

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/11
Reading Passages (Core)

Key messages

- Candidates should check their work carefully to avoid unnecessary errors - for example, missing words/comma splicing.
- In (g) Candidates should remember that (ii) requires a comment on the writer's use of language in the whole phrase – simply repeating the same definition as that given for (i) is insufficient as an answer.
- For **Question 2**, it is important to take note of the given genre and to use a format and register appropriate for it.
- Candidates should ensure they refer to all 3 bullet points in **Question 2**, and attempt to develop ideas, both factual and inferential from the passage. The key message here is to go beyond the text for the third bullet point.
- Candidates should take note of the number of marks available for each question – if there are 3 marks then they should try to find 3 discrete points for their answers.

General comments

Candidates need to read the rubric for the paper very carefully and be aware that it is not possible to 'explain fully' by simply lifting sentences from the passage.

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the article had been clearly understood and many candidates responded well to the more straightforward questions.

Whilst most candidates answered **Question 2** adequately, many appeared not to appreciate the importance of giving a credible account of what happened *after* the writer arrived inside the house which restricted them to a Reading mark in Band 2 at the most for this question. In some cases, the undeveloped response to the third part of the task came about because the candidate did not recognise the insert as being a mystery story, and therefore left the reader to guess what happened next, inadvertently leading to lower marks. In general, the level of written English in **2b** was mostly good.

As far as the use of time was concerned, most candidates attempted all questions. Some, however, appeared to run out of time, as evinced by overly long **Question 2s** which led to incomplete or omitted responses to **3a**, **3b** or both.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Give two reasons why the narrator found it difficult to get to the house (paragraph one, 'My path to the...').

Most candidates gained at least one mark on this question and many gained two. Some gave only one of the 4 available responses, but complete misunderstanding of what was required was rare. A small number merely copied the opening sentence 'My path to the house was by no means an easy one' without saying why, and therefore gained no marks, but such responses were quite rare.

- (b) Using your own words, explain what the writer means by 'this odd and picturesque building made me pause' (line 6).

Many candidates were able to establish the strangeness of the house in their own words, although quite a number merely repeated the word 'odd'. Fewer candidates managed to understand the contrasting reference to 'picturesque', with some either ignoring it or thinking it meant 'ugly'. Some attempted to explain 'picturesque' as being 'like a picture' or 'as in a painting or photograph' which were not sufficient as explanations of the word's meaning. Similarly, attempting to explain the oddness of the house by saying simply that it was 'different' did not go far enough, as the house can be different for many different reasons. A large number of candidates neglected to focus on the whole phrase and did not attempt an explanation of the phrase 'made me pause' for which the second mark was awarded. Many of those who did attempt to explain this phrase often interpreted it with reference to the writer's feelings as in 'surprise' or 'shock', but these of course do not relate to the building's oddness and beauty which give rise to his physical reaction. The least successful responses came from those who merely lifted the words 'odd' and 'pause' when responding and therefore did not gain any marks. Some candidates also showed a tendency to over-explain, owing perhaps to feeling the need to explain the situation, rather than simply say what the words mean.

- (c) Why did the narrator decide not to go back to the road (paragraph two, 'The quiet and apparent...')?

The answer to this is that the narrator is tempted back to the house owing to its promise of comfort. Many candidates identified this point, but a significant number focused their responses on the narrator's feeling 'foolish' with a vague reference to the house's 'interior' without referring explicitly to its cosy /inviting/comfortable promise and simply said that he thought "it would be foolish to deny himself".

- (d) Re-read paragraph three, 'But half-way...hurriedly leaving'. What was unusual about the way the man left the house?

This was answered successfully by most candidates although some thought that the question required a less obvious answer than 'didn't close the door' despite the fact there was only one mark available. The most frequent incorrect answers referred to the man placing his watch back in his pocket as an unusual action, or identified his looking back at the house he was leaving as being unusual.

- (e) Re-read paragraph four, 'As we met...to the man'. Explain as fully as you can, what caused the narrator to feel 'puzzled' about the behaviour of the man.

The majority of candidates gained two marks out of the three available for this question. Only a small number made the mistake of relating the question of the narrator's puzzlement to that of the 'man' and again relatively few misunderstood the paragraph by asserting that the man was puzzled and not the narrator. Most candidates were able to identify the 'raising of the hat', showing respect and not being surprised by meeting a stranger in such a remote place, although the 'not saying a word' point was often overlooked. Some misread the phrase "showed little surprise" interpreting it instead as "showed a little surprise".

- (f) Explain as fully as you can, what the narrator says about his attempt to speak further with the man (paragraph eight, 'A peculiar greeting...').

There were two aspects to this question. The first was that the two men were some distance apart and the second that because of this they were unable to hear what was said 'clearly'. Many candidates were able to understand the first point but only a minority successfully made clear their understanding of the second, and simply stated that the two men couldn't 'hear' what was said, which of course was not true. Each knew that the other was speaking, it's just they could not make out with certainty what was being said. Those candidates who were able to identify this lack of clarity, however expressed, were awarded the mark for the second point. Candidates who merely lifted the sentence 'his voice returned to me ... his answer reached me' were awarded one mark only, because such direct lifting does not constitute an explanation.

- (g)(i)** Re-read paragraphs one, two and ten ('My path to the...so invitingly.' and 'The house...more inviting.'). Explain, using your own words, what the writer means by the words underlined in three of the following phrases:

A small number of candidates failed to follow the question instructions accurately and chose a different combination of phrases to respond to in **(g)(i)** and **(g)(ii)**.

As stated in the 'Key Messages' section of this report, this question requires candidates to explain the underlined word in **(g)(i)** and to explain the whole phrase in **(g)(ii)**. The repeating of answers to **(g)(i)** – whether right or wrong – in **(g)(ii)** with little or no development is not sufficient to gain further marks. A further concern is that in response to **(g)(ii)** candidates often failed to attempt their analysis in the terms of the question, which, on this paper, focused on the house and the narrator. Again, those candidates who did address the question often merely focused on one of these aspects. Finally, it is worth noting that for **(g)(i)** some candidates did not attempt to explain the identified word but attempted another word from the phrase instead. This was particularly so with phrase 4 where the focus was sometimes on 'intruder' rather than on 'disuse'. Candidates who attempted to relate the word/phrase to the passage context were more likely to gain marks on these two questions.

- 1 'I found doors and windows open to the pervading mist' (lines 3–4)

'Pervading' caused a problem for many candidates with very few identifying the mist as spreading everywhere in the room. The most frequent answer was 'thick' or 'menacing' or 'ghostly' but the widespread/everywhere aspect was mainly missed.

- 2 'this silent room, with its sinister atmosphere' (lines 7–8)

This word was probably understood more clearly than those from the other three phrases. The sense of 'evil' implied by 'sinister' or its 'creepy/scary' connotation were common correct answers.

- 3 'I now scrutinised more carefully' (line 36)

This word caused problems for many candidates who attempted to explain it. Many felt that scrutiny implied judgement or criticism as opposed to studying something more closely. Many candidates merely responded with 'looked' or 'observed' without any qualifier to indicate the intensity implied, and a significant minority merely added the two words 'more closely' to their answer which is a direct lift from the phrase itself and, therefore, could not be rewarded.

- 4 'it had about it an air of disuse which made me feel like an intruder' (line 39)

'An air of disuse' led many candidates to think it was the actual air itself which was 'disused' rather than the building. Many responses believed that 'disuse' meant 'no use' or 'never used' as opposed to 'no longer used'. A few candidates correctly identified the implied neglect or abandonment suggested by the word.

- (ii)** Explain how the writer conveys the nature of the house and the narrator's feelings about it through the use of language in each of the phrases you have chosen in **Question 1(g)(i)**. You should refer to the whole phrase in your answer and not just the word underlined.

In their responses to this question it was clear that some candidates were making an attempt to engage with the writer's use of words; for example, one response suggested that the first phrase linked 'open' with 'pervading', producing a picture of the house wide open to invasion by the mist which spreads everywhere and is unwelcome / threatening. In general, however, very few achieved more than 2 or 3 marks in total. These marks were generally gained for identifying a sense of spookiness, a feeling of disquiet or curiosity on the part of the narrator, or the narrator's sense that he somehow shouldn't be there. Many of the less successful responses resulted from what would appear to be a failure to focus on the specific rubric requirement to comment on the whole phrase quoted, and not just the word that was defined in answer to **(g)(ii)**. The outcome of this was a large number of repeated or slightly modified attempts to provide another synonym for the single word underlined, without attempting to explain what effect the author was trying to achieve in the phrase as a whole.

Question 2

Imagine that you are the narrator of the story. You enter the house and after waiting a few minutes, other people begin to arrive. It is now the afternoon of the following day...

Write a letter to your older brother or sister describing your impressions of the house and your experiences since you discovered it.

In your letter you should:

- describe how you first discovered the house
- describe your thoughts and feelings when you met the man leaving the house
- explain what you discovered after you entered the house.

All candidates were able to respond in some detail to this question, generally showed an at least satisfactory understanding of the extract and were able to develop a convincing voice on the part of the narrator. However, there were examples of uninspired copying from the passage, and a few candidates failed to demonstrate understanding of the conventions of writing a letter to a family member. Many could have produced a more convincing letter by remembering to include an appropriate valediction as a conclusion to the task. A large number of overall satisfactory responses ended their accounts as soon as the narrator entered the house (no matter how much “suspense” had been built up) and effectively omitted to address the third bullet, which meant that they could not be awarded a mark for Reading higher than one in Band 2.

On the other hand, some letters launched straight into the discovery of ‘the house’ with no explanation of how the writer had stumbled across it and a presumption that the brother or sister would know what they were talking about. A very small number of candidates wrote letters based on Passage A, thus earning marks only for 2W. Most candidates, however, made a positive attempt at writing an appropriate letter with the majority achieving a Band 3 mark at least for their efforts with 2R and 2W. The most successful responses made very good use of the passage, using it as a springboard for their own imaginations to deal with all manner of ghastly and ghoulish goings-on in the shady haunts of the house’s inner depths which, nevertheless, were convincingly developed from details implied in the original.

Less successful responses revealed a generally secure understanding of the passage but tended to be over-reliant on its content and language, to the point where their own creativity was left relatively undeveloped apart from a passing comment on what was discovered when they entered the house, usually relating to the details provided in the final paragraph. The least successful responses produced only a very bald narrative with a few references to the strangeness and confusion rather than tracking the more subtle changes in reaction, especially to the house and the man. As noted above, most letters were generally well done and engaged with the text in a suitable manner.

In general, most candidates showed the ability to convey their ideas in writing with reasonable clarity although many responses were marred by avoidable errors of expression and punctuation. The most common failings were comma splicing and apostrophe errors, but generally letters were written in a register that befitted a sibling audience. Relatively few candidates achieved a mark lower than Band 3 for this task. A small number of candidates disadvantaged themselves by producing handwriting which was almost impossible to decipher.

Question 3

Read carefully Passage B, Hadrian's Villa, in the Reading Booklet Insert and then answer **Question 3(a)** and **(b)** on this Question Paper.

Question 3(a)

What do you learn about the structure and main features of Hadrian's Villa and grounds and the reasons why it was built, according to Passage B?

Write your answers using short notes. Write one point per line.

You do not need to use your own words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer.

Candidates generally scored quite well on this summary question, although the most common error arose from their not clearly identifying what were the main features and structure of the Villa and its grounds, by including irrelevant details such as the car park, picnics, signposted buildings, and the historical fact about the attack by the barbarian hordes, none of which was credited. The most common repetition points were references to libraries, bathhouses and so on as separate points and similarly the Grove of Academe and Canopus references.

Some candidates included more than one point on a line in spite of the rubric and a few continued to add points after the 10 in the grid had been completed. It is important that candidates read the rubric carefully so that they do not lose marks because of positioning of valid points.

A few candidates thought that 'Pluto' had lectured his students there and others that Hadrian had built a Marmite Theatre. As this task assesses reading skills, these slips of the pen were credited as correct points. Overall, most responses gained at least 5 or more points with the most successful focusing on the precise detail of the appropriate points in note form as opposed to merely copying overlong sentences from the passage – those who attempted this approach frequently lost marks as they tended to include more than one point per line (as mentioned above).

Question 3(b)

Information about the structure and main features of Hadrian's villa and grounds and the reasons why it was built:

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about the structure and main features of Hadrian's Villa and grounds and the reasons why it was built.

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

Your summary should include all 10 of your points in **Question 3 (a)** and must be 100 to 150 words.

It is important for candidates to keep in mind that the instructions for this question require them to attempt to turn their own points into a summary. Those who go back to the Passage and attempt to summarise from that give themselves a much harder task when attempting to use their own words. In general, candidates did not find it easy to re-word and reorganise and many produced generalised responses about the delights of visiting the villa and its grounds, rather than simply writing a summary focused on the wording of the question, ('the structure and main features of Hadrian's villa and grounds and the reasons why it was built').

This was the question which was most often not attempted, presumably because of time constraints.

In conclusion, most candidates performed at least satisfactorily on this paper and their answers showed that they had a mainly secure understanding of the reading passages and that they were capable of expressing themselves with some accuracy and competence when producing a piece of written English. Nearly all engaged well with the Reading Passages and made positive attempts to respond conscientiously to the different tasks. Future candidates are advised to ensure that they read carefully the wording of the sub-questions in **Question 1** and attempt to respond precisely to their requirements to ensure that they can achieve the highest marks of which they are capable.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/13
Reading Passages (Core)

Key messages

- Candidates should check their work carefully to avoid unnecessary errors - for example, missing words/comma splicing.
- In **(g)** Candidates should remember that **(ii)** requires a comment on the writer's use of language in the whole phrase – simply repeating the same definition as that given for **(i)** is insufficient as an answer.
- For **Question 2**, it is important to take note of the given genre and to use a format and register appropriate for it.
- Candidates should ensure they refer to all 3 bullet points in **Question 2**, and attempt to develop ideas, both factual and inferential from the passage. The key message here is to go beyond the text for the third bullet point.
- Candidates should take note of the number of marks available for each question – if there are 3 marks then they should try to find 3 discrete points for their answers.

General comments

Candidates need to read the rubric for the paper very carefully and be aware that it is not possible to 'explain fully' by simply lifting sentences from the passage.

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the article had been clearly understood and many candidates responded well to the more straightforward questions.

Whilst most candidates answered **Question 2** adequately, many appeared not to appreciate the importance of giving a credible account of what happened after the writer climbed through the window, which restricted them to a Reading mark in Band 2 at the most for this question. In some cases, the undeveloped response to the third part of the task came about because the candidate may not have recognised the insert as being a mystery story, and therefore left the reader to guess what happened next, inadvertently leading to lower marks. In general, the level of written English in **2(b)** was mostly good.

As far as the use of time was concerned, most candidates attempted all questions. Some, however, appeared to run out of time as evinced by overly long **Question 2s**, which led to incomplete or omitted responses to **3(a)**, **3(b)** or both.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Explain what the narrator means by the phrase 'mentally photographed' (line 1).

The key to gaining this mark was in identifying that the narrator was storing an image in his mind. Many candidates were successful in doing so. The most frequent misunderstanding of what was required was by candidates who put merely that the narrator observed or 'looked closely', the latter simply repeating the phrase just before in the same line.

- (b) Using your own words, explain fully the narrator's thoughts when looking at the window (paragraph 2 'More than anything...').

Many candidates gained two marks for this question, making such points as: it disturbed him/he wanted to put his hand through it/he wanted to climb through it. The important feature with this task, as noted above, was the requirement to use own words. Thus, candidates who lifted words ('uneasy' was a popular example) would not show an understanding of the narrator's words, and these answers could not be credited.

- (c) From lines 16–22 give two reasons why the narrator is persuaded not to knock on the door of the house ('It was clearly...unrewarded.').

The majority of candidates seemed to have understood what was required and achieved two marks on this question, the main reason for less successful responses being answers that were too brief and did not cover two points.

- (d) Using your own words, explain the narrator's reasons for thinking that the house was definitely empty (lines 26–28).

The first element of this answer, that the window had been left open, was identified successfully by many candidates. However, only a small number gained two marks by going on to explain that if someone was in the house they would have shut the window. There were very few candidates who referred to the blind being left up.

- (e) What answer did the narrator plan to give in the event of being seen climbing through the window (lines 30–31).

As with **Q1(d)**, a large number of candidates gained 1 mark on this question for suggesting that the narrator would say he was just about to raise the alarm. Far fewer candidates obtained the second mark as they said little about the circumstances. Both **Q1(d)** and **Q1(e)** highlight the need for candidates to have an awareness of the total number of marks available and provide sufficient detail for the full number of marks to be awarded. It also highlights the problems that arise when candidates rely on lifting text and only use one relatively simple phrase when more than 1 mark is available.

- (f) State two of the narrator's thoughts while climbing through the window (lines 32–41 'In such damp weather... What was I to do next?').

This question was answered effectively by a large number of candidates – many identifying more than just two points.

- (g)(i) Re-read paragraphs one, two and seven ('I looked closely...in my bones.' and 'However, it gave...to do next?'). Explain, using your own words, what the writer means by the words underlined in three of the following phrases:

A small number of candidates failed to follow the question instructions accurately and chose a different combination of phrases to respond to in **(g)(i)** and **(g)(ii)**.

As stated in the 'Key Messages' section of this report, this question requires candidates to explain the underlined word in **(g)(i)** and to explain the whole phrase in **(g)(ii)**. The repeating of answers to **(g)(i)** – whether right or wrong – in **(g)(ii)**, with little or no development is not sufficient to gain further marks. A further concern is that in response to **(g)(ii)** candidates often failed to attempt their analysis in the terms of the question, which, on this paper, focused on the house and the narrator. Again, those candidates who did address the question often merely focused on one of these aspects. Finally, it is worth noting that for **(g)(i)** some candidates did not attempt to explain the identified word but provided a short explanation of the phrase which they repeated for **(g)(ii)**. Candidates who attempted to relate the word/phrase to the passage context were more likely to gain marks on these two questions.

- 1 'An instant earlier, the world swam before my eyes.' (line 2)

Almost all candidates chose this word and very few did not find an acceptable explanation, such as: moment/second/very short period of time.

- 2 '...a curious tightening of my throat...' (lines 4–5)

Again, this was a popular choice and was successfully explained by most candidates who chose it, popular examples being: strange, unusual or odd.

- 3 '...caused by a sense of uneasiness.' (line 5)

A little less popular than options 1 and 2, this was handled well by the majority of candidates who chose it; successful responses included: uncertainty, worried and scared.

- 4 'It did not betray me – not even by the slightest sound.' (lines 36–37)

Some found this challenging which may have been in part as a result of having to deal with a phrase rather than one single word. There was a tendency to explain the whole phrase rather than just the part underlined. Successful responses included: 'it didn't let me down' and 'didn't give me away.'

- (ii)** Explain how the writer's use of language in each phrase you have chosen in **Question 1(g)(i)** helps to suggest the narrator's thoughts and feelings. You should refer to the whole phrase in your answer and not just the word underlined.

In their responses to this question it was clear that many candidates were making an attempt to engage with the writer's use of words; for example, a number of responses made a connection between the narrator's uneasiness and the possibility of the house being occupied or with questions about whether he should enter or not. In general, however, very few achieved more than 2 or 3 marks in total. These marks were generally gained for identifying a sense of menace, a feeling of disquiet or curiosity on the part of the narrator, or the narrator's sense that he somehow shouldn't be there. Many of the less successful responses resulted from what would appear to be a failure to focus on the specific rubric requirement to comment on the whole phrase quoted and not just the word that was defined in answer to **(g)(ii)**. The outcome of this was a large number of repeated or slightly modified attempts to provide another synonym for the single word underlined, without attempting to explain what effect the author was trying to achieve in the phrase as a whole.

Question 2

Imagine that you are the narrator of the story. It is the morning after the events described in the passage and you are writing a journal entry in which you describe the events of the day before.

In your journal entry you should:

- describe how you first discovered the house and your impressions of it
- describe your thoughts and feelings while you were standing in the rain
- give an account of what happened after you climbed through the window.

All candidates were able to respond in some detail to this question, generally showed an at least satisfactory understanding of the extract and were able to develop a convincing voice on the part of the narrator. However, there were examples of uninspired copying from the passage, although few candidates failed to write in a manner appropriate to a journey entry. A large number of overall satisfactory responses ended their accounts as soon as the narrator entered the house (no matter how much “suspense” had been built up) and effectively omitted to address the third bullet, which meant that they could not be awarded a mark for Reading higher than one in Band 2. On the other hand, some responses did not include sufficient detail to give a clear sense of the narrator’s predicament and need to find shelter.

Most candidates, however, made a positive attempt at writing an appropriate response with the majority achieving a Band 3 mark at least for their efforts with 2R and 2W. The most successful responses made very good use of the passage, using it as a springboard for their own imaginations to deal with all manner of possible situations faced once inside the house, taking clues from the passage to help develop the response.

Less successful responses revealed a generally secure understanding of the passage but tended to be over-reliant on its content and language, to the point where their own creativity was left relatively undeveloped, apart from a passing comment on entering the house, usually relating to the details provided in the final paragraph. The least successful responses produced only a very bald narrative with a few references to the strangeness and uncertainty rather than referring the more subtle suggestions about what might transpire when entering. As noted above, most letters were generally well done and engaged with the text in a suitable manner.

In general, most candidates showed the ability to convey their ideas in writing with reasonable clarity although many responses were marred by avoidable errors of expression and punctuation. The most common failings were comma splicing and apostrophe errors, but generally letters were written in a register that befitted a sibling audience. Relatively few candidates achieved a mark lower than Band 3 for this task. A small number of candidates disadvantaged themselves by producing handwriting which was almost impossible to decipher.

Question 3

Read carefully Passage B, Ggantija, in the Reading Booklet Insert and then answer **Question 3(a)** and **(b)** on this Question Paper.

Question 3(a)

What do you learn about the building structure of Ggantija and the activities that took place there, according to Passage B?

Write your answers using short notes. Write one point per line.

You do not need to use your own words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer.

Candidates generally scored on this summary question although the most common error arose from their not clearly focusing on the need to identify the structural features of Ggantija and including irrelevant details, particularly about the priestess and the female giant, Sunsuna. There was relatively little repetition of points and where this did occur it tended to be over the activities that took place in Ggantija such as details of how the place was used, particularly for point 3 (see below). Some candidates included more than one point on a line in spite of the rubric and a few continued to add points after the 10 in the grid had been completed. It is important that candidates read the rubric carefully so that they do not lose marks because of positioning of valid points.

Overall, most responses gained at least 5 or more points with the most successful focusing on the precise detail of the appropriate points in note form as opposed to merely copying overlong sentences from the passage – those who attempted this approach frequently lost marks as they tended to include more than one point per line (as mentioned above).

Question 3b

(Summary)

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about the building structure of Ggantija and the activities that took place there.

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

Your summary should include all 10 of your points in **Question 3(a)** and must be 100 to 150 words.

It is important for candidates to keep in mind that the instructions for this question require them to attempt to turn their own points into a summary. Those who go back to the Passage and attempt to summarise from that give themselves a much harder task when attempting to use their own words. In general, candidates did a reasonable job of re-wording and reorganising and many produced acceptable responses. Less successful responses tended to be more generalised pieces that linked the notes in the order recorded, but were less successful at putting them into an organised whole.

A small number of candidates did not attempt this question, presumably because of time constraints.

In conclusion, most candidates performed at least satisfactorily on this paper and their answers showed that they had a mainly secure understanding of the reading passages and that they were capable of expressing themselves with some accuracy and competence when producing a piece of written English. Nearly all engaged well with the Reading Passages and made positive attempts to respond conscientiously to the different tasks. Future candidates are advised to ensure that they read carefully the wording of the sub-questions in **Question 1** and attempt to respond precisely to their requirements to ensure that they can achieve the highest marks of which they are capable.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/21
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read both passages thoroughly, paying attention to key detail
- read each question carefully, paying attention to the specific guidance offered
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- planned the structure and sequence of each answer, making each point once only in a response
- allowed time to address fully each section of each question
- avoided copying whole sentences or sections from either passage
- used their own words in **Questions 1** and **3(b)** and when exploring and explaining choices in **Question 2**
- ensured that ideas were fully explained and developed in **Question 1** and **Question 2**
- checked their responses carefully to correct errors of spelling and grammar affecting meaning
- used a range of appropriate, precise vocabulary.

General comments

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

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

Most **Question 1** responses were generally focused on the question and in all but a handful of responses, all parts of the task were attempted. Good responses displayed a sound understanding of the ideas in Passage A by including a range of relevant ideas that were often developed effectively and supported by apt detail. Less good responses tended not to pick up on implicit ideas from the passage, for example, that Maria Rose Head had written the winning entry, or that her pain in the neck was not due to the pillows. Some of the least successful responses displayed little modification of the material and/or lost sight of the task in hand. The vast majority of candidates read the question carefully and wrote the letter from Maria on holiday to her friend back home. Responses written from the wrong perspective were relatively rare, though a small number of candidates paid insufficient attention to task instructions – for example, writing the letter to Al once Maria was home, or writing as Al's wife. Some included their own home address and their own name at the base of the letter, missing opportunities to incorporate details from the passage as evidence of their Reading skills. Some mid-range answers missed opportunities to develop and interpret the material, replaying the passage, albeit in their own words, and often producing uneven responses which were largely concerned with the most straightforward ideas for the first two bullets as a result. A mechanical use of the passage demonstrates at best a reasonable level of understanding – those displaying a competent or thorough reading of the passage were able to go further, adapting and modifying the material in the passages. 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.

For **Question 2** candidates needed to offer appropriate choices of words and phrases from each of the two paragraphs and make specific, detailed comments about these choices. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to write detailed explanations of the effects of their choices in both parts of the question, demonstrating sound understanding of the writer's purpose and teasing out those connotations and associations of the language used affecting the reader's view. Most responses included a sufficient number of appropriate examples from the relevant paragraphs. Fewer answers included the clear explanations of effects and images that are required for marks in the top bands. Many contained some accurate explanations of meanings and the identification of some linguistic devices but only partially explained effects. Weaker responses tried to explain the selected language in the same words as the language choice – for example, suggesting that 'entranced' means that AI was in a trance, or that 'laced' meant the sunlight looked like lace on the trees. Some candidates missed opportunities to consider individual words within longer choices and demonstrate understanding at higher levels, giving instead rather broad and vague comments such as 'the image here is one of warmth and beauty' and/or simply labelling devices without exploration of how the example was working within this particular context.

In **Question 3** many candidates managed to achieve over half the marks available by finding a reasonable number of points. Candidates do not need to use their own words in **Question 3(a)**, though some did to good effect. In **Questions 3(a)** short notes, identifying each separate idea precisely, are required, rather than whole sentences or imprecise selections from the passage. In **Question 3(b)** own words need to be used and some responses missed opportunities to target higher bands by relying on lifted phrases from the passage to communicate a number of ideas. 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. It is not a requirement that every word is altered – more technical terms or names, for example, are unlikely to have suitably precise synonyms, and words such as 'honey' and 'hive' did not need to be replaced or explained. Some candidates attempted to write a persuasive piece rather than the required informative response, often including unnecessary comment and additional information as a result, and prejudicing their ability to summarise the key aspects of the passage effectively.

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

Comments on specific questions

Section A

You are Maria from Passage A. The day after the rafting trip you write a letter to a friend back home. Write the letter.

In your letter you should comment on:

- **your impressions of the hotel and its staff**
- **your thoughts and feelings about your husband's attitude and behaviour on the holiday**
- **your plans for the remaining days of your holiday.**

Base your letter on what you have read in Passage A, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullet points.

Begin your letter, 'Dear friend, This place is everything I imagined...'

To demonstrate their Reading skills in this question candidates were required to modify the narrative account of the events in Passage A and write a letter to a friend from Maria's perspective, reporting and reflecting on various aspects of the holiday from her point of view and predicting, based on close reading of the passage, how she might choose to spend the remaining days of her stay. Good responses were able to sustain the use of supporting detail throughout the response, firmly tethering development to details in the passage. The first bullet allowed them to use evidence from throughout the passage to describe the ambiance and

hospitality of the 'Honey Hotel' along with its helpful staff who were clearly eager to please. The vast majority of responses picked up on the prompt in the question that the place was everything Maria had imagined and attempted to present the hotel and staff positively. For example, in stronger responses the hotel's remote location and distance from the airport was interpreted as offering an oasis of calm, whilst even those who considered AI's attentions as indicating someone trying a little too hard were mostly able to recognise that Maria would have appreciated the effort involved and reacted sensitively. Those few who criticised aspects of the hotel which they personally might not have found attractive – for example, the presence of the cat on the terrace – showed less convincing evidence of careful reading since Maria's reaction to the animal was clearly far more positive. Those candidates who made reference to swimming pools and went into great length speculating on the facilities in the suite such as wide screen televisions and mini bars were in similar danger of losing focus on the passage and drifting into creative writing based on their own ideas and experiences rather than evidencing close reading. The few who criticised AI and the hotel throughout had often misunderstood both task and text.

The second bullet allowed candidates to move beyond the explicit and explore judgements about Mr Head's behaviour. In many answers this section proved the strongest of the three. Some judged his behaviour more harshly than others, with those reading closely noting and developing ideas based on the other guests' reports and reactions as well as Maria's reluctance to accompany him on the rafting trip and decision to leave him in the hospital until the end of the holiday despite the minor nature of his injuries. Where ideas were supported by careful reference to details and suggestions in the text they could be rewarded.

The third bullet point required candidates to identify and develop ideas based on clues from the passage. Many candidates referred to the places that Maria might visit or return to – the ruins, the animal sanctuary and the market. They also developed ideas about enjoying the freshly cooked meals, writing on the terrace or learning more about the bees. Where candidates had not read detail closely, this third bullet was likely to be especially challenging and in weaker responses it often received a rather perfunctory treatment at the end of the letter ('I'm just going to relax and recover from a stressful week), or was treated as an opportunity for creative writing moving outside the bounds of the text ('I'm planning on sky-diving and bungee jumping for the rest of the holiday). Some of the least successful responses missed details in both the task and text suggesting ideas that the couple headed home immediately after the accident or Maria moved in to another hotel near to the hospital. More successful responses understood that she was likely to be planning on making the most of her remaining time in an area she found fascinating, and was likely to have been at least a little annoyed or disappointed by events to date. Many candidates were able to expand and develop ideas successfully in this section. A feature of better responses was equal attention paid to the three bullet points with clear modification of the ideas, integrating and interpreting details from the passage.

The best responses realised that Maria Rose Head had written the winning entry, and that AI had taken some time to realise this; that Maria's 'pain in the neck' was an excuse and/or referred to her husband. They interpreted Mr Head's actions variously as demonstrating an inability to appreciate other cultures, indicative of arrogance and/or recklessness, and deduced that he would remain in hospital for the rest of the stay. Mid-range responses made reasonable use of the passage, but tended to stick closely to the events and ideas in the passage, presenting them in the same order as in the passage, and often using some of the same words. A noticeable feature of such responses was close paraphrasing of Mr Head's obnoxious behaviour in the market and his rude behaviour at dinner that night.

The least successful answers were often thin, simple or short. They offered a very general view of the situation but few ideas and details in response to the bullet points.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity, fluency and coherence of the response and how well it used language to capture Maria's voice. The vast majority of candidates were able to respond in the required form of an informal letter, making some effort to address their audience and purpose, structuring their response helpfully. Levels of formality varied, along with the tone of responses – some chose a reserved, calm and more forgiving voice for Maria than others, some adopted a style in line with that of the competition entry, some were chatty and/or more animated. Where decisions about style and tone had been made and maintained deliberately, they worked well and could be rewarded. Responses which contained inconsistencies of style, lifted frequently from the passage and/or took little account of an audience were less successful. Stronger responses understood the need to explore Maria's point of view and were able to pick up on a number of subtle prompts in the text (for example the fact that she is a writer who 'understands the spirit' of the hotel and her diplomacy regarding the staff and other guests) and to use these to help craft a voice that was convincing and revealed her implicit attitudes to events

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- read the whole passage carefully
- think about how to use key details before you begin writing your answer
- give equal attention to ideas relevant to each of the three bullet points
- adapt material from the passage to make it an appropriate response to the specific task set
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- develop and extend your ideas by considering the perspective of the given persona
- answer clearly, in your own words, creating a suitable voice and tone for the persona of your response
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response
- re-read the passage to ensure that you have selected enough relevant detail for each of the bullet points.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a) the winning entry in paragraph 4, beginning ‘He agreed...’
(b) Al and Mr Head’s visits to the market in paragraph 6, beginning ‘On the second morning...’.

Select four powerful words or phrases from each paragraph. Your choices should include imagery. Explain how each word or phrase selected is used effectively in the context.

In response to **Question 2**, candidates were advised to include four appropriate examples for each part of the question and most answers contained a sufficient number of choices, though some contained incomplete examples without full images, and some choices missed key words. Responses to Question 2 are expected to take the form of continuous prose in order to allow candidates to explore their choices fully and consider how language examples are working in context. Using a grid or table format is not advised as this often results in duplication of material and forces responses to be expressed very briefly or in note form. Similarly, brief notes jotted under the choices as a sub-heading are unlikely to allow for full consideration of the subtleties and complexity of the language choice being discussed. Analysis in both halves of the question needs to be sufficiently developed and extended to allow candidates to unpick each word within a chosen phrase and consider how the language is contributing to and affecting the reader’s understanding and reactions

The most successful responses to **Question 2** showed precise focus at word level and were engaged and assured, exploring and explaining their choices in careful detail. They selected precisely, including images, and answered both parts of the question equally well. The best responses identified the unifying features, such as the ‘bewitching’ idea that could then be traced through the use of ‘entranced’, ‘conjuring’ and ‘charming mirage’. They gave meanings then explored the build-up of associations. This then helped with the interpretation of ‘romantic’ as an idealised view of a place holding mystery, the chance to go back in time, escapism into the past. There were some excellent and imaginative responses to ‘beehive’, not just in terms of swarming with people, buzzing with activity, but also the ideas of an organised community all working productively together. The best responses traced ‘rainbow of produce’ through from a range of colours in the food to concepts of healthy food that is exotic, emphasising its vibrancy and variety. Many saw that the unflattering comments on the market reflected more about Mr Head than the quality of the market, to convert basic explanations of the meanings of ‘stragglng market stalls’ and ‘tatty trinkets’ to a significant reflection of a sneering, dismissive tone. Less successful responses tried to reconcile this as a different angle on the market and too often ‘tatty’ and ‘stragglng were explained as messy, dirty and unhygienic’. Some weaker responses still depended on the key words being repeated in their explanation; the most frequent examples being ‘laced’, ‘ancient civilisations’, and ‘staged scenes’. There were some candidates who selected whole sentences, or selected phrases that are not in themselves, ‘powerful’, for example ‘complaining loudly or ‘unimpressed’. Less successful responses sometimes adopted a ‘technique spotting’ approach identifying literary techniques, such as the metaphor ‘beehive’ or alliteration in ‘white-washed walls’. This approach often led to rather generic comments about the effects of the techniques rather than the words themselves which limited the response.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- make sure your choices are precise – do not copy out whole sentences
- make sure your choices are complete – do not offer only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase or image
- do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle
- avoid general comments such as ‘the writer makes you feel that you are really there’ or ‘this is a very descriptive phrase’
- to explain effects, think of all that word might suggest to a reader – the feelings, connotations and associations of the language
- use your own words to explain your choices rather than repeat the words from the choice itself
- try to explain both how and why a particular word or image might have been used
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them
- if you are unsure about effects, begin by offering a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- do not just label literary devices you notice, consider how each example is working in context.

Question 3

(a) Notes

According to Passage B, what is the importance of honeybees to humans and what does the writer of the letter believe to be threatening bees’ well-being?

Write your answer using short notes. Write one point per line.

You do not need to use your own words.

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

(b) Summary

Now use your notes from Question 3(a) to write a summary of the importance of honeybees to humans and what is threatening bees’ well-being, according to Passage B.

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

To answer **Question 3(a)** successfully, candidates needed to first identify fifteen points from Passage B that were relevant to the question and to list them clearly, one per numbered line, in note form. Candidates are reminded that they are only credited with a maximum of one point per line. Any points added after line 15 are not credited unless replacing an answer crossed out earlier on. Most candidates understood that in a question testing their ability to ‘select for specific purposes’ they should not go beyond line 15, or include groups of ideas on each line. As an opinion piece the passage required students to read critically to determine the facts about honeybees which are being refuted or endorsed in the text. Weaker, less-focused responses often included the incorrect suggestion that GM crops and mobile phones threatened bees. Better responses were careful to be clear and unambiguous in the ideas they presented – for example avoiding the suggestion that bees are used in medicine.

Answers, though in note form, needed to be sufficiently clear and focused to identify the point in hand. The question had two strands: the importance of honeybees to humans, and what threatens their well-being, and the best responses organised their points to acknowledge the different strands. Candidates needed to ensure that their notes were phrased appropriately to focus on the question, for example, ‘a loss of healthy food’ in itself did not indicate how honeybees are useful to humans and needed ‘without bees’ or ‘if bees were extinct’ to make the point clearly. Also, if candidates chose to use an example to make a point, they needed to ensure that the example was accurate so ‘over 30 per cent of crops rely on bee pollination’ would earn a mark, whereas ‘30 per cent of crops...’ would not. There are no marks to be scored for Writing in **3(a)**, however, checking responses for accuracy in spelling and grammar is clearly essential if candidates are to avoid the potential danger of negating points through careless slips. Candidates should pay particular attention, for example, to correct any slips that might change meaning; for example, some candidates wrote ‘pollution’ instead of ‘pollination’.

The majority of candidates demonstrated an awareness of the appropriate style for a summary, with very few examples of wholesale copying, although occasionally some added in further speculation and detail, resulting in less concise answers. The most successful responses used the notes from **3(a)**, re-ordering and regrouping the relevant information with a clear focus on the question. The best answers had considered carefully both the content and organisation of their answer, writing in fluent sentences, within the prescribed

length and using their own words as far as possible. They avoided writing introductory statements and making comments, and concentrated on giving a factual objective summary.

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

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

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

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/23
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read the passages carefully from beginning to end, paying attention to key detail
- read each question carefully, paying attention to the specific guidance offered
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- planned the structure and sequence of each answer, making each point once only in a response
- allowed time to address fully each section of each question
- avoided copying whole sentences or sections from either passage
- used their own words in **Questions 1** and **3b** and when exploring and explaining choices in **Question 2**
- ensured that ideas were fully explained and developed in **Question 1** and **Question 2**
- checked their responses carefully to correct errors of spelling and grammar affecting meaning
- used a range of appropriate, precise vocabulary.

General comments

Candidates' responses to this paper largely indicated some familiarity with the demands of each task and the format of the paper, along with an awareness of the need to use material from the passages to answer the questions.

The majority of candidates attempted all parts of the three questions and their responses were an appropriate length. Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible and the majority were able to finish the paper within the time allowed.

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

For **Question 2** candidates need to offer appropriate choices of words and phrases from each of the two paragraphs and make specific, detailed comments about these choices. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to write detailed explanations of the effects of their choices in both parts of the question, demonstrating sound understanding of the writer's purpose. It is most important that connotations related to the chosen words are explored and explained carefully, with the effects suggested being well-related to the context. Most responses included a sufficient number of appropriate examples from the relevant paragraphs. Few answers included the clear explanations of effects and images that are required for marks in the top bands. General observations could not be credited without support from the text. Many responses contained some accurate explanations of meanings and the identification of linguistic devices, but only partially explained effects.

In **Question 3(a)** some candidates managed to attain a mark in double figures, finding a reasonable number of points. Candidates do not need to use their own words, but should use short, well focused notes, rather than whole sentences taken from the passage. In **Question 3(b)** some responses contained lifted phrases and sentences from the passages rather than ideas clearly expressed in their own words. It is important that

candidates use their own words as far as possible in this summary task as otherwise it suggests that they do not fully understand the wording of the original. When rephrasing, the original meaning must still be clear.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to keep in mind that 20 per cent of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1 and 3**. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing – planning and editing their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style and imprecise meaning. While writing is not specifically assessed for accuracy in this paper, candidates should be aware that unclear or awkward expression will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language and structure of the passages. Leaving sufficient time to check and edit responses is advisable. The majority of responses were within the recommended length guidelines. There is no need to count words for any answer as valuable time can be lost in this way – an estimation based on the guidelines in each question is sufficient to avoid the repetition that can come with excessive length.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

You are a local journalist who was in the restaurant that evening and saw everything that happened. The next day you decide to write an article for the local newspaper.

Write the article.

In your article you should:

- **report what you observed in the restaurant and how the incident was resolved**
- **explain the complaints of tourists and how far you think they are justified**
- **suggest how locals feel about tourists and how both sides could work to rebuild mutual respect.**

Base your article on what you have read in Passage A, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullet points.

Begin your article with the headline, ‘Our city - a playground for tourists?’

Write about 250 to 350 words.

Question 1 required candidates to modify the narrator’s account of how a boy steals his wallet while he and his colleague are at a restaurant in a foreign city celebrating a successful business deal. A local journalist sees everything that happens and next day writes an article for the local newspaper. The response takes the form of this article and there are three bullet points to direct attention to useful ideas. Candidates who only wrote about the shocking state of the thief and how the issue with the two tourists was resolved, without addressing the second and third bullet points, missed opportunities to demonstrate understanding and access higher marks. Those that carefully focused, as directed, on finding the complaints of tourists and the ways to rebuild mutual respect were able to produce mainly focused and often well-structured articles. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and there were attempts to create a convincing voice for the local journalist.

The first section of the article reported the events at the restaurant – responses often developing ideas connected to the stark contrast between the well-fed tourists and the hungry child. In explaining the sequence of events candidates had the opportunity to show careful reading. The victim of the theft and his colleague Fenton reacted differently to the child; this idea was occasionally developed in answers that noted how one tourist showed more concern than the other. The violent response of the waiter in slapping the child, and the appearance and foreign speech of the tourists attracting attention were also used in some responses. ‘How the incident was resolved’ was omitted altogether in some answers, though others made more thoughtful suggestions such as inviting the boy to eat with the tourists, giving him money or taking him to a foster family. Some candidates became so involved with this part of their answer that they hardly referred to the next two bullet points. Candidates are reminded of the need for balanced answers, with full weight given to answering and developing all parts of the task.

The second bullet point required candidates to identify grounds for the tourists' complaints: a disinterested and hostile waiter, pickpockets and crime making the streets unsafe, vociferous and unmusical buskers and crowds of unscrupulous street traders and beggars all besieging the visitors with requests for money. Some candidates were able to develop these further in the article by saying locals were rude, making tourists feel unwelcome; the waiter preferred serving 'locals;' tourists thought that locals saw them as 'money bags;'; the city was dirty, unsafe and all the beautiful streets were obscured by beggars who would not leave them alone.

The third bullet point or section of the article was perhaps the most challenging as preceding ideas implied the perspective of the local population and how each complaint could be resolved to the satisfaction of both sides. Many candidates were able to offer at least a little development of one relevant idea. Ideas included that the local people needed income from tourists as they were relatively poor and their jobs, like those of waiters, depended on this extra money; tourists should be sensitive to the culture of a different society and not be brash and loudly 'take over' the city while showing off their wealth; mutual tolerance and respect needed to involve both sides with education and language skills being taught; services like those in restaurants should be improved and the city authorities should licence buskers and street traders; policing needed improvement and accommodation for the homeless and providing meals for street children would make the city a better place for all.

Good responses focused on all three bullet points and created a strong and convincing character for the journalist. They contained a range of ideas that were well developed and closely related to the passage. They avoided repetition and displayed the ability to select detailed material relevant to each part of the task. Most candidates appeared to engage with the passage, showing largely accurate reading of events.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity and fluency of the response and how well it used language to convey the attitude of the writer, for example in relation to the social problems raised by the incident. Higher writing marks were awarded for a range of effective and interesting vocabulary. Good responses were well-structured, displaying some sense of audience and using an appropriate register and language for a newspaper report. Weaker responses relied on the wording of the passage and displayed a limited range of appropriate vocabulary and an inconsistency of style or the article was written in 'the wrong voice' without modification.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- read the passage carefully and return to check key details as you plan your answer
- ensure that the ideas you include are sequenced logically and avoid repetition
- answer in your own words
- adapt material from the passage to the type of response you are writing
- re-read the passage to ensure that you have selected enough relevant detail for each of the bullet points
- extend your ideas from the perspective of the character speaking or writing, but be careful not go beyond ideas suggested in the passage
- create a suitable voice and tone for the response.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a) the waiter's appearance and behaviour in paragraph 3, beginning 'Fenton and the waiter ...'
(b) the boy in paragraph 7, beginning 'By now I was supporting the kid ...'.

Select four powerful words or phrases from each paragraph. Your choices should include imagery. Explain how each word or phrase selected is used effectively in the context.

Write about 200 to 300 words.

In response to **Question 2** candidates are advised to include four appropriate examples for each part of the question and most answers contained a sufficient number of choices. The question directs candidates to specific paragraphs and gives a precise focus for their selection of phrases.

Responses to **Question 2** are expected to take the form of continuous prose in order to allow candidates to explore their choices fully and consider how language examples are working in context. Using a grid or table format is not advised as this often results in duplication of material and forces responses to be expressed very briefly or in note form. Similarly, brief notes jotted under the choice as a sub-heading are unlikely to allow for full consideration of the subtleties and complexity of the language choice being discussed.

Analysis in both halves of the question needs to be sufficiently developed and extended, for example to allow candidates to unpick each word within a chosen phrase and consider how exactly the language is contributing to and affecting the reader's understanding and reactions. Less good responses often only included one or two choices in each half limiting the discussion possible. This is not sufficient to display an understanding of the writer's use of language and to secure marks in the higher bands. Likewise, selecting too many choices in each half often resulted in superficial explanations that did not fully explore and explain the effects intended by the writer. Occasionally, responses contained fewer relevant examples in part (a) limiting the evidence of understanding shown and resulting in lower overall marks for the question as a result than a more focused, balanced answer could have targeted.

Credit is given for the ability to select evocative or unusual words that may have different layers of meanings or certain connotations and, in this question, candidates were asked to comment on the waiter's appearance and behaviour in part (a) and the boy in part (b).

In part (a) better responses contained clear explanations of how the words show the waiter's thinly veiled contempt and disinterest in serving the tourists such as: 'resented our presence,' 'nonchalant reluctance,' and 'ringmaster bored with his act.' The image of a circus ringmaster who no longer enjoyed his job was only explained occasionally; similarly, 'processed' our orders connoting mechanical, robotic compliance and 'vacantly watching' were very rarely commented on. 'Tired tea-light' was sometimes interpreted correctly as a symbol of the waiter and even the city; his appearance, hair 'slicked back with some kind of oil' was suggested as representing an undesirable character from a film.

Some answers missed the opportunity to show understanding by including long quotations containing more than one effective phrase so that not all were addressed. This occurred in both parts of **Question 2**. For example, 'he approached our table with the nonchalant reluctance of a ringmaster bored with his act;' and 'He relit a tired tea-light and processed our orders with casual disdain.' Answers needed to be more 'forensic' in approach, carefully selecting and examining small phrases in detail. Very general or unsupported comments did not display understanding and as such could not attract marks. Clear explanations of collective effects occasionally suggested a good overview, but only if there had been sufficient detailed exploration beforehand to arrive at that conclusion.

Potentially interesting language examples such as 'jaded trio' and 'sloped off' were not often selected, or selected but not correctly explained. Some candidates did though take the opportunity to explore and explain how 'dressed without distinguishing feature' reflected the attitude of the waiter, and the city itself, to serving tourists. In several responses the use of alliteration was identified in 'tired tea-light' without exploring its effectiveness. The naming of a literary device can only be rewarded when accompanied by an explanation of its use in the phrase.

By focusing on less interesting words and phrases in both parts of the question, candidates missed the opportunity to explain relevant effects of key words – for example, by selecting ‘watching a girl cross the square, a pigeon circle the sky’ and missing out ‘vacantly’.

Most responses to part (b) offered a wide range of more relevant choices, but again losing the focus of the question was a common error. For example, explaining the phrases, ‘the rotten, miserable sight of him made me feel ashamed,’ or ‘I was still living under the spell of the projected illusion,’ moved the focus away from ‘the boy’ and onto the narrator. However, the majority of answers contained clear explanations of the shocking description of the boy and connected images of trash, decay and death found in the descriptions: ‘discarded heap,’ ‘deflated membrane,’ ‘rotten,’ and ‘disintegrated carcass.’ Meanings were frequently given and imagery sometimes discussed, showing understanding of the horror of a living child being described in this way.

Other phrases, ‘skin and bones,’ and ‘sunken face,’ were also explained most often, while ‘wizened,’ and ‘gaunt’ were not generally understood. Less good responses to this question did not include a range of precise and appropriate choices in both sections. Some repeated the original wording in their explanations or included overlong examples which did not address the key words. The best responses made judicious selections, identified images and analysed the writer’s use of language with precision and clarity.

The following, drawn from candidates’ responses this session, helps to highlight how some of the more successful answers attempted to address the task. This is not intended as a model answer and could have been improved.

The narrator effectively conveys the waiter’s ‘disdain’ towards the tourists in his description of the waiter’s appearance. The inclusion of the adjective ‘dull’ in the description of the waiter’s clothing suggests an attitude of boredom, as if he is fed up of waiting on tourists. ‘Dull’ also creates a lack of liveliness, portraying how he no longer cares about entertaining. This theme is furthered by the simile ‘with the nonchalant reluctance of a ring master bored with his act’. The comparison of the waiter to a ‘ringmaster’ emphasises how he has lost the desire to entertain and is fed up with his job. The word ‘act’ also implies that he is only putting on a show, he doesn’t care about being polite to customers.

The waiter’s behaviour also highlights how ‘bored’ he is as he ‘stared off into the distance’ watching a pigeon circle the sky’. This seems to portray that he wishes he were somewhere else.

‘The word ‘carcass’ is used which conjures images of death and one assumes he is on the brink of death as he is so emaciated. Carcass is associated with the bones of a dead animal. It is used instead of ‘corpse’ which dehumanises the child, making him more disfigured and animal-like and therefore wild. The use of ‘sunken face’ shows that the boy is hollow and caving in on himself in a pitiful manner. ‘Sunken’ has connotations of a ship wreck as if all of his hope had drowned. “Swelling up accusingly” is very effective and powerful with the child’s face going from bony and gaunt to red and painful, the poor boy becoming even more disfigured by the injury. The swollen area is presumed red by the reader and draws ideas of anger as the colour and emotion are heavily connected. The bitterness the child can’t express is coming out on his skin instead. ‘Rotten’ is also effective, connoting the idea that the child is already dead and decomposing, left to rot as no one cares about him.’

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- pay close attention to the focus of each part of the question when choosing words or phrases
- make sure your choices are precise – do not copy out whole sentences
- avoid generalised, ‘empty’ comments such as ‘the writer makes you feel that you are really there’
- do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle
- to explain effects, think of how the reader’s understanding is enhanced by the use of language when reading the word or phrase, because of its connotations and associations
- when offering a phrase as a choice, discuss how each of the words within it is working
- try to explain both how and why a particular word or image might have been used
- use your own words when explaining rather than repeat the words from the choice itself
- if you are unsure about effects, begin by offering a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- do not simply label literary devices you notice, consider how each example is working in context.

Question 3

(a) Notes According to Passage B, what makes a restaurant successful?

Write your answer using short notes.

You do not need to use your own words. Write one point per line.

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

(b) Summary

Now use your notes from Question 3a to write a summary of what makes a restaurant successful, according to Passage B.

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

Pleasingly, the majority of candidates had understood that in a question testing their ability to 'select for specific purpose' they needed to identify just 15 points in 3a and that further answers added on after the 15 would not be credited unless replacing a crossed-out answer earlier on. A few candidates however carried on beyond 15 or did not complete the grid, offering fewer than 15 responses. There were a total of 18 possible answers available from this one passage, which gave candidates looking for 15 some leeway, and many responses were able to identify 10 or more relevant points.

The need to select and identify distinct points meant that candidates had to read and plan their answers carefully both to avoid repetition and to organise their ideas sensibly. Most were able to identify a good number, with the better, sharply-focused answers typically scoring two thirds or more of the available content marks. Candidates are reminded that the question instructions ask for short notes, one per line. Long copied sections of text and/or lists of possible ideas on one line are unlikely to demonstrate the focus required to identify clearly the point to be credited.

It is important that points are made with sufficient precision and clarity to be rewarded. Some one-word answers were sufficient; in some cases, for example, 'inexpensive' or 'décor.' was enough to secure the mark. However, other ideas needed to include more information, for example, 'recognising responsibilities to employees' and 'be prepared to do any job.'

Candidates should check back through 3(a) points when planning 3(b), ensuring that each point has been communicated accurately - imagining for example how clear each answer might be to anyone who had not read the text. Candidates need to remember that their notes in **Question 3(a)** are marked for Reading and are not simply shorthand planning for their response in 3(b). Each answer needs to demonstrate an unambiguous understanding of the content point in hand. Consequently, unspecified ideas such as 'the steamy gurgle of the coffee machine' or 'discipline' along with general references to 'money matters' and 'restaurants are businesses' were not detailed enough to be rewarded. Phrases copied from the passage without clear focus were also too imprecise to be credited, for example, 'they run out of money before they open.'

Candidates are not required to use their own words in this part of the question, though in better responses there was some evidence of own words, seen in clarifying points and when moving on to write the summary in 3(b). Selecting and identifying relevant ideas in this first section meant that candidates were able to plan their summaries carefully, avoiding repetition and organising them into concise and focused prose. There was frequent evidence that such planning had been done to good effect.

Most candidates were aware of the appropriate style and form for a summary and many part (b) responses were factual and informative, and of an appropriate length. The majority of summaries were reasonably focused and concise, although overlong explanations or repeating the idea in a different way did occur. An example of unnecessary explanation would be: 'Keep checking your finances and then get another person to do it so you don't run out of money before you start. The profit, pay and buying things has to be under control.' Giving opinions has no place in a summary as it results in less focused responses.

Candidates are rewarded for writing the summary in their own words. In less good responses, words and phrases were copied from the passage which sometimes resulted in a lack of concision and focus. Some included lifted phrases such as: 'be realistic about what you put in and take out of the business;' and 'don't overprice things; the public knows the cost.' Regular copying in this way led to a lower mark. However, better responses used suitable alternatives for words in the passage for example, 'Make your restaurant your own style without copying someone else,' and 'Taste the dishes with your chef so you know what the customers are getting,' and 'Get a cloth and wipe up!'

Summaries that contained attempts to use own words often displayed a better level of understanding and were able to demonstrate a wider range of vocabulary overall. Not all of the summaries were written with fluency, though in stronger answers candidates used varied and fluent sentence structures. Less good responses were list-like and often written in the same order as the passage, or were rather stilted, with points expressed in short sentences. Better responses used and reorganised the information in **3(a)** carefully, linking similar points and explaining sequences clearly.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

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

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0524/04
Coursework Portfolio

Key messages

In this component, candidates should aim to:

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

General comments

This year's entry for the coursework component was the largest in its history and over a hundred Moderators assessed the samples.

There were many examples of Centres who fully understood the educational opportunities afforded by coursework. This was reflected in their choice of interesting and challenging assignments, the general advice given to candidates at the end of each draft and on the final versions, and the encouragement of original thought by the candidates.

Most Centres put a great deal of effort into their folder work. Some however, showed little imagination in the assignments that they set and were often content to use tasks and texts that they had found in textbooks or had used in previous sessions. This safety first factor affected interest in the content of the work and the enthusiasm of candidates to express and develop their own ideas.

Many points made and explained in detail in previous editions of this report had either not been read or incorporated into the planning and administration of the coursework.

One of these concerned advice given about the reading test in Assignment 3 where there was an increase by Centres awarding Band 1 marks to candidates who had showed little evidence of reading for detail, writing an overview of the writer's attitude or developing a sound set of evaluations. There was an increase in the number of candidates who used the text as a stimulus and addressed the topic instead of analysing the text. Centres who understood the nature of the exercise did well.

There was a tendency for Centres to ignore a considerable amount of error particularly of sentence separation. Candidates often wrote in short sentences and wrongly divided their sentences with commas. Many candidates over-used semi colons.

Centres often did not record changes made to the marks at internal moderation and in some cases there was no evidence that internal moderation had taken place. These changes should be made on the CASF(WMS) form where there should be clear evidence that every set has been sufficiently sub-sampled. Some moderators reported problems with a lack of consistency in the marking. This may have been caused by a lack of internal moderation or inaccurate weighting of the four main objectives of content, structure, style and accuracy.

In many cases teachers indicated specific errors in drafts and corrected some or all of them. This is strictly not allowed but teachers should give general advice at the bottom of the draft. They should not write in the margins or in the body of the text. In some cases two or more teachers from a Centre were involved in this practice and sometimes the mark given to the candidate was increased with little effort on the part of the candidate. Where this was judged a malpractice, scripts were sent to the Regulations Team in Cambridge to decide any further action.

Good Practice

- Candidates were given flexibility in choosing topics and titles that interested them and were of sufficient challenge with regard to their ability.
- They were encouraged to write in their own register and to express their own opinions and not to repeat standard opinions found elsewhere, for example on the internet.
- For Assignment 3 they were encouraged to make their own choice of ideas and opinions from the text and to evaluate the writer's use of them, for example evaluating inconsistencies and bias. They were also encouraged to give an overview of the article as a whole including the writer's attitude.
- As a result of general advice given on the draft, they indicated changes using a different coloured ink, editing, revising and correcting in order to improve the work.

Bad Practice

- Candidates were given little choice and often a whole set would be given the same task to complete, so that the exercise became more like an examination than coursework.
- Some assignments appeared to be 'off the peg', probably from text books and often previously used by the Centre.
- The content of some assignments was often very similar indicating undue help from a textbook or ideas given out in class.
- Drafts were often plain, having no general advice or guidance.

Task setting

Several points have already been made about task setting. The best practice was to set tasks that coincided with candidates' imagination and their interests.

Tasks set for Assignment 1 were generally more varied than in previous years, but there were still some that, because of their nature, did not score so highly as a well-argued issue of concern.

For Assignment 2, Centres should take care that candidates write narratives that are credible and within their imaginative experience. They should also make sure that narratives give an indication of maturity, given the age of the candidate.

For Assignment 3, the text(s) chosen must have a sufficient number of ideas and opinions that candidates can evaluate and comment on to some purpose. Some Centres gave considerable choice, even down to every candidate having a different text, and all of them were appropriate. Other Centres gave out one text only which had few ideas and opinions of any depth or value, and thus gave their candidates little chance of scoring high reading marks.

Assessment of coursework

Writing

Candidates assessed in Band 1 are expected to demonstrate almost perfect accuracy. Coursework offers excellent opportunities for candidates to draft and to check their work for errors. They have time to proof read their responses and are allowed to use electronic devices to help them with spelling and to identify stylistic shortcomings.

Some Centres were extremely strict about accuracy. This was largely because they had spent time and care teaching it and expected candidates to put their teaching into action.

Other Centres did not seem to notice the incidence of error. Sometimes there was a comment at the end of a piece of work to the effect that there were few errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar, when a more careful analysis showed that they were common throughout the work-

The commonest error was that of sentence separation.

Some candidates ran into problems over the use of present and past tense in Assignment 2, making repeated changes throughout the writing.

The frequent use of dashes (often appearing as hyphens in typed scripts) is not recommended. Full stops and commas are often more useful and the use of brackets should be considered. Exclamation marks were used injudiciously and question marks were put at the end of statements, particularly those beginning with the word 'surely'.

Teachers were asked to annotate errors in final submitted pieces, and often this was done sporadically but not exhaustively so that Moderators had little idea how marks had been awarded. Many scripts had no annotation of errors at all, which in some cases led Moderators to believe that accuracy had been disregarded.

The assessment of style was generally more secure. Candidates adopted a variety of registers and most of these were consistent and appropriate (although there were examples of bad language that should not have occurred). Most candidates gave evidence of a range of vocabulary in their second piece. Assessors did not always distinguish between candidates who used the right word to express a variety of details and ideas and those who tried to be too clever and used words that made meanings less clear or which were not quite the right usage. There were a number of examples of inappropriate imagery, usually from the world of animals, not applicable to the detail that was described. Sentence structure varied greatly from candidate to candidate.

On the whole, content was correctly assessed and most candidates scoring high marks attempted more difficult tasks. Exceptions to this included tourist guides, some leaflets, film reviews, some versions of 'Don't get me started', biographies of pop stars, and 'A life in the day...' These examples of safe tasks, which tended to produce standard responses, did not always test candidates above Band 3 and the bottom of Band 2.

Structure was generally good and was correctly assessed. Exceptions to this were in Assignment 1 if there was no pattern in the order of paragraphs and if the sequence within paragraphs was insecure. In Assignment 2 the order was nearly always good with some attempt to entertain by various devices, for example twists near and at the end of a story, or the use of two narrators, and the usual flashbacks and time lapses. Some stories were however, no more than collections of events with unconvincing endings. This was also true of some descriptions which were collections of images with little shape. However, most descriptions had some sense of changing time or perception. The most difficult Assignment 2 tasks to structure were monologues which were prone to repetition of moods and ideas. In Assignment 3, not all responses were structured and while a selection of ideas and opinions was made from the text, there was not always a sense of order or progression.

Assessment of reading

Marks for reading were for candidates who could give an overview of the whole text and the writer's attitude, giving evidence of a grasp of the text as a whole, and who could select relevant ideas and opinions and make significant and quality evaluations and comments about them. The best candidates tied in their individual selections to the overview which could be at the beginning of the response or could form the basis of the whole assignment.

Centres that had thought this out carefully scored high marks, but many responses were over marked because:

- candidates addressed the topic and not the text (so there was little evidence of reading)
- they made little reference to complete ideas and opinions
- they summarised the text
- the quality of their responses was not sufficient, with little development or even logicity, sometimes straying from the selected idea to write about something else
- the text had no depth and few ideas and opinions with which to engage.

Where centres over-marked they often neglected to consider that this assignment was a test of reading which required understanding of both explicit meaning and of underlying attitudes.

Administration by Centres

Summary of the contents of the folder

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

The folders required by CIE were correctly sent to Cambridge, as set out in 1 and 2. Some Centres still presented them in plastic bags, which were time consuming and awkward to handle. There were a few examples of work that was not securely fixed together, and this gave rise to a possibility of the loss of an important piece of paper. Most Centres kindly put the folders in descending order of merit.

3 and 4 were included, but not all Centres submitted a complete CASF for the whole entry. This was needed to check the addition of marks and to ensure that they had been correctly transferred to the mark sheet. Moderators discovered a large number of errors. Where marks had been changed at internal moderation, these changes were normally made clearly on the folders, but this was not always the case.

5 and 6 were normally included, although there were some rare occasions where a text was missing. Moderators had to read the texts before they could fairly judge the quality of the candidate's response.

Annotation

A comment has already been made about the lack of annotation of error on the final versions of assignments. Otherwise there was plenty of useful comment at the ends of pieces of work and in the margins, although some of the comments were for very ephemeral features that were not always typical of the whole work. There was a tendency to over praise work rather than to point out weaknesses, and this sometimes resulted in over marking.

Drafts

The function of the draft is to give the candidate an opportunity to improve work through editing (eg words and phrases), revising (eg sections) and correcting. Ways in which this can be done are included in the general advice to be written at the end of the draft.

There were Centres where candidates were encouraged to do their own re-drafting. Centres are reminded that must not indicate errors by highlighting, circling or commenting in the margin. Coursework must be a candidate's own, unaided work.

Internal moderation

It was sometimes difficult to find evidence that this had taken place formally. Some form of internal moderation is essential in all Centres with more than one set of candidates. The best way is to choose two teachers who cross moderate their own sets and who then apply their agreed standards by sub sampling the other sets. Where a pattern of leniency or severity is found, the set teacher is invited to submit a new set of marks, or the whole or part of that set can be scaled. All changes should appear in the right hand column of the CASF form. This was rarely done, which meant that the Moderator was unable to carry out an important check. Some Centres clearly carried out internal moderation and annotated the folders with new marks, although this was sometimes confined to agreement. There were examples of inconsistent marking (as indicated above).

Authenticity

As usual there were examples of copying from websites and Moderators reported these and sent evidence to the Regulations team at Cambridge. Centres are reminded that, knowing their candidates, it is easy to be suspicious about an assignment that is clearly out of keeping with the normal standard of a candidate's work. Where a plagiarised response is found, it should be removed from the folder and either replaced by original work or the final mark should be adjusted for a missing piece.

Assignment 1

There were many examples of well-argued, persuasive writing. The work was often original and there was evidence of personal conviction in presenting a topic. At its best, the register was well adapted to a supposed audience and not too formal, so that the intensity of the writing was communicated well. Again, at its best, this writing was orderly and the sequence of each part of the argument was secure, so that the reader had no problems in following the work.

There were also examples of writing that was competent but less effective because the topics were too well worn. The cases for and against the death penalty were so similar that one suspected that they emanated from a published source. Some were far too similar to the arguments in the over used Flamehorse article. There were similarities in the cases for euthanasia and abortion and it was only rarely that one of these topics caused a candidate to write with any freshness or originality. Many candidates wrote about the dangers of social media with little enthusiasm, and defences of video games had little life in them.

Despite warnings in previous reports, 'Don't get me started...' and 'Room 101' still made frequent appearances. Some candidates wrote well when they chose a topic that they could argue effectively and which challenged them appropriately. Others chose unchallenging topics for which little credit could be claimed. For 'Room 101', candidates were much better when they chose only one topic. Where there were more, no skills of overall structure were apparent. Some of the topics chosen by less strong candidates were the same as those seen in other scripts from other Centres, and it seemed that they were copied from a primary source.

Most film reviews were disappointing. They contained copious compliments to actors, producers and musicians that were often very similar within a Centre. Part of the writing was taken up with an account of the story line, which was not challenging. There was then a section about the acting which was often superficial and something about the special effects and the music. Many of these reviews gave the impression of going through a plan copied from elsewhere and occasionally the writing style did not appear very original.

These, and other types of topic listed previously in this report, were best avoided except by weaker candidates. In some Centres, every candidate appeared to have been given the possibility of choosing a personal topic, and this was generally most satisfactory. The following list illustrates originality in choosing one's own topic for Assignment 1. On such occasions, candidates were left to their own devices in order to plan and complete the work.

Florence Nightingale – misogynist
The real meaning of Christmas
Is sugar the new cocaine?
Gender and football
I am Indian
Being a fan matters
Funerals – a dying industry
The challenge of being fatherless
Extreme haircuts
A generation more plastic than their Barbie dolls
Robot invasion
Free libraries
Selfish selfies

Assignment 2

Much of the narrative writing was original and very engaging to the reader. One Centre worked round the central idea of 'The bus stop' and clearly needed no help from a teacher to build their stories round a selection of sometimes sad characters who were at the bus stop for different reasons and at crucial moments in their lives.

All the best stories were first and foremost credible. This meant avoiding unreal events and situations but it also meant using the type of language that communicated things and people as they really were. The inclusion of striking dialogue with a function in the plot was also important. Stories also had to reflect the maturity of a sixteen year old. Although there were rare examples of a successful zombie story, most were trains of incredible events. There were a number of accounts of air crashes. It was not credible that the writer of a story should die in the last line and where there was a sole survivor, there was often more incredulity.

A number of Moderators pointed out that some topics were outside the imaginative world of the candidates. This was true of some of the accounts of 9/11, although there were occasional good twists to the story. It was also true of the First World War stories and the very derivative Omaha Landing topic that was best avoided.

Also best avoided were narratives based on video games because they were lists of mostly violent events.

Some of the best writing was from a candidate's own experience and there were also some good and many competent descriptions. Writing that reflected positive features of life, particularly where there was a little humour or irony was better than writing about endless misery. It was also much better to write with a specific title in mind.

Here again are some titles that worked:

Noises

The Catch (a story about a cat)

Fashion show

School assembly

The end of the road

Song of the grave digger

A family meal

A Zanzibar market

24 minutes to disaster (an original countdown narrative)

Climbing a construction crane

A funeral and a wedding

Prospero's prologue (a clever take on 'The Tempest')

Famous for the day

Assignment 3

There were some original choices of texts for Assignment 3, but there were also some bad ones that disadvantaged candidates.

Multiple texts and texts longer than two sides of A4 paper caused candidates to make use of only a section of the reading and not grasping the text as a whole. Some very clever candidates could do this, but they were a rarity.

Some texts had very few ideas and opinions with which candidates could engage. Examples of this were 'I saw a killer die' which elicited very little creditable response and which was a questionable piece to set candidates in any case. A small section from 'Warhorse' was reflective narrative and again had little for candidates to work with. 'Educating Essex', a throwback to an ancient TV programme, had a few rather weak anecdotal events which hardly constituted ideas and which provoked almost the same responses from the candidates who attempted it. 'Educating Yorkshire', a more suitable article which started as a review but turned into a general, illogical attack on teenagers, proved too difficult for most candidates who could not appreciate the difference between the events of the programme which were reported and the use made of the review by the writer. Finally the tragic article about Tony Nicklinson had nothing to work with except the words of the sufferer himself: this made candidates write about the issue and introduce ideas such as the responsibilities of doctors and Biblical references which were not alluded to in the article.

It was a shame that teachers did not attempt to find more up to date articles. Many relied on writing by Katie Hopkins and Jeremy Clarkson and it was surprising that more use was not made of a large number of other controversial journalists writing on up to date topics. Here are a few successful text topics:

Paternity leave

Single sex schools for boys

Homework

Choosing state education

The Syrian migrant crisis

Women and boxing

Ban the TT (An annual race for motor bikes on an offshore British island)

Charlie Hebdo

The Glastonbury Festival (an annual summer rock festival held in a field in the middle of the British countryside)

Final comments

Again the Moderators thank Centres for the efforts they made to complete what were often very worthwhile and readable folders. They would suggest however, that more thought might sometimes be put into the setting of assignments and particularly of allowing candidates opportunities to make their own choices about what they want to write about. Once the work has started it is important that they should be free of reference to resources that guide their writing, and teachers should not offer undue guidance in class.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0524/06
Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

Key messages

Choosing the correct pathway

- Component 6 consists of three distinct tasks: **Task 1** is an individual presentation; **Task 2** is a paired activity; **Task 3** is a group activity.
- The three tasks are distinct and should be attempted at different stages in the course, preferably using different topics. It is not advisable for candidates to undertake **Task 1** and **Task 2** in one session in a hybrid form of the Component 5 test as this is against the spirit and ethos of Component 6 and can lead to stilted responses lacking scope and depth.
- The three separate tasks can be assessed at any time during the course. This flexibility allows a broader range of topics and skills to be assessed but requires centres to fully embrace the concept that the Speaking and Listening tasks are an integral part of the overall course.
- Centres should decide whether to choose Component 5 or Component 6 at the beginning of the planning stage. It is very difficult to change from one component to the other and is certainly not recommended as the components are distinct in their approaches to the Speaking and Listening section of the syllabus.
- Uncertainty and confusion as to which pathway to follow can lead to centres entering for the wrong component. This always causes problems for the centre and the moderator.

Recommended support material

- Centres are urged to use both the current syllabus and 'Speaking and Listening Handbook' to ensure the requirements for the administration of the component are met in full. All the relevant information is contained within these documents.
- Official Cambridge training sessions are run throughout the year.
- Enhanced online support materials are available.

What to send in the sample packet

- Please be aware that four different items must be included in the sample package sent to the Moderator: All the centre's recordings; all the Summary Forms; all the individual Candidate Record Cards and a copy of the mark sheets showing the total marks awarded for each candidate entered.

Recordings

- Centres are required to record all the **Task 1** and **2** responses for the entire entered cohort. All these must be sent in the centre's sample for the purpose of moderation.

- We strongly encourage the use of digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or USB drive in a recognised common audio file format that can be played by standard computer software.
- Centres should avoid sending video files, as these can often cause issues with Moderators. Any video files which are sent are viewed without a picture, as this is an assessment of speaking and listening, thus negating any benefits of have a visual recording.
- Please check the quality of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge and ensure that the CD, DVD or USB is securely packaged to avoid damage in transit. A jiffy bag is recommended.
- Ideally the recordings should be arranged in the same order as on the mark sheets – i.e. in candidate number order.
- Centres are urged to transfer their cohorts' recordings onto a single CD or USB that contains one file for **Task 1** and another for **Task 2**. In turn, these should contain the candidates' recordings arranged in candidate number order. Sub-files for different teaching groups or for recordings made on different dates are unhelpful and time-consuming for the moderator.
- Each track should be labelled with the candidate's name and number. For **Task 2**, both candidates' names and numbers should be included in the title of the track.
- Each track should be introduced formally using the rubric prescribed in the current syllabus and centres should ensure that each candidate involved in the **Task 2** Paired Activity is clearly introduced at the beginning of the recording so it is absolutely clear to the moderator who is speaking first and who is the second participant.
- Wherever possible, recordings should be made in a quiet, undisturbed environment.

Summary Forms

- Moderators require Summary Forms detailing a breakdown of the marks awarded for the whole cohort entered. Preferably these are completed in candidate number order.
- Please note the Component 6 Summary Form is different to the Component 5 version. The two are not interchangeable.
- Ideally the Summary Forms should be arranged in the same order as the mark sheets – i.e. in candidate number order.
- The accuracy of the Summary Forms should be checked thoroughly before submitting to Cambridge.

Candidate Record Cards

- A requirement for this component is that an individual Candidate Record Card should be completed for each candidate.
- All the Record Cards should be included in the sample sent to Cambridge.
- The individual Record Cards should include specific information about the choices made for each task and not just generic statements.
- The moderator is required to make a judgement as to the suitability of the centre's approach to Component 6. Without the Record Cards this judgement cannot be made.

A copy of the mark sheets

- A copy of the marks (the MS1) already sent to Cambridge should be included in the sample sent for moderation
- Centres should ensure that the copies can be read clearly.

General comments

- Any candidate who is absent should be recorded as such on the relevant documentation and only those who attempted the activity but who failed to contribute should be given a mark of 0.
- If a mark has been changed as a result of internal moderation, please make it clear on the Summary Forms which of the four separate criteria marks have been modified.
- Cambridge provides specific forms for use with Component 6; namely the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form. These can now be found on and downloaded from the relevant page of the Cambridge website. It is permissible for centres to create their own versions of these forms but in doing so centres must ensure the required information is present and easy to disseminate.
- For Component 6, centres are encouraged to be creative in the choice of tasks as long as the assessment criteria are used as a guide to the skills being assessed.

Comments on specific tasks

Well planned and prepared responses to tasks were generally more successful but, in particular, **Tasks 1** and **2** do not benefit from over-scripted and seemingly 'artificial' performances where spontaneity is missing. Candidates aspiring to the higher band criteria need to be able to react positively to changes in the direction of the discussion in **Task 2**.

In response to **Tasks 1** and **2**, it is very difficult to achieve the higher bands if the performances are heavily scripted.

Task 1

Responses generally took the form of an individual presentation. This component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when topics are chosen. This component allows the candidate and teacher to work together through rehearsal and development of the task to ensure the topic choice is suitable.

Some examples of productive **Task 1** activities include:

- 'My holiday in' that is developed beyond a narrative account.
- A personal experience that is relevant, thought-provoking and developed beyond narrative.
- Personal responses to relevant social issues such as cyber-bullying, gender equality and media bias.
- A review of a film, book, concert or sporting event where the candidate is thoroughly engaged and able to develop the presentation beyond a literal re-telling of the events.
- An engaged reflection on a hobby or sport in which the candidate is thoroughly engaged. (Generally sports other than football work best as they tend to be less generic and more specifically focussed.) Topics that seem to work particularly well are: Anime, skate-boarding, working with horses and rugby.

Task 2

There should be only two participants in **Task 2**. Where there is an extra candidate, a teacher or a pupil who has been assessed may make up the pair. It is unacceptable and an infringement of the rubric for this task to be performed by three candidates. In effect, any **Task 2** activity comprising of more than two candidates becomes a **Task 3** Group Activity. As three distinct tasks are expected in response to Component 6, this becomes non-compliance and will be treated accordingly.

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

Unlike Component 5, there is no specified time duration for Component 06 tasks but it is difficult to see how both candidates in the Paired-Task activity can meet higher level criteria such as 'responds fully', 'develops prompts' or 'employs a wide range of language devices' in a performance lasting less than two minutes. Given that both speaking and listening are assessed, it is important that the activities last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. Planned, rehearsed and developed performances will normally justify higher marks in the same way written examination practise encourages more successful outcomes.

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

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

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

Some examples of productive **Task 2** activities include:

- Body image
- Playstation or X-Box?
- Topical social issues such as sexism in sport
- Feminism/Gender inequality
- Reality television versus real life
- Planning a school prom
- Analysis of set texts such as poems and novels
- Cyber-bullying
- Are zoos an evil necessity or just evil?
- Should teenagers take more notice of politics?
- Room 101 but only if well-prepared and where both candidates take it in turn to be the participant.

It is strongly advised that **Task 2** should not be scripted but a level of preparation and formality is required. Seemingly unprepared, chatty and informal discussions do not reflect well on the candidates' ability and often do not address the higher band criteria in the mark scheme.

Task 3

Task 3 may take various forms but it is most important that each candidate in the group is allowed sufficient scope within the activity to demonstrate their strengths without being dominated by others. A group made up of candidates of similar ability levels is often more successful. In more diverse groupings the weaker candidates are disadvantaged and do not have the opportunity to contribute to the best of their ability. The role of a group leader should be considered as a more successful outcome usually results from having one of the candidates directing the focus of the discussion.

*Some examples of productive **Task 3** activities include:*

- Characters from a literary text participating in a televised debate
- Performing an additional, self-devised scene from a play candidates have studied
- Any discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- What to include in a time capsule/ school newspaper, etc.
- Championing a character from a film or book where each candidate chooses their favourite
- Balloon debates

General conclusions

- It is gratifying to report that the general level of assessment by centres is in line with the expected standard.
- There are many centres where internal moderation has been successful.
- Successful centres continue to implement the component efficiently and imaginatively. Samples are generally well-prepared and aid the moderation process considerably.
- A huge 'thank you' is extended to all our successful centres.
- Component code errors continue to cause considerable disruption and are unnecessary.
- Where problems have arisen, centres have not followed the instructions regarding sampling and documentation. It is an expectation that centres provide the requisite documentation and that it is accurate.

All the documentation asked for in samples is used to check and cross-check as part of the rigour that underpins the moderation process. In the end this is of benefit to centres and their candidates. It is important to remember that every centre is moderated in every session and that this process is conducted rigorously to protect the reputation of the component and to maintain the standard so that centres may have continued confidence in the product they have chosen.