary choices and grammar are correct.

### **Assignment 2**

Many centres set tasks which were appropriate. Candidates produced some interesting descriptions of a range of subjects such as busy places and buildings and objects or people of personal importance to the candidate; for example, returning to a family home, re-discovering a childhood treasure, or a loved relative such as a grandparent. Less successful responses were those in which candidates struggled to create credible and convincing descriptions; for example, dystopian/apocalyptic cities, haunted houses, scenes from World War 1, or clips from films.

The most engaging and successful descriptions were those in which the candidates had carefully selected vocabulary to create a realistic and credible sense of atmosphere, place or person, and which were well sequenced and carefully managed for deliberate effect. Candidates were less successful when they were overambitious with their vocabulary choices, included imagery or idioms which did not fit the context of their writing, or included unrealistic and unconvincing scenarios (for example, dystopian cities/haunted houses). Writing which lacks credibility and realism would be expected to be given marks from Level 4 in Table C (content and structure) or below. A common reason for adjustment of marks was when centres awarded marks from the higher level assessment criteria to unrealistic and unconvincing writing which more appropriately met the lower level assessment criteria.

Moderators commented that descriptions which remained fully focused on description and avoided narrative development were more successful in meeting the higher level assessment criteria than those which were characterised by the inclusion of overlong narrative preambles explaining the events leading up to the focus of the description. This detracted from the overall impact and effect of the descriptions and should be awarded marks from Level 4 or below of Table C (content and structure). One of the most common reasons for adjustments to marks was when the moderators identified a trend of awarding marks from the highest level assessment criteria for content and structure to writing which displayed the characteristics more typical of writing at Level 4 or below.

Another reason for adjustments to marks was when moderators identified a trend of awarding high marks to writing that contained a limited range of sentence structures, incorrectly constructed sentences, or contained frequent errors with punctuation and grammar. Writing that achieves marks from Levels 5 and 6 of Table D (style and accuracy) is expected to be consistently accurate, consistent with the chosen register and demonstrate an ability to use a range of sentences for specific effect. The moderators saw some writing which displayed these characteristics, but a significant majority of the writing awarded marks from Levels 5 and 6 from Table D, were quite often more characteristic of writing at Level 4 or below. Many candidates 'told' the reader about the scene being described, rather than 'showing' the reader with a careful and precise use of vocabulary and images.

The moderators also noticed a general trend for candidates to use repeated sentence structures and create almost list-like descriptions, which added to the 'telling' rather than 'showing' style of writing mentioned earlier. In addition, the writing in a significant number of samples seen contained frequent and serious errors which impaired the meaning and overall effect of a candidate's work. The most frequent errors were missing prepositions and articles, changes in tenses, typing errors, commas used instead of full stops and grammar errors. Often the meaning of sentences was blurred, or meaning of sentences was lost altogether. Errors which affect meaning and clarity of writing cannot be considered as minor. As mentioned earlier in this report, the absence of the annotation of all errors by the markers made it difficult for the moderators to determine whether errors had been taken into account when marks had been awarded. Accurate and effective application of the assessment criteria is achieved through the careful weighing up of the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing and the application of a mark which 'best fits' the assessment criteria. To achieve this, it is essential that all errors are identified and indicated by the markers. Engaging in this process allows markers to effectively balance the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing and apply marks that are most appropriate to their candidates' work.

### **Advice to candidates for Assignment 2**

- make sure that the vocabulary you use matches the context and content of your description
- make sure that the images you create matches the context and content of your description
- try to 'show' readers your imagined scenario instead of 'telling' them about it
- keep your focus on the details of your description and avoid slipping into narrative
- carefully check and proof read your work to identify and correct common errors such as missing articles and prepositions, switches in tenses and typing errors
- try to avoid repetitive sentence structures, instead use a range of sentences for create specific effect.

### **Assignment 3**

Moderators reported that they read some engaging, well-managed and convincing narratives. The most engaging and successful narratives were those in which the candidates created stories which featured well-defined plots and strongly developed features of fiction writing such as description, characterisation and convincing details and events.

Less successful narratives were those which did not convince the reader of the imagined situation or character, or had limited development of plot or character. This type of writing was most evident when candidates wrote in the genres of action, murder mystery, ghost, dystopian or adventure stories. Stories such as these, although containing a definite beginning, middle and ending, were often unrealistic and incredible, or lacked development of character or plot. Writing such as this is classed as 'relevant' or 'straightforward' and should expect to be awarded marks from Level 4 or below from Table C. The moderation team noticed a tendency with a significant number of centres to award relevant or straightforward writing marks from Level 5, or even Level 6, when marks from Level 4 or below would have been more appropriate. This was another common reason for adjusting marks.

When moderators saw work which was very accurate, contained precise well-chosen vocabulary and maintained a consistent register throughout they could agree when centres awarded marks from Levels 5 and 6 in Table D. As with Assignment 2, moderators noticed a trend for centres to award marks from the highest levels of the mark scheme to work which contained frequent and persistent errors, and which more accurately met the assessment criteria from Level 4 or below in Table D. This was a common reason for adjustment of marks. The comments made for Assignment 2 with regards to accuracy and the annotation of errors are also relevant to Assignment 3 and should be noted by all who mark coursework.

### **Advice to candidates for Assignment 3**

- try to create stories that are realistic, credible and convincing
- remember that characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader; do not just rely on events
- try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider an individual and original selection of content
- carefully proof read your work and check your writing for errors which will affect your mark, such as punctuation, your use of prepositions and articles, tenses and construction of sentences.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

---

Paper 0500/04  
Speaking and Listening Test

## Key messages

Centre assessment generally accurate in line with the requirements of the new syllabus for 2020. With only a small number of exceptions, the administration of the component was accurate and helpful to the moderating process.

Candidates' responses to Part 1, the Individual Talk, were often well-organised and delivered confidently. Some very interesting and diverse topics were covered with a good degree of success. In the vast majority of cases the 3–4 minutes allowed for Part 1 were utilised effectively by the candidates and timings were adhered to.

Part 2 takes the form of a conversation that should evolve naturally through the 7–8 minutes time period allowed. A Part 2 conversation that depends largely on a question and answer format is not as successful as a naturally developing conversation. Where there were issues with timing they tended to arise in Part 2 and this is an area examiners should pay close attention to when conducting the tests.

The topic discussed in Part 2 must be the same as the one chosen by the candidates for Part 1. Any aspect of the topic introduced in Part 1 may be used to develop the conversation in Part 2 but any prolonged departure from the core topic will seriously disadvantage the candidate, as reflected in the mark accepted for Part 2.

## **Administration – General points**

Centre administration was of a high standard but where there were issues the following guidelines may help to clarify administrative requirements:

- All tests should be carried out within the boundaries of the test window stipulated by Cambridge International.
- Every test should begin with a full introduction to include the date on which the candidate is being examined, the candidate's full name and examination number, the centre's name and number and the examiner's name. The information can appear in any order as this is not as important as the need for the information to be covered in the introduction. It is expected that the examiner conducting the test delivers the introduction and not the candidate. A generic introduction for an entire cohort does not help the moderation process.
- Centres may choose to create and use their own versions of the Oral Examinations Summary Form (OESF) as opposed to utilising the one provided by Cambridge International but in these cases the form used must accurately reflect the information required.
- It should be noted that 0500 First Language English and 0510/0511 Second Language English are different syllabuses and the speaking and listening tests are also separate components following different formats. A test undertaken in the 0510/0511 format is not acceptable as an 0500/04 test as it does not fulfil the criteria.

## **Conduct of the test – General points**

Generally, the standard of examining was very good with candidates being given many opportunities to express their views and demonstrate their range of oratory skills.

Where there were concerns, the following advice is offered.

- In some centres, examiners engaged in an ‘off topic’ conversation with candidates before asking them to begin their Part 1 task. It is advised that each test should begin with the examiner’s formal introduction and be followed immediately by the candidate performing Part 1, the Individual Talk.
- The importance of timing within the test should be appreciated. Where a Part 1 response is significantly short of the minimum three minutes required, please consider whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met and assess accordingly. It is difficult for a response to meet higher level criteria in a performance lasting significantly less than the prescribed minimum time allowance. Equally, if a candidate speaks for considerably longer than the time allowed or has to be stopped to avoid doing so, it should be carefully considered whether such a performance can fulfil the descriptor for Level 5 that states ‘full and well-organised use of content’.
- Given that both speaking and listening are assessed in Part 2, it is important that the conversations last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. It is the examiner’s responsibility to ensure this minimum expectation of seven minutes is met wherever possible.

## **Comments on specific sections of the test**

### ***Part 1 – Individual Talk***

With very few exceptions, all the candidates entered in this series delivered their responses to Part 1 as formal presentations. This is perfectly acceptable. It is clear that most candidates prepared thoroughly for the test having researched their topics at great length. Many of the presentations were memorised which is acceptable as long as there remains an element of natural fluency to the delivery. Over-reliance on memory and rehearsal can stilt the natural fluency of the presentation and impede performance. As always, the most successful tasks attempted were those where the candidates felt ownership of a topic, had a strong knowledge of the subject, and were genuinely interested in what they were saying. Well planned and prepared responses are almost exclusively more successful than those delivered without proper preparation.

The Speaking and Listening Test allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when choices are made. Topics with imaginative themes, providing reflective and analytical opportunities for the candidates to explore, tended to be the most successful, particularly if the candidate was able to move beyond the simply descriptive and narrative.

Another strong element of presentations achieving Level 5 in Part 1 was the structure underpinning the talks. A clearly defined persuasive argument or a cyclical arrangement that brought the concluding statement back to the initial point often helped candidates to fulfil ‘the full and well-organised’ descriptor for Level 5. Less successful structures tended to meander from point to point without such a strong sense of purpose. Whilst structure itself does not confirm a mark in Level 5, it does provide a strong basis for candidates to exhibit their linguistic and presentational skills.

It should be noted that almost any topic chosen can be productive or less successful based on the candidate’s own knowledge of the subject, the depth of research undertaken and the degree of preparation attempted, but clearly some topics offer more opportunities for development and discussion than others. When choosing a topic, candidates should give equal consideration to the Part 2 element of the test. As well as being confident to deliver a talk for 3–4 minutes a candidate must consider if there is also scope for a successful conversation lasting 7–8 minutes. The equal distribution of marks for both parts of the test means this becomes a very important consideration when choosing a topic.

### ***Part 2 – Conversation***

During Part 2 it is imperative the examiner gives candidates opportunities to expand their thoughts and to consistently speak at length within the conversation. Candidates who develop their thoughts and ideas always outperform those who merely respond passively to questioning.

Unlike Part 1 where the candidate is solely responsible for the quality of performance, in Part 2 the examiner dictates not only the timing of the test but also its pace and to a degree, the level of responsiveness of the candidate. A good examiner will not openly question a candidate's responses by being critical but will tease out a more developed response through careful prompting. Examiners who constantly interrupt or who try to monopolise the conversations do not help the candidates at all.

Generally, candidates were not interrupted when in full flow and examiners were not judgemental when the candidates' responses could be deemed inaccurate or potentially controversial. Examiners do not need to agree with the statements the candidates make but may seek to challenge more able candidates if they feel this will stimulate them to develop their ideas more fully. This is a judgement call for the examiner and should only be made if the examiner is certain a candidate's reaction will be a positive one.

Where there were issues and improvement can be made in examining Part 2 the following advice is offered:

- The timing of Part 2 is controlled by the examiner. It is the examiner's responsibility to ensure Part 2 lasts for at least seven minutes in order to give the candidates the fullest opportunity to demonstrate their skills and accrue marks.
- To ensure a minimum of seven minutes is completed in Part 2, the examiner should develop the conversation using notes made during the candidate's Part 1 presentation.
- It is important that any questions to the candidate are open and not closed. Questions needing only a perfunctory answer should be avoided because they limit the candidate's ability to respond at length.
- Part 2 conversations solely conducted on a question and answer basis, where the series of questions is only loosely connected and responses from the candidate are then ignored in favour of the next question on the list, do not fulfil the descriptors in the higher levels.
- Allowing the conversations to progress beyond the maximum time allowed of eight minutes is unnecessary and may become counter-productive. It is very doubtful whether any contribution made by a candidate after the eight minutes have been exceeded will have any bearing on the mark being awarded for Part 2.

#### **Advice to centres**

- Choosing the most appropriate topic is key to being successful in the test.
- Examiners must remain passive listeners in Part 1 unless the candidate falters to the point of not being able to continue. Even then, a gentle prompt is more productive than asking a question. Asking a question normally signals the transition from Part 1 to Part 2 in the test.
- Although candidates should prepare thoroughly, it must be remembered that Part 1 is a demonstration of presentational skills and that the monotonous regurgitation of a memorised topic will not fulfil the criteria for higher levels.
- Consider how examiners can hone their skills in the delivery of Part 2 of the test using the above guidelines.
- Part 2 is a conversation and not a question and answer session; candidates need to participate actively in Part 2.
- Efficient administration allows more efficient moderation of a centre and this helps all concerned in the process.