

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (9–1)

Paper 0627/01
Reading Passages

Key Messages:

candidates should ensure that they read all questions carefully and take careful note of specific instructions, such as ‘using your own words’ or ‘select **one** word’

candidates should take note of the number of marks available for each question – if there are 2 marks they should look for 2 discrete points

candidates should check their work carefully to avoid unnecessary errors, especially in **Question 2** where there are 15 marks awarded for Writing

in **Question 1(f)** candidates should only select language choices from the lines of the passage specified in the question

in **Question 2** candidates should read the question carefully to ensure that they adopt an appropriate style and register

in **Question 2** candidates should select relevant ideas from Passage B and evaluate them in response to the task set, using the specified format and voice

in **Question 3(c)** the candidates should use the bullet points to ensure that the response covers all the assessment objectives but may choose to interweave their comments on language, structure and techniques throughout the response.

General comments:

There was a very small entry for this final examination series. The majority of candidates made some attempt to write a relevant response to every question on the paper, although some did not attempt all of the tasks. Although most candidates had clearly been appraised of the specific requirements of each task, a few candidates misunderstood what they were required to do.

The texts used on this paper proved effective and elicited positive responses from candidates. Although Passage A, *Mill on the Floss*, was written in the 19th century, almost all candidates were able to respond with some understanding to **Questions 1(a) – 1(f)**. Passage B, *Ending the Gender Divide*, and Passage C, *The Fun of It*, were drawn from the 21st-century and 20th-century respectively and all passages proved accessible for candidates who appreciated the contrasting ways in which the writers conveyed their views and ideas about the different treatment of boys and girls as they are growing up.

Most candidates were able to use their time effectively so that they could spend more time on the questions which are worth more marks. There were some candidates who did not finish the paper, however, and centres are advised to ensure their candidates have plenty of practice in effective use of time.

The majority of candidates seem to have followed the order of the questions on the paper. The low tariff questions in **Section A** are designed to build on one another and provide a solid foundation for the analysis required in **Question 1(f)**, and **Questions 3(a) – 3(b)** are designed to lead into the evaluation and comparison of Passages B and C in **Question 3(c)**.

Candidates should assist the examiner who is assessing their work by signposting their answers clearly where they have used the additional pages in the answer booklet. They should indicate which of the questions they are continuing by writing the number of the question in the margin.

Comments on specific questions:

Question 1

Question 1 was based on Passage A, an extract from *Mill on the Floss*. Despite being a 19th-century fiction passage, most candidates found it accessible and were able to understand and follow the narrative.

Question 1 is broken down into several low tariff questions, **(a) – (e)**, worth between 1 and 4 marks up to a total of 15. These questions test a candidate's ability to select relevant details from the text and interpret them, as well as commenting on the writer's use of language in specific lines. **Question 1(f)** is a more extended response to the writer's effects and is again based on specified sections of the text.

(a) Re-read lines 1 – 7, 'The next morning ... gates were to be lifted.'

(i) Select one word which shows that Maggie looks very happy about going fishing with Tom. [1 mark]

Most candidates gained the 1 mark available for this straightforward question by selecting the word 'radiant'.

(ii) Using your own words, explain why Maggie has asked Tom to put the worms on the hook for her. [1 mark]

The majority of candidates gained the 1 mark available for this straightforward question by explaining that Maggie is afraid of hurting the worms or doesn't want the worms to be hurt. A few candidates thought that Maggie didn't like the worms.

(b) Re-read 10 – 14, 'Tom, indeed, was...when she did wrong.'
Using your own words, give two impressions of Tom's attitude to Maggie. [2 marks]

The majority of candidates gained one mark for explaining that Tom thinks that Maggie is silly or incapable. A number gained 2 marks for also explaining that he also cares about her or feels responsible for her. A few got the second mark for saying that Tom has a sexist attitude to Maggie.

(c) Using your own words, explain the meaning of the following phrases as they are used in the passage.

(i) 'private opinion' (line 5) [2 marks]

Most candidates were able to explain both parts of the phrase correctly as his personal views. A few candidates found 'opinion' more challenging to explain but were able to gain 1 mark for a partial explanation of the phrase.

(ii) 'in awe of Tom's superiority' (line 9) [2 marks]

Candidates found this part of the question slightly more challenging. Some were able to offer a meaning for 'in awe', such as admire, and gain 1 mark, but some candidates found superiority more challenging.

- (d) **‘There was nothing to spoil her delight in the whispers and the dreamy silences, when she listened to the light dripping sounds of the rising fish, and the gentle rustling, as if the willows and the reeds and the water had their happy whisperings also. Maggie thought it would make a very nice heaven to sit by the pool in that way, and never be scolded.’
(lines 30–33)**

Using your own words, explain how the underlined phrases are used by the writer to reflect Maggie’s feelings at this point. [4 marks]

The majority of candidates were able to explain how Maggie’s contentment and happiness are reflected in the language used by the writer. Maggie’s feelings are reflected in the clam and tranquil descriptions of her surroundings. Some responses needed to focus more closely on explaining the effects of the language. A few candidates gained all 4 marks for this question and many were able to gain up to 3 marks for their explanations.

- (d) **Re-read lines 35 – 37, ‘It was one of their ... fond of each other.’
What impressions does the writer give of Maggie and Tom at this point?** [4 marks]

In this question, candidates could gain up to 3 marks for relevant explanations of how Maggie and Tom’s relationship is presented in these lines. Most candidates were able to explain that they are very close, rather naïve and innocent about their futures, and that they are very fond of one another.

Question 1(f)

Re-read lines 15 – 30, ‘They were on their way ... and was pleased with her.’

**Explain how the writer uses language and techniques to describe:
the Round Pool
Maggie’s experience of fishing and Tom’s reaction.**

In your answer you should select powerful words and phrases and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.

You should write about 200–300 words.

There are up to 15 marks available for the content of your answer.

The specified section of the text offered candidates a wide range of language choices and techniques to explore. Any choices and comments which focused on the bullet points in the question and offered explanations of their use were rewarded. It was gratifying to see that for the vast majority of candidates this 19th-century passage proved accessible and interesting with even the less developed responses offering some relevant language choices and comments.

The strongest responses were able to choose a range of relevant language choices, focusing on the description of the round pool and the excitement felt by Tom when Maggie catches a fish. Many candidates offered interesting analysis at word and phrase level, such as ‘mysterious’, ‘almost a perfect round’, ‘framed’, and ‘glassy watered’ as an indication of the round pool’s hidden depths and beauty. Many commented on the pool being described as a mirror in a frame focusing on its beauty and its sense of hidden meanings. The mystery of its origins was also explored effectively. This language was usually contrasted with the sudden movement and noise when Maggie catches a fish. Maggie ‘looking dreamily’ is suddenly shattered by ‘running’ and ‘a large fish bouncing on the grass’. Tom’s tender language in ‘O Magsie, you little duck’ was often analysed well. Some responses picked out some appropriate language choices but needed to offer more analysis of the effects of the language. A few responses made general comments on the specified section of the text but did not offer any quotations to support or illustrate them.

A small number of candidates did not follow the instructions in the question and didn’t select any language choices, instead describing what happens in the passage.

Question 2: Summary Task

A new toy megastore is opening in your local area later this year and a new manager has just been appointed.

Using the ideas from the passage, write a letter to the manager outlining your concerns about the impact that toys can have on children and their future career choices. Give your advice on how the manager should organise the store to ensure that children are encouraged to pursue their interests.

You should write no more than 250 words.

There are up to 15 marks available for the quality of writing, and up to 10 marks available for the content of your answer.

This question was based on Passage B, *Ending the Gender Divide*, and offered up to 15 marks for Writing and 10 marks for Reading. For the Reading marks candidates were expected to demonstrate understanding of explicit and implicit meanings and attitudes and critically evaluate the facts, ideas and opinions expressed in Passage B. For the Writing marks candidates were expected to write in an appropriate voice and register, write accurately and use a range of sentence structures and vocabulary for effect.

In terms of reading, candidates clearly found the passage accessible and interesting with many expressing sensitive understanding of the way that toy shops are often organised according to gender and the way that it can affect future career choices.

Candidates should be aware that to get into the higher mark bands they are expected to select a number of appropriate ideas from the passage to evaluate. Most candidates chose a few of the more straightforward ideas from the passage, the most popular being the different colours used for boys and girls, the way that toys are gendered with domestic toys for girls and mechanical toys for boys, and the attitudes people have to genders in terms of male and female jobs. The strongest responses offered a more selective evaluation of the information given in the article, reorganising the ideas to make them suitable for inclusion in a letter. They were able to maintain a formal tone and reshape the material to focus on the issues being raised.

As a writing task, this proved largely successful, most candidates convincingly adopting an appropriate register and tone for a formal letter. There were few responses in the lower bands for Writing. Most adopted a convincing voice and used formal language to express their views. Some responses were too similar to the passage, sometimes lifting whole phrases. Stronger responses were highly accurate using a wide range of suitable vocabulary. Others were less convincing but still maintained a reasonably consistent voice and communicated clearly. Some candidates produced repetitive sentence structures, and mistakes of spelling, punctuation and grammar were sometimes evident, occasionally impeding communication.

Question 3

Question 3 was based on both Passage B and Passage C. **Questions 3(a) – 3(b)** were low tariff questions on both passages, designed to lead candidates to the extended **Question 3(c)** where they are asked to compare how the writers' views and ideas are conveyed.

(a) **Re-read paragraph one, 'Walk into any ...stuck in the last century'.** [1 mark]

(i) **Using your own words, explain why the writer describes toys as 'children's learning tools'.**

Most candidates were able to gain the mark for this question by explaining that toys are educational.

(ii) **Give two different language features from this paragraph which make this an effective opening to the article. For each feature give an example from the paragraph.** [2 marks]

To gain these 2 marks the candidates had to identify a language feature and offer a relevant example twice. Many candidates gained both marks. Some did not offer a clear feature or did not offer an appropriate example.

(b) **Re-read paragraph 2, ‘Looking back now ... and I got together.’**

Using your own words, give two aspects of Amelia Earhart’s character that show she was unusual for a girl at this time. [2 marks]

This was a straightforward question and most candidates were able to identify her love of traditionally boys’ sports, her love of trying new things or her lack of concern about what her elders thought of her.

Question 3(c)

Compare and contrast how the writers of Passage B, *Ending the Gender Divide*, and Passage C, *The Fun of It*, convey their views and ideas about treating boys and girls differently?

In your response you should compare and contrast:

the views and ideas each writer presents to the reader

the evidence that the writers use to support their views and ideas

the language, structure and techniques used by the writers and why they are effective.

Remember to support your answer with details from the passages.

You should write about 300 to 350 words.

There are up to 20 marks available for the content of your answer.

The majority of candidates attempted a response to this task which requires candidates to think independently, making judgements about both texts, evaluating the ‘power’ of the language, structure and techniques the writers have used, and comparing the way they have presented their views and ideas.

Many candidates were able to compare both passages in reasonable detail offering some comments on language and structure. Better responses started by comparing the text-types and purposes of the passages, acknowledging that they have similarities as well as differences. These responses made good use of information given; they recognised that Passage B is a modern newspaper report, whereas Passage C is a biographical account of a girl growing up in 1930s America. Some candidates explored the differing attitudes towards girls and boys noting that much has changed since the 1930s but that expectations are still very different in terms of what is deemed acceptable for each gender. They also compared the more personal nature of Passage C compared to Passage B’s more objective perspective.

Some responses tended to be rather superficial making a few more obvious comparisons between the passages. These responses lacked an overview of the passages and what the writers are saying about the treatment of boys and girls.

A very small number of candidates ran out of time and didn’t attempt **Question 3(c)** or offered a rather brief, undeveloped response.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (9–1)

Paper 0627/02
Directed Writing and Composition

Key messages

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

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

- articulate and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect
- use a range of appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures
- use register appropriate to audience and purpose
- make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar
- analyse and critically evaluate facts, ideas and opinions, using appropriate support from the text
- select and synthesise information for specific purposes
- use an appropriate form and style, adapted for the intended audience and genre
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives.

General comments

Most scripts showed a good grasp of what was expected in both the directed writing and the composition sections of the paper. Responses were purposeful, overall, with relatively few brief or undeveloped answers. There was evidence in many scripts of a clear awareness of how marks were awarded in the different questions and writing genres and most followed the rubric.

Most responses showed an understanding of the topic in **Question 1** and made sensible use of the reading passages in their responses. Responses clearly engaged with the question and the reading material; they were able to identify with the issues surrounding keeping animals as pets and give some advice about keeping animals as pets. Most responses in the middle mark range tended to select a range of evidence from the passages. Less effective responses drifted away from the material, listed some points simply, or used the material as a starting point to offer a general response to the task.

In the Composition section, more effective responses showed a clear understanding of the features of descriptive or narrative writing and in both genres; there was developed and structured writing. Some less effective descriptive writing tended to slip into narrative or in some cases was entirely narrative in character; these responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good descriptive style, such as a focus on detail and a more limited time span.

The best responses in both questions were characterised by the careful selection of precise vocabulary and sentence structures to create specific effects. The reader was often intrigued in the early stages of compositions and the writing was consciously shaped in both genres to engage and sustain the reader's interest. In weaker responses, an appropriate register and effective style was more difficult to achieve. In **Question 1**, for example, the required tone required for an article aimed at young people was sometimes forgotten. In this question and in the compositions, there was insufficient attention paid to basic punctuation in weaker answers. Capital letters were sometimes used rather indiscriminately, appearing frequently where not required but not used for proper nouns, in speech or at the beginnings of sentences. Semi-colons were much in evidence but only quite rarely used accurately.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1: Directed Writing

Question 1

Write an article for young people about owning animals as pets.

In your article you should:

**evaluate the views in the passages about keeping animals as pets
give your advice about keeping animals as pets, based on what you have read.**

Give reasons and examples to support what you say.

**You should use evidence from the two passages you have read to help you answer this question.
Remember to write the article using your own words.**

Write about 250 to 350 words.

(40 marks)

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

Most responses adhered to the structure for writing an article; some were mindful of the full question brief that they were directed to write for young people about owning animals about pets and giving advice about keeping them. In better responses both passages' content was scrutinised, synthesised and evaluated purposefully. They also wrote fluently and used vocabulary to good effect and adopted an effective register. Some, however, simply listed reasons why keeping animals might be a good or bad idea.

The marks for reading:

Good responses followed the bullet points but also synthesised the evidence and adopted the evaluative stance required for marks above band 3. Better responses identified and explored the subtleties of the passages, and explored for example: keeping exotic animals could be a 'fashion' implying irresponsible and superficial understanding of animals; the points made about hedgehogs could be broadened to apply to pets in general; cruelty towards animals can be driven by demand for them; all animals need care and attention; all pet keepers are the same – they want to take care of and have a relationship with animals; some animals cause deaths but owners are not necessarily criticised in the press.

Better responses were also able to evaluate the arguments to build a compelling case about keeping animals as pets and gave advice appropriate for young people. These better responses weighed up and evaluated views in both passages. The advice given was balanced and well-reasoned. Evidence was derived from the ideas and examples in both passages, developing claims and assessing their implications with clear and persuasive arguments.

The most successful responses assimilated the details of the passages into a whole new piece: to imply that cats have as many needs as exotic pets seems disingenuous; the impact of neglecting animals on the environment and on the animals themselves is greater in more exotic animals; keeping animals as pets at all may be questionable.

This kind of evaluative approach to the material in the passages was required for marks in band 5 and above. Where responses simply selected evidence from the passages, marks could not be awarded above band 4.

Responses in the middle range tended to list a range of evidence to support their view. Other responses at this level tended to focus on one passage only. Where there was some commentary on evidence, these remarks were just beginning to evaluate or consider mainly the explicit ideas from the passages.

Less effective responses did not seem to understand the need to draw on information from the texts or present any evaluation of the arguments presented. These responses were vague; the misconception here seemed to be that the texts were merely a prompt to help generate ideas rather than a source to be used.

Some responses showed an over-dependence on some key phrases in the texts and obvious words and phrases such as 'pet fads', 'pitfalls of ownership', 'keeping exotic pets is selfish' and 'anti-captivity advocate' appeared frequently.

The marks for writing:

25 marks were available for register and audience, choice of vocabulary, the structure of the answer, appropriate use of sentence structures and technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Register and audience

Most, across the mark range, wrote an introductory paragraph making clear the purpose of their article.

The majority of responses adopted an appropriate register, addressed the audience, young people, in their responses and continued to do so throughout, keeping an appropriate tone of voice; these responses structured answers according to the requirements of an article.

Structure

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for writing, handled the material confidently and presented their arguments, cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a response which was clearly derived from the ideas in both passages but was not dependent on their structure and sequence. Some stronger responses did not base their structure around the bullet points. At the highest level, an overview of the issues involved was given rather than a list of reasons for owning animals as pets. Some fluent responses with effective sentences did not give full attention to sequencing, so ideas within and between paragraphs were not linked as smoothly as they could be. Moreover, there was some tendency, even among stronger responses, to neglect the use of paragraphs. Many middle band responses used discursive markers which provided effective structure. Some responses were structured according to the bullet points, occasionally devoting one long paragraph to each. Some responses lacked a clear introduction and conclusion and ideas were presented in a confused way, often without paragraphs. Responses given marks below band 3 were characterised by brief or no introductions and a simple list of evidence from one, or both passages, in sequence.

Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in band 6. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. Responses in band 4 were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Responses given marks in band 3 sometimes showed some clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation errors which precluded Examiners from awarding band 4 marks and in addition, there was sometimes a simplicity of language and style. Sentence separation errors also appeared at this level and the frequency of errors became self-penalising, as did insecure grammar and awkward phrasing.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- use material from both passages and offer an overview
- try to develop ideas from the passages concisely, using inferences that are suggested, but without drifting beyond
- be aware of the genre you are using for your answer; think carefully about the right style for a letter or an article and the register appropriate to audience
- use paragraphs to structure responses
- check your writing for basic punctuation errors that will inevitably reduce your mark.

Section 2: Composition

Write about 350 to 450 words on one of the following questions.

Up to 16 marks are available for the content and structure of your answer, and up to 24 marks for the style and accuracy of your writing.

Descriptive Writing

Question 2

Describe a group of people eating a meal in an outdoor setting.

OR

Question 3

Describe your thoughts and feelings as you shelter from the weather.

(40 marks)

The first question was the most popular of the two options.

The first question provided a great variety of responses across the range. The best responses not only demonstrated linguistic and stylistic skills but used a variety of devices to create atmosphere. Complex atmospheres relating to thoughts and feelings experienced were developed. The best responses showed a wide range of vocabulary and imagery evident.

Most responses chose to write from the perspective of a distant observer, although some offered a view as one of the participants in the meal; some did not address the ‘outside’ aspect of the question which gave a wider scope for description. Better responses gave well defined and convincing details of surroundings for example, the details of the weather, observations of the people at the meal; they also reflected on the initial excitement and activity at the start of the meal, contrasting this calm, or sometimes chaos of the aftermath, ‘flecks of rubbish polluted the previously perfect green canvas. These responses often used figurative language with success, for example ‘slid down his throat like a child down a slide ... churning, churning, it went round in the small fist size cavity like socks in a washing machine’.

Middle band responses tended to list who was present at the meal what was being eaten in a routine and perfunctory way which did not allow for detail, creativity or development.

Some responses lacked focus, gave general impressions of mealtimes or offered a narrative recounting specific, or unrealistic events.

A common issue for some mid and lower band responses was that, in an attempt to convey the immediacy of the outdoor meal, they began by employing the present tense but then switched to the past.

The second question produced responses across a range of marks and, also encouraged exploration thoughts and feelings and close observation of detail. This question was approached in many ways. The most successful began with a dramatic opening, ‘The wind rips at any patch of bare skin.’ and continued by sharing a journey of emotions until safe shelter (of a snowdrift) was reached, ‘Your face has gone numb as you slip into this foxhole’ and ending with time for reflection ‘inside only the echoing sounds of your breathing seems to disrupt the quite peace’.

Middle and lower band responses were not able to create a cohesive overall description and often included formulaic use of detail from each of the five senses which sometimes led to the details and images being presented in a disjointed way. This approach can weaken the structure and overall picture formed in even the strongest of responses.

Marks for Style and Accuracy were sometimes lower than those for Content and Structure. Better responses chose precise and varied vocabulary and controlled complex sentences with secure punctuation within and between sentences. In less effective responses, tenses were used insecurely, and incomplete or poorly separated sentences adversely affected marks awarded. There were some examples of strings of incomplete, verbless sentences and this limited responses to band 3. Some responses wrote descriptively

through narrated events and, as a result could access the higher marks, whereas weaker responses used narrative alone.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved:

avoid narrative and remember to provide descriptive detail
try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content
it is good practice to write in the present tense, but do not change tense once you have started your writing
write sentences with proper verbs; there are no special sentence structures for a description.

OR

Narrative Writing

Question 4

Write a story beginning with the words: ‘You’re in charge ...’

OR

Question 5

Write a story using the title, ‘The Song’.

(40 marks)

The first narrative question was the most popular of the two options.

Question 4 produced some reflective written responses. Most chose to focus their plots on some form of unusual event or decision which had to be made. Better responses were convincing, well balanced and carefully managed for effect.

Some of the most successful responses used subtle twists and turns in the narrative which produced complex and sophisticated writing; appropriate vocabulary was used to set the scene as well as intense character description and well-placed dialogue.

Middle band responses often focused on simple events, for example completing a return journey, return to home after a long absence or returning to a forbidden place. Events in these responses, whilst relevant, were recorded with only brief development.

Lower band responses tended to focus on unrealistic events and lapsed into plots which were too unwieldy to convey events convincingly. These lower band responses used unclear sentence structure, over lengthy dialogue, simple vocabulary and had problems with choosing and staying in the correct tense.

Very few candidates answered **Question 5**. Better responses often introduced a dramatic scenario allowing the narrator to create suspense and a sense of climax. The most successful response had a clear plot and was cohesive. This response began with the call of sirens, ‘I could hear it, sweet harmonies bombarding me. Their voices floating towards me . . . a crescendo of voices . . . the ship was tilting . . . until we capsized’ and then used a flashback technique to progress the narrative.

Some responses were characterised by less effective, more contrived endings or by less control over the chronology. Responses given marks in band 3 were particularly dominated by events, some of them rather unlikely, while band 2 marks usually reflected very brief accounts with very little to engage the reader in terms of characters and setting. Some stories became a series of events which did not really cohere, and some scenarios lacked credibility, and, in a few cases, there was little sequencing or clarity overall. Overuse of dialogue was often a characteristic of these weaker narratives.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was lively and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects.

Speech was over-used only in weaker responses but there were many responses where the punctuation of direct speech was insecure, even when the story itself was quite well-structured. Basic punctuation errors with capital letters, the spelling of simple words and misused homophones appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes so frequent as to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved:

remember that stories need more than events to interest the reader
plan the ending before you begin so that you can shape your story appropriately
characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader
originality is important; try to think of unusual approaches to your topic but keep the details credible
check your writing for errors, especially missing full stops.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (9–1)

Paper 0627/03
Speaking and Listening

Key messages

Most centres assessed candidates accurately and performed the required administrative procedures professionally and effectively.

Where there were issues, the following guidelines may help to clarify administrative requirements.

Administration – General Points

All the recordings for the entire cohort should be sent as part of the sample package to Cambridge. The centre does not have to choose which recordings to send.

Each recording for every candidate entered should begin with a formal introduction by the Examiner to reflect the guidelines included in the syllabus.

It is not acceptable for a centre to create one generic introduction for the whole cohort.

All tests should be carried out within the boundaries of the test window stipulated by Cambridge. This is another reason every test should begin with a full introduction to include the date on which the candidate is being examined.

Please check the forms very carefully before sending to Cambridge. Errors of addition on the Summary Form and transcription to the Mark Sheet delays the moderating process for a small but significant number of centres.

Where total marks for a candidate have been altered because of internal moderation, please indicate on the Summary Form which of the three marks has been changed.

Conduct of the test

Generally, the standard of examining was very good with candidates being given many opportunities to express their views and exhibit 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. While this was aimed at putting candidates at ease before the test it was not a necessary part of the process, led to some very long overall recordings and was distracting for candidates who really only wanted to begin their talks. It is strongly advised that each test should begin with the Examiner’s formal introduction and be followed immediately by the candidate performing **Part 1**, the presentation.

The importance of timing within the test should be appreciated. Where a **Part 1** response is significantly short of the minimum required, please consider whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met and assess accordingly. It is difficult to see how a response can meet higher band criteria in a performance lasting significantly less than the prescribed minimum time allowance.

Given that both speaking and listening are assessed in **Part 2**, it is important that the discussions last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. It is the Examiner’s responsibility to ensure this minimum expectation is met.

Accuracy of assessment

In most cases, centres have applied the criteria accurately, appropriately and fairly whilst underpinning this through successful internal moderation procedures.

When considering what marks to award this guidance may be helpful:

Examiners should not interrupt candidates within **Part 1**. Examiners should only interrupt to move the candidates into **Part 2** if they show no signs of reaching a natural conclusion after the maximum time prescribed.

Examiners may prompt candidates who are struggling in **Part 1**, perhaps through loss of concentration or nerves, to help them get back on track. Asking a question however is inadvisable as this normally indicates **Part 2** has begun.

Articulate, confident candidates may be over-assessed in **Part 1** when the content is largely factual or linear in nature rather than including analysis and reflection. A travelogue that only narrates a holiday day by day would fall into this category.

The examiner must ensure a full **Part 2** discussion takes place. Short discussions generally inhibit the candidate's ability to fulfil the criteria in the higher bands.

It is important that examiners do not over-dominate the discussions in **Part 2**. Candidates should be allowed to talk and their contribution should be dominant, particularly for those being awarded marks in the higher bands where detailed responses to questions and prompts are expected.

Approaches to Part 1

The most successful tasks attempted were those where the candidates took ownership of a topic, had a strong base knowledge of the subject and were genuinely interested in what they were saying. Well planned and prepared responses are generally more successful but responses do not benefit from an over-reliance on notes or over-rehearsal.

Once again, Moderators reported a wide range of topics being undertaken although the tasks generally took the form of an individual presentation. Some dramatic monologues were presented and these tended to be well received. It is important to consider that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when choices are made. To achieve the higher bands, the presentations should move beyond the descriptive and narrative to include elements of reflection and analysis.

Some examples of productive **Part 1** topics include:

- My Love of Musical Theatre
- The Mandela Effect
- Food Waste
- Cultural Differences
- The Digital World
- Being Alone
- Identity
- Percussion
- Introverts
- Football Ticket Prices
- The Tooth Fairy
- Climate Change (and other environmental issues).

Some other examples of less successful **Part 1** topics include:

- The person I admire most (where the talk is purely descriptive and a series of regurgitated facts and rumours)
- Bullying (too vague when generalised and a possible safeguarding issue where more specific)
- Football (too generalised and unfocused)
- Social Media (becoming cliché ridden and repetitive)
- Future Career Plans (where the talk is generic and unfocused)
- Favourite Movie/TV Show (Where there is no attempt to move beyond the narrative and descriptive)
- A Project About Food
- My Holiday (Where there is only a linear narration of events)
- Video Gaming
- Pyrotechnics.

Management of Part 2

Good examiners understand the role in **Part 2** is to provide stimulus for the candidates to express their ideas and opinions on their chosen topics.

Good examiners do not:

- consider their own thoughts and opinions to be more important than those of the candidates
- do not stick rigidly to a list of pre-prepared questions that limit any genuine discussion that may arise from what the candidate has said
- run out of relevant questions about the chosen topic and ensure a full discussion takes place
- allow discussions to meander into general conversation that is not focused on the topic.

Good examiners do:

- show genuine interest and enthusiasm in the candidates' topics, provide appropriate encouragement and are not judgemental
- give many opportunities for candidates to develop their ideas as fully as they can, providing open questions that help them to explore and develop the discussion
- avoid the use of closed questions. They understand that closed questioning limits the candidates' ability to respond at length.

In addition, good examiners are good listeners and do not hinder the candidates by interrupting or cutting into a discussion when it may be more advantageous to allow the candidate to continue. Detailed and developed responses are required if marks in the higher bands are to be awarded for Listening

Advice to centres

Please check administrative procedures to ensure a smooth and trouble-free moderation of your centre. Choosing the most appropriate topic is key to being successful 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 Band 1.

Give the candidates the fullest opportunity to demonstrate their skills through effective discussion and appropriate timings for both parts of the test. Keeping to the timings prescribed in the syllabus will avoid candidates being adversely limited in the accurate application of the mark scheme.

When conducting the discussions in **Part 2**, examiners should have plenty of relevant questions to ask to push candidates to fill the time for the discussion. Examiners should ask questions strategically to encourage and help the candidates to think for themselves and show off what they can do. Examiners should avoid saying too much or interrupting too early, which can affect the candidates developing their own ideas.