

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (9–1)

Paper 0627/01
Reading Passages

Key messages

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

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

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

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

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

In **Question 3(c)** the candidates should use relevant but brief textual references to support their points

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

General comments

Examiners noted that the vast majority of candidates made some attempt to write a relevant response to every question on the paper, although a minority did not attempt all of the tasks. Although most candidates had clearly been appraised of the specific requirements of each task, a few candidates misunderstood what they were required to do. This was usually simply the result of not reading the question carefully enough.

The texts used on this paper elicited positive responses from candidates. Although **Passage A**, *The unveiling of the stranger*, was written in the 19th century, almost all candidates were able to respond with some understanding to **Questions 1(a)–1(f)**. **Passage B**, *The world needs invisible people: why fame-seekers and attention-cravers have it all wrong* and **Passage C**, *Our invisible poor*, were accessible for many candidates who appreciated the contrasting ways in which the writers conveyed their views and ideas about people who are ‘invisible’ in society.

Examiners reported seeing some extremely strong work on this paper, especially in **Question 1(f)** where there was some really perceptive analysis of language, and in **Question 3(c)** where some candidates exhibited mature control of the comparison of the writers’ views and ideas in **Passages B** and **C**.

Most candidates used their time effectively so that they could spend more time on the questions which are worth more marks. The length of their responses to some of the lower tariff questions suggest, however, that a minority of candidates may be spending too much time on these questions in **Question 1**, especially **Questions 1(d)** and **1(e)** where many candidates continued their responses on an additional page. Centres are advised to ensure their candidates practice effective use of time so that candidates spend time on each question commensurate with the marks available.

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

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Question 1 was based on **Passage A**, an extract from *The unveiling of the stranger*. Most candidates appeared to find it accessible and were able to understand and follow the narrative.

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

(a) Re-read lines 1–8 'Inside the parlour ... the better of him'

(a)(i) What question does the stranger ask Mrs Hall?

Most candidates gained the 1 mark available for this straightforward question by quoting 'Why haven't you answered my bell?' or by explaining that she has ignored his call. Some candidates did not get the mark as they focused on Mrs Hall's failure to bring him his breakfast.

(a)(ii) Why does Mrs Hall feel she has a right to keep the stranger waiting?

The majority of candidates gained the 1 mark available for this question by explaining that the stranger hasn't paid his bill or owes Mrs Hall money.

(b) Give two things that the stranger has done to disguise his identity.

The majority of candidates gained both marks for this question by offering two examples from disguising himself with wrappings/bandages, or wearing glasses, or false hair/whiskers, or clothing accessories such as an upturned collar/gloves/hat. Occasionally candidates offered two very similar examples as separate points, such as bandages and wrappings, so only scored 1 mark.

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

(c)(i) 'appeared after an interval' (line 4)

Most candidates were able to explain both parts of the phrase, correctly explaining that Mrs Hall returns after a brief period of time. A few candidates missed the second mark as they interpreted 'interval' as a break rather than a short amount of time.

(c)(ii) 'universally felt that Mrs Hall had the better of him' (line 8)

Some candidates found this part of the question more challenging, but most were able to explain 'universally' as everybody present, and 'the better of him' as winning the argument or having the upper hand to gain a second mark. Some candidates did not address the whole phrase and some repeated 'had the better of him' in the response.

(d) Re-read lines 9–16:

'Look here,' he began. 'I daresay in my pocket ...'
'You told me yesterday you hadn't any money,' said Mrs Hall.
'Well, I've found some more ...'
'Hel-lo!' from the bar.
'I wonder where you found it,' said Mrs Hall.
That seemed to annoy the stranger.
'Before any breakfasts,' said Mrs Hall, 'you tell me what everybody is very anxious to understand: how 'tis your room was empty, how you got in again, and ...'

Using your own words, explain how the **underlined phrases** are used by the writer to suggest what Mrs Hall and her customers in the bar think about the stranger 'He had a crust of bread ... and trudged on.'

In this question, candidates could gain up to 3 marks for relevant explanations of the three underlined phrases. Most candidates were able to explain that Mrs Hall thinks he is lying, or is suspicious, and many went on to explain that she suspects that he may have stolen the money or gained it through criminal means. Fewer responses explained the general curiosity and interest generated by the stranger. A good number of responses gained all 3 marks on this question. Some candidates wrote more than they needed to for this 3-mark question.

(e) 'Re-read lines 17–19:

The stranger raised his gloved hands and said, 'Stop!' with such extraordinary violence that he silenced her instantly. 'You don't understand. I'll show you.' He removed his spectacles. Everyone gasped. He took off his hat and tore at his whiskers and bandages.

Explain how the writer uses language here to make this moment dramatic.

Many candidates chose good examples of language from the lines of text given for this question and were able to offer convincing explanations of their dramatic qualities. The most popular examples were "Stop!", 'extraordinary violence', 'silenced her instantly' and 'Everyone gasped'. There were also some excellent explanations of 'gloved hands' and 'tore'. Others made some good language choices, but struggled to offer convincing explanations, simply repeating the question and saying that the language or structural feature was used dramatically. The response was marked holistically and where a candidate could explain effects well they gained all 4 marks available. For partially successful explanations they gained 2 or 3 marks. A basic response offering general explanations scored 1 mark. Some candidates wrote more than they needed to for this 4-mark question.

Question 1(f)

Re-read lines 21–48, 'It was worse than anything ... had escaped.'

Explain how the writer uses language and techniques to show:

**people's reactions after Mrs Hall shrieked
the stranger's escape.**

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

You should write about 200–300 words.

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

15 marks were available for this extended response on the writer's effects. The specified section of the text offered candidates a wide range of language choices and techniques to explore. Any choices and comments which focused on the bullet points in the question and offered explanations of their use were rewarded. The strongest responses were able to choose a range of relevant language choices, focusing on the range and development of people's responses to the invisible man in this section of the passage. Many candidates

offered interesting analysis at word and phrase level, such as ‘everyone began to move’, ‘tumbled’, ‘violently firing out its humanity’, and ‘swayed and hooted and enquired and exclaimed’ as an indication of the immense interest aroused by the situation and the sudden and immediate reactions due to shock and horror. They were also able to analyse the uniform responses suggested in ‘crowd formed itself into a straggling wedge’ as well as the dramatic reactions in ‘and then – nothingness, no visible thing at all!’ In terms of the stranger’s escape, many responses were able to see the building tension and sudden speeding up in ‘kicked’, ‘sprang’ and ‘flung’, as well as the comic effect of the crowd ‘fencing at random and hitting at nothing’. Examiners commented on the number of strongly analytical responses which not only considered the language choices but also made pertinent comments about how structure contributed to the effects of the writing. Some responses picked out some appropriate language choices but needed to offer more analysis of the effects of the language, but also picked out rather plain language, or offered a rather descriptive commentary. A few responses made general comments on the specified section of the text but did not offer any quotations to support or illustrate them.

There were very few candidates who did not follow the instructions in the question and selected language choices that were not in the specified lines of the passage.

Question 2

Imagine that you are a headteacher giving a short speech to students who are about to leave school. You want to show them how they can be successful and fulfilled in their chosen careers and in their lives without seeking attention.

Write the words of your speech summarising your advice.

You should write no more than 250 words.

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

This question was based on Passage B, *The world needs invisible people: why fame-seekers and attention-cravers have it all wrong*, and offered up to 15 marks for Writing and 10 marks for Reading. For the Reading marks candidates were expected to demonstrate understanding of explicit and implicit meanings and attitudes and critically evaluate the facts, ideas and opinions expressed in Passage B. For the Writing marks candidates were expected to write in an appropriate voice and register, write accurately and use a range of sentence structures and vocabulary for effect.

In terms of reading, many candidates expressed insightful understanding of the way that the writer presents the contrast between those who seek attention and those who take pride in their work with no desire for recognition or fame.

Candidates should be aware that to get into the higher mark bands they are expected to select a number of appropriate ideas from the passage to evaluate. Most candidates chose a few of the more straightforward ideas from the passage, the most popular being the short-term satisfaction of fame or celebrity status, not measuring success by the praise received, recognising your own value, and the satisfaction that comes from a job well done. They offered fairly straightforward advice based on these ideas without offering much evaluation in the form of adapting the material to make it more relevant to a teenage audience. The strongest responses offered a more comprehensive evaluation of the information given in the article, reorganising the ideas to make them suitable for inclusion in a formal speech by a headteacher. They were able to maintain an objective viewpoint and reshape the material to make it suitable for the teenage audience focusing on the advice given to them as they leave school. Less successful responses lacked focus on the passage, offering a general response.

As a writing task, most candidates convincingly adopted an appropriate register and tone for a formal leaving speech. There were few responses in the lower bands for Writing. Most adopted a convincing voice and used formal language to express their views. Some responses were too similar to the passage, sometimes lifting whole sentences and phrases. Stronger responses were highly accurate using a wide range of suitable vocabulary. Others were less convincing but still maintained a reasonably consistent voice and communicated clearly. Some candidates produced repetitive sentence structures, and mistakes of spelling, punctuation and grammar were sometimes evident, occasionally impeding communication. A small number of candidates wrote a very general response to the passage repeating a few details with no awareness of audience and purpose or offered a very brief response to the task.

Question 3

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

(a) Re-read paragraphs 1 and 2, 'Everyone wants ... behind the scenes.'

(a)(i) 'What does the writer think of reality TV contestants?'

The majority of candidates correctly identified that the writer thinks that they are attention-seeking or that they are all the same / nothing special.

(a)(ii) Give one phrase which shows that the people the writer calls 'Invisibles' should be valued.

Most response offered a correct response by quoting 'highly skilled' or 'work is critical'. Some candidates lost the mark by offering more than a 'phrase'.

(b) Re-read paragraphs 1 and 2, 'In the last year we seem ... as it is now lived.'

(b)(i) What does the writer mean by the phrase 'we seem to have awakened, rubbing our eyes'?

Most candidates were able to gain 1 mark on this question by offering a relevant explanation: we have only just realised or until now have not noticed (the poverty around us).

(b)(ii) From paragraphs 1 and 2 give two different language features which make this an effective opening to the article. For each feature give an example from these paragraphs.

For each mark candidates needed to identify a language feature and offer a clear example from paragraphs 1 or 2. The question did not require an explanation of the example chosen. The vast majority of candidates gained 2 marks on this question. Where they lost marks, it was usually because no example was offered, or they offered a quote and explained the effect without identifying the language feature.

Question 3(c)

Compare and contrast how the writers of Passage B, *The world needs invisible people: why fame-seekers and attention-cravers have it all wrong*, and Passage C, *Our Invisible Poor*, convey their views and ideas about different people in society.

In your response you should compare and contrast:

the views and ideas each writer presents to the reader

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

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

Remember to support your answer with details from the passages.

You should write about 300 to 350 words.

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

The majority of candidates were able to make a meaningful response to this comparative task. At its heart this task requires candidates to think independently, making judgements about both texts, evaluating the 'power' of the language, structure and techniques the writers have used, and comparing the way they have presented their views and ideas.

Examiners reported seeing some strong responses to this question where candidates were able to compare both passages at length with comments on language and structure skilfully interwoven with the juxtaposition of ideas and views. Stronger responses started by comparing the text-types and purposes of the passages offering very different perspectives and ideas about 'invisibility' and had very different purposes. These responses made good use of information given; they recognised that **Passage B** was a lighter text in terms of purpose and content, persuading the reader that the current trend of seeking celebrity status through

reality TV and social media sites is far less rewarding than doing a job well without the need for recognition from others. They then compared this to **Passage C** which tackles the more serious issue of the poverty in the US in the 1960s. Many candidates acknowledged the different eras in which the passages were written, citing the more serious intentions of **Passage C**. Most could say something about **Passage B**'s use of personal experiences and direct quotations from 'invisibles' themselves to support the viewpoint offered, but only the strongest responses analysed the language in detail considering the effects of phrases such as 'personal horn tooting' and 'waving a flag'. There was some good analysis of the more figurative language used in **Passage C** to describe the temptations to spend money in cities as 'piranha fish ...' who can 'strip a budget to its bones'. These responses also considered powerful language such as 'no face, no voice ...'. Candidates offered many relevant comparisons of the use of personal experience, facts and statistics in each passage, most arguing that **Passage B** is more reliant on anecdotal evidence whereas **Passage C** does offer more factual and statistical evidence. Many candidates did point out that even in **Passage C** the evidence is rather vague and that both pieces are heavily weighted towards personal opinion. Candidates need to be aware that analysis of use of language must have short, relevant textual support, and a clear explanation of the effect on the reader: device spotting, use of simile/metaphor, rhetorical questions or statistical evidence, counts at best as 'identification' if purpose and effect are not present.

Weaker responses tended to concentrate on **Passage B** instead of making time to fully understand **Passage C**, hence comparisons, if drawn, tended to be superficial. These responses usually offered an overview of the passages and compared what the writers are saying. Some responses did not give textual support for the comparison of views, only for use of language that was treated separately; conversely others lifted whole chunks of quotation. Stronger responses embedded neat snippets of quotation within their analysis. Some failed to compare the differences in views, focusing more on describing the content of the passages separately. There was also considerable repetition in weaker responses to this question.

Most candidates made some relevant use of subject terminology, but some of those who did so were unsure about the difference between a metaphor and a simile. The strongest responses used a wide range of terminology to support discussions of how the passages worked to convey the writers' views and opinions to influence the reader.

A small minority of candidates ran out of time and didn't attempt **Question 3(c)** or offered a brief, undeveloped response, sometimes only referring to **Passage B**.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (9–1)

Paper 0627/02
Directed Writing and Composition

Key messages

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

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

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

General comments

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

Most responses showed an understanding of the topic in **Question 1** and made sensible use of the reading passages in their responses. Responses clearly engaged with the question and the reading material; they were able to identify the different uses of camera phones and give advice about using them responsibly. Most responses in the middle mark range tended to select a range of evidence from the passages. Weaker answers drifted away from the material and offered a general response or listed some points simply.

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

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

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 Directed Writing

Question 1

Write an article for young people about the use of camera phones.

In your article you should:

**Evaluate the arguments against the use of camera phones.
Give your advice about using camera phones responsibly.**

Give reasons and examples to support what you say.

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

Write about 250 to 350 words.

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

Most responses adhered to an article writing structure using a clear introduction, followed by main ideas and were able to bring their articles to a logical conclusion. They showed understanding of the requirements of an article intended for young people, and in better responses both passages' content was scrutinised, synthesised and evaluated purposefully. They also wrote fluently and used vocabulary to good effect and adopted an effective register. Many, however, simply listed reasons why camera phones are useful or lasted advice about using them responsibly.

The marks for reading

Good responses followed the bullet points but also synthesised the evidence and adopted the evaluative stance required for marks above Band 3. Effective responses identified and explored the subtleties of the passages, for example fears of industrial espionage are real in certain situations, the irony that manufacturers should ban camera phones, camera phones can also help police with evidence and live entertainment should expect to be recorded if stars or celebrities are performing and exorbitant ticket prices are being charged. These responses were able to evaluate arguments from both texts and synthesise them. The best responses considered the arguments in both texts as they affected the situation presented, deriving evidence from the ideas and examples in both passages. For example, the invasion of privacy is a genuine issue; there are copyright issues with taking pictures and recordings of events; unselective use of camera phones shows ignorance of others around and can distract performers; social media is distorting reality and ironically those using social media often complain about others' use of camera phones. These better responses synthesised and evaluated the use of camera phones with clear and persuasive arguments.

The most effective responses assimilated the details of the passage into a whole new piece to offer a convincing overview: what is appropriate to share and it is difficult to control circulation of photos once posted; security is important and the use of phones may be restricted as is the need to check and respect rules in advance; bans are usually appropriate for high security situations such as in airports, prisons and hospitals; self-policing is necessary, and the context of a situation and camera phone usage should be considered. This kind of evaluative approach to the material in the passage was required for marks in Band 4 and above. Where responses simply selected evidence from the passages, Examiners could not award marks above Band 3.

Responses in the middle range tended to list a range of evidence against the use of camera phones: the circulation of unauthorised information; violation of privacy; annoyance to the general public; they can disturb a range of live performances and people become less aware of the present. Other responses at this level tended to focus on one passage only, taking as the focus the use of camera phones at work, or in the theatre.

Weaker responses did not seem to understand the need to draw on information from the texts or present any evaluation of the arguments presented. These responses were vague, either giving advice about the use of

cameras at school or how to keep safe online. The misconception here seemed to be that the texts were merely a prompt to help generate ideas rather than a source to be used. Some weaker responses showed an over-dependence on some key phrases in the texts and obvious words and phrases such as 'sensitive information', 'catching moments that might otherwise been missed', 'desensitised' and 'prism of social media' appeared frequently. References to the Tim Donahue, Gwyn Topham and the 'Textually' often seemed forced or not well integrated. Responses at this level sometimes misunderstood the task and one wrote about the need to keep camera phones safe and from being stolen.

The marks for writing

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

Register and audience

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

The majority of responses adopted an appropriate register in their response and structured their answers according to the requirements of an article. Numerous, however, did not conclude their article appropriately, or even at all. Some responses adopted a plain voice with unambitious vocabulary whereas others appeared far too informal using 'text speak' and slang.

Most candidates addressed young people in their responses and continued to do so throughout, keeping an appropriate tone of voice. This was achieved using sophisticated vocabulary and the embedding of clauses which directly addressed young people.

Less effective responses became confused who they were addressing; some wrote to a business or a theatre.

Structure

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

Accuracy

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

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- use material from both passages and offer an overview
- try to develop ideas from the passages concisely, using inferences that are suggested, but without drifting beyond

be aware of the genre you are using for your answer; think carefully about the right style for a letter or an article and the register appropriate to audience
use paragraphs to structure responses
check your writing for basic punctuation errors that will inevitably reduce your mark.

Section 2: Composition

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

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

Descriptive Writing

2 Write a description of a busy children’s playground.

OR

3 Write a description of the first moments after arriving on a new planet.

The first question was the more popular of the two options providing a great variety of responses across the range. The best responses not only demonstrated linguistic and stylistic skills but used a variety of devices to create atmosphere. Complex atmospheres relating to location and additionally, thoughts and feelings experienced by the range of children and adults were developed. There were some outstanding responses with a wide range of vocabulary and imagery evident.

Most responses chose to write from the perspective of an anonymous observer observing activities in the playground; the location varied from a school, public or an abandoned recreational space; a few successful responses were set against a backdrop of either glorious or gloomy weather.

Mid-range responses tended to list what could be seen in a playground in terms of individuals or equipment in a routine and perfunctory way which did not allow for detail, creativity or development.

Less effective responses lacked focus and often gave an account of a playground incident or an account of a school day with a starting point of the playground or even a conversation within it. A common issue for some responses was that in an attempt to convey immediacy, they began by employing the present tense but then switched to the past.

The second question also produced responses across the range of marks and encouraged exploration thoughts and feelings and close observation of detail. This question was approached in different ways. Most who responded to this task gave a panoramic view of the landscape where they encountered mountains, sand, lakes or even blossoming trees. One successful response wove a myriad of colours throughout their response, ‘an illusion of bouncing sparks of orange and yellow and pink danced, scarring the air with delicate touches . . . floating through dwarf like fireworks.’ Stronger responses often articulated a sense of loneliness, isolation or abandonment and an acute awareness of imagined surroundings. Some created an effective contrast between Earth and the new planet; some considered Earth itself as the new planet.

Mid-range responses were often very narrow in focus, concentrating unidentified dangers. These responses sometimes took a narrative approach including a little descriptive detail.

Less effective responses often offered lengthy narratives, typically about being stuck on a new planet and trying to escape from aliens.

Some responses which included formulaic use of detail from each of the five senses found on the new planet often led to the details and images being presented in a disjointed way. This approach can weaken the structure and overall picture formed in even the strongest of responses.

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

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

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

Avoid narrative and remember to provide descriptive detail.

Try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content.

It is good practice to write in the present tense, but do not change tense once you have started your writing.

Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.

OR

Narrative Writing

4 Write a story that involves a character who just wants to help.

OR

5 Write a story which includes the words, ‘It must have moved’.

Question 4 produced a wide range of often adventurously written responses. Most chose to focus their plots on characters in need and where there was some sort of moral to the tale.

Often candidates placed their narratives in a school situation written from first person point of view outlining how their genuine attempts at help were misinterpreted, or they helped a school friend to beat the system. Others took a theme of health and some wrote about helping family or friends to overcome an illness or addiction. One ambitious and successful response crafted a narrative about helping someone disentangling themselves from an intricate spy ring, another about correcting a legal injustice.

The most successful responses used subtle twists and turns in the narrative which produced complex and sophisticated writing. Higher band responses explored the benefits and consequences of helping others, sometimes for mutual benefit and used appropriate vocabulary to set the scene, intense character description and well placed dialogue.

Middle Band responses often focused on simple adventures, getting lost and being rescued; these were event driven with only brief development and some had a predictable ending ‘And then I woke up’.

Lower band responses tended to focus on unrealistic events such as saving someone’s life after some fantastical misadventure. At this level, responses were complicated and lapsed into plots which were too unwieldy to convey events convincingly. Lower band responses used unclear sentence structure, over lengthy dialogue, simple vocabulary and had problems with choosing and staying in the correct tense.

There was quite a range of subjects in response to Question 5. Responses took both a literal, for example money being stolen, and a philosophical approach. One successful response referred to the ‘front line’ moving in battle, and offered a poignant narrative of trying to reach the ‘other side’ only to discover that ‘The front line has not moved at all . . . I allow myself to cry because Louis died for nothing, Tom died for nothing and this whole war is for nothing’. Some responses focused on tangible objects moving, for example within a room adding mystery as to the perpetrator,

Higher band responses often introduced a more dramatic scenario which represented a turning point for the narrator, allowing them to create suspense and a sense of climax.

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

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

Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, if persistent, limited even competently told stories to Band 3, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation. Speech was over-used only in weaker responses but there were many responses where the punctuation of direct speech was insecure, even when the story itself was quite well-structured. Basic punctuation errors with capital letters, the spelling of simple words and misused homophones appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes so frequent as to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved:

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

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (9–1)

Paper 0627/03
Speaking and Listening

General comments

The majority of centres administered and conducted the tests appropriately and professionally, continuing the positive trend from previous examination series. Most centres were at or near the assessment standard.

Where there were issues with the administration of the tests, the most common problem was with the introductions to the recordings. The most common issue with the conduct of the test was non-adherence to the stipulated timings for Part 1 and Part 2.

Key messages

Examiner Introduction on Each Recording

Every recording for each candidate should have its own full introduction. One generic introduction for the whole cohort is not acceptable.

The examiner should introduce each candidate's recording by stating the following: the centre's name and number; the candidate's name and number; the name of the examiner and the date on which the test is being conducted.

This is a windowed test so the date on which the recording is made must be included to confirm the test has been carried out within the specified dates.

Administration – General Points

It is important that centres carefully read the instructions on the administration of the test. These guidelines may be of help.

The centre should include the following in the packet sent to Cambridge to be moderated: All the recordings for the candidates entered for the series; the Oral Examination Summary Forms for all the candidates entered; a copy of the marks that have already been sent to Cambridge. Each of these items is very important in the process of assessing a centre's performance so if a packet is incomplete a delay in the moderation process is inevitable.

Centres should generate audio files – ideally transferred to a single CD or USB drive – in a recognised common audio file format such as mp3, wav and wma (but not aup) that can be played by standard computer software.

Centres should check the recordings at regular intervals during the testing process to ensure their quality. Please also check the CD or USB drive before despatching to Cambridge. Faulty recordings continue to delay the process of moderating a small minority of centres.

Where there are multiple examiners at a centre involved in the testing, internal moderation is required. Where the total marks for a candidate have been altered because of this internal moderation, please indicate on the Summary Form which of the three marks have been changed. It is unhelpful if only the total mark is altered.

Where candidates have been entered but fail to take the test they should be recorded as 'absent' and not awarded a mark of zero. A mark of zero should only be awarded to a candidate who is present for the test but who does not say anything worth awarding marks for when assessed against the marking grids.

Conduct of the Speaking and Listening Test

When considering candidates' marks, the importance of timings must be appreciated.

Part 1 should be a minimum of four minutes and a maximum of five minutes. Please note, this does not include the examiner's introduction. Where a **Part 1** response is short, please consider whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met and assess accordingly. It is difficult to see how a response can meet higher level criteria in a performance lasting significantly less than four minutes.

Equally, a response which is significantly overlong cannot be regarded as fulfilling the criteria for Band 5. It is in the best interests of the candidate that the examiner steps in to halt any **Part 1** talk that exceeds the maximum time allowed. This should not be considered as being in anyway rude to the candidate but as a positive act to prevent the candidate exceeding the time limit. In terms of assessment, if an intervention is deemed necessary, it should be considered whether the candidate has successfully fulfilled the criteria for Band 5 if this level is to be awarded.

Given that both Speaking and Listening are assessed in **Part 2**, it is important that the question and answer session lasts long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. In **Part 2** a minimum of four minutes and a maximum of five minutes is expected. It is the examiner's responsibility to ensure these timings are adhered to.

A reliance on written material in **Part 1** is counter-productive and only leads to a lack of natural fluency which affects performance. Candidates can take into the test one cue card containing prompt notes. These notes should not be written in full sentences or be read verbatim.

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

If candidates naturally 'dry-up' during **Part 1** or show signs of momentary distress (because they have forgotten what they were going to say or lose their flow) the examiner should use prompts without resorting to asking questions.

The use of pre-prepared responses to known questions in **Part 2** is not permitted. When they plan and prepare their responses, candidates are encouraged to consider what questions they may be asked during **Part 2** but there should be no collusion between the examiner and candidate. Candidates who prepare long and unnatural monologues in response to anticipated questions only penalise themselves.

The test may be performed in front of a live audience but this audience must be passive and silent throughout both parts of the test. There should be no interaction between the candidate and the audience in either part of the test.

Accuracy of assessment

Generally, centres applied the criteria accurately, appropriately and fairly whilst underpinning this through successful internal moderation procedures. Where there were issues the following applies:

Timings were not adhered to in one or both parts of the test but the marks awarded did not take this into consideration

One prominent cause of inaccuracy was generosity in the awarding of marks in **Part 2** for short responses which were not of sufficient length or challenge to secure the higher bands. Responses need to be consistently detailed in **Part 2**

Articulate, confident candidates tended to be over-rewarded where the content was factual rather than demonstrating more analysis and reflection

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

Approaches to Part 1

A wide range of topics were undertaken although the task generally took the form of an individual presentation. This is a perfectly valid response to the task and one candidates often feel most comfortable in performing. Some centres chose to be quite inventive and their candidates responded to this task by delivering dramatic monologues in a chosen character. Again, this is a perfectly valid response to the task.

When preparing a response to **Task 1**, whether it is a presentation or a monologue, candidates should consider the length. Candidates are expected to talk for four to five minutes. This demands a certain degree of organisation, planning and preparation to be successful. It is recommended that centres are proactive in guiding candidates towards topics about which they are knowledgeable and enthusiastic but that are not too generic. Weaker topics seem to be social media, football, footballers' wages, gaming, travelling and body image where there is often a lack of focus and an inability to maintain the topic for the required four to five minutes.

Focused talks are more successful in that they allow the candidate to explore and develop a topic – for example, instead of 'My holiday in Spain' a more successful talk would be 'Why my holiday in Spain has made me more aware of a different culture'. Usually, where a candidate speaks about their experience of another culture (often because they are living in the UK but originate from elsewhere) they can compare and contrast cultures and ideas and give a meaningful representation of their former home, making for a more reflective and interesting talk.

Topics that worked well include:

- Deforestation
- My favourite Harry Potter character
- Supermarkets versus local shops
- My involvement in (specified activity/event)
- My great-grandfather
- The importance of music in my life
- Plastic and its effect on the environment
- Being an introvert/extrovert
- Malaga, the perfect holiday destination
- Being eco-friendly
- Schooling in Britain compared to Romania.

Management of Part 2

In most cases, **Part 2** was well conducted and examiners asked appropriate and interesting questions that enabled the candidates to extend and develop their ideas.

Supportive examiners ask open questions that encourage the candidates to extend their ideas and reflect on the points made in **Part 1**. Pertinent, focused and challenging questioning works best giving candidates every opportunity to display their skills.

The question and answer format can result in some stilted **Part 2** responses, especially when examiners think of their questions as a tick-list rather than a means to delve deeper into the topic or broaden the points made by the candidate in **Part 1**.

Candidates are often hindered by the listener cutting into a response when it may be more advantageous to allow the candidate to continue. Detailed and developed responses are required if marks in the higher bands are to be awarded for Listening.

It is the examiner's responsibility to ensure each candidate is given a minimum of four minutes for **Part 2**. Some **Part 2** responses were limited because the examiner ran out of relevant questions to push the discussion to the required minimum length, thus disadvantaging the candidates.

Advice to Centres

This is a formal terminal test: Prepare for this examination as any other – i.e. techniques/research/thought about appropriate topics. Practise methods of presentation and response to questioning in other situations as preparation for this test.

The test timings are as important as they are in any written examination, so examiners, teachers and candidates should adhere to them.

Encourage candidates to choose topics that they know well through personal experience and are passionate about. Issues and ideas work better than factual topics unless the candidate has an individual flair or interest.

Examiners should ask questions strategically to encourage and help the candidates to think for themselves and show off what they can do. Examiners should avoid saying too much or interrupting too early, which can affect the candidates developing their own ideas.