

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/11
Composition

Key Messages

- Candidates should allow roughly equal amounts of time to do both sections fully.
- In **Section 1** candidates are advised to familiarise themselves with all the criteria for good Task Fulfilment and use it as a checklist. A good band mark for Task Fulfilment can be gained, even when the band mark for Language is low.
- Also in **Section 1**, candidates need to pay attention to the overall scenario and think themselves into the part they are supposed to be playing within it, so as cope with the demands of the Task Fulfilment.
- In **Section 1** candidates are advised to give equal consideration to each bullet point.
- The proper punctuation and layout of speech can give problems and a greater focus on this would improve performance.
- Candidates could improve their performance by paying attention to correct tenses and agreement.
- The words 'However', 'Moreover', 'Furthermore', and 'Consequently' should be used with the correct meaning and not just as arbitrary paragraph openings.

General Comments:

This examination saw changes in the syllabus for the winter session with the Directed Writing moved to **Section 1** and the Creative Writing becoming **Section 2**. The relative weighting of the two sections also changed with equal marks being given to both for the first time. Furthermore, the Directed Writing was assessed using Task Fulfilment alongside Language as the criteria. However, the overall standard of the vast majority this year seemed to be on a par with that of previous years. **Section 1** was done well by the vast majority, with some reservations which will be detailed below. This year, in **Section 2**, all of the questions seemed to be accessible to candidates. Time management for almost all candidates was good, especially with the change to the lengths of response required, although there were a few who did not divide their time adequately. Fewer candidates wrote drafts which they then copied. Candidates are advised that a more efficient approach would be to make a plan in note form and then to write their response. It is not necessary to copy out the question before attempting the answer. The strengths and weaknesses of the linguistic ability were very much those which have featured in previous reports: also, there was a great deal of very fluent, imaginative writing and accurate writing which engaged the reader.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 Directed Writing

In **Section 1**, candidates were asked to consider an incident at a railway station when many people were injured. As a result, they had to write an account for the local police detailing the incident, suggesting the cause of the disturbance and showing how people helped the victims of the disturbance. Although this was not a school-based scenario, it would appear that a railway setting was well within the experience of the vast majority of candidates. Most responded extremely well to this task and were able to address all three bullet points very competently. The scenario allowed for a wide variety of individual disturbances and this contributed greatly to the success and interest of the responses.

As is always said with this question, **Section 1** is directed writing and so involves more reading than **Section 2**. Candidates had to be aware that in order to satisfy the requirements of the bullet points this year a perfect answer had to have:

- a clear indication of where and when the incident happened as well as how close the writer was to the incident;
- a clear cause of the disturbance with details of what happened throughout;
- details of the help given by railway staff and/or members of the public.

In the first bullet point it was essential to be specific about the location and time, rather than merely repeat that it was at a railway station, something already given in the question. 'Disturbance' could be interpreted in any suitable way. The second bullet point depended on establishing the root cause of the incident and how it then developed. Bullet 3 had to focus on the help given, not just on the development of the incident, and this could include help given by the narrator.

The descriptors for **Task Fulfilment** in the syllabus make clear that candidates will be judged under headings of clear understanding of purpose, situation and audience; a correct format for the piece of writing; appropriate tone and register; the use of information to justify personal opinion as well as the sensible development and organisation of the bullet points. As far as **Task Fulfilment** was concerned this year, the highest marks went to those who established a strong sense of time and place, established themselves as a credible witness and kept to a clear factual account which was helpful to the police. In **Task Fulfilment** it is the development of the ideas that will gain most marks. Therefore, the most successful candidates explained clearly which particular station they had in mind by naming it and specifying a time of day, real or imaginary. The better candidates also specified the distance they were from the incident, even down to quoting the number of metres away they were. Others were less specific about distance but still made it clear they were close by naming part of the station ('..in the ticket queue..'; '..in the waiting room..'). As for the cause of the incident, these were many and various but the better ones made clear that something specific led to what followed, for example someone snatching a bag or a train arriving too quickly and crashing, perhaps into a wall or a car on a level crossing, a terrorist attack, a fire, or an accident with people straying onto the track. This was much better, for example, than simply saying a fight broke out without saying how the fight started. The point about help was addressed by almost every candidate with victims being taken to hospital or comforted at the spot.

Less successful candidates were vague about the location and time often citing a day '..last Monday..' without putting a date to the report or relying on '..in the morning..' which would be far too vague for the police. A small number of candidates set the action somewhere other than a railway station. Some said there were no casualties which made it difficult to give convincing detail for bullet 3. Some weaker candidates failed to mention their own presence at the scene. Whereas all candidates mentioned what happened, a significant number mentioned irrelevant detail, such as what happened before the incident (details of the candidate's journey to the station) and in some cases this reduced the amount of time available for the development of the required points. As a rule it is important to write roughly equal amounts for each bullet point and not let the response be unbalanced. Weaker candidates here made the mistake of writing a lot about what happened and much less on the other crucial aspects (sometimes just one line for each).

Generally, there was a very good awareness of audience from better candidates through an acknowledgement in the first paragraph that the candidate was writing to the police about a specific topic. The best responses realised that there was just one audience, the police, and to write a lot at the end detailing what the police did as if they were writing a newspaper account was missing the point. A significant number of candidates let themselves down with the purpose by depending on narrative (for example, long descriptions of the weather and other details they could not possibly have seen as a witness). The register was kept properly formal and factual by the most successful candidates but a number did lapse into a casual approach, or made their narratives too atmospheric and emotive ('..oozing blood..', '..a terrifying storm..') or they vented their anger at the railway company or drunken train drivers. Most candidates employed an 'appropriate' format starting with 'To the Police..' and ending appropriately with the date and signature but some forgot to put the latter detail, feeling that the date of the incident was enough whereas it might have been different and therefore needed stressing. Organisation hardly varied, with candidates logically and sensibly following the bullet points in the order given. A very small number made use of paragraph headings to reinforce the organisation.

Overall, the vast majority wrote a suitable amount for **Section 1** and captured the polite, accurate, helpful tone and approach very well. Where many candidates scored more heavily than others was in the use of a

crisp, informative, helpful approach, thinking carefully about what the Police would need to know and how they would like to have it presented.

Linguistically, the better candidates found little difficulty in producing a convincing piece of work, although some had difficulty with train-related vocabulary and there was an overuse of the word 'and'. Spelling was generally good although 'crush' and 'crash' were often confused. There were common tense problems making it difficult to follow the sequence on times and an overuse of lower case letters in names ('Harare railway station').

Section 2 Creative Writing

1. **Describe a time when you prefer to be alone and a time when you like to be part of a crowd. (Remember that you are describing the atmosphere and your feelings, not telling a story.)**

This was the least popular question this year but was generally done well by those who attempted it. Good answers successfully used the rubric to structure answers, giving attention to both halves of the question, moving from a consideration of times spent alone to those spent in a crowd. Often this was prefixed by an opening paragraph suggesting that both states would be covered in the essay. Candidates mentioned the attractions of being alone when there was a need to reflect, often when they had done something wrong or sadness had entered their lives. Being in a crowd was at its best during a sporting event or a festival or a family gathering, usually something that was a happy event. Obviously, location played a part in this essay and the excellent use of contrast in the moods described was enhanced by the atmospheres of different settings which often mirrored the mood in a poetical fashion. The best candidates took the opportunity to explain these changes of mood rather than just stating them. Weaker candidates relied simply on giving reasons for being alone or in a crowd and did not describe feelings enough or ignored the guidance in brackets and wrote narratives rather than responding fully to this descriptive opportunity. The better essays were clearly balanced with as much attention given to being in a crowd as being alone. Being a descriptive topic, the use of vivid adjectives marked out some of the better work.

2. **What are the advantages and disadvantages of attending either a small school with few candidates or a large school with many candidates?**

This was a fairly popular topic and produced some good responses. It was a topic that was close to the experience of each candidate and one which produced some very strongly-held views. Those who concentrated on large schools saw advantages in the provision of a big school canteen and a wider range of subjects together with better sporting facilities. The drawbacks were seen as less one-to-one teaching and the increased risk of bullying. Those who had experience of smaller schools generally saw the opposite of this with better relationships being an advantage and the lack of space and facilities being drawbacks. More successful candidates realised that the question asked them to concentrate on either large or small schools and so were able to give depth to their responses. Weaker candidates diluted their response by trying to deal with both large and small schools and sometimes turned it into a question about which were better which did not quite address the question. Dealing with both sorts of schools also led to a great deal of repetition of ideas and it proved how important it is to plan a discursive essay to ensure that there are enough ideas to complete a worthwhile discussion.

3. **Write a story which includes the sentence: 'As we entered the building, the other people smiled as if they knew something we did not.'**

This question was possibly the most popular question this year. It produced an array of stories which were often imaginatively developed and allowed candidates to use figurative language successfully. Some stories managed an interesting twist at the end, although some were rather predictable stories about surprise parties. The responses were generally dramatic, interesting and often moving. Characterisation marked out the better essays with candidates making clear the anxiety being felt. Less successful essays dealt in stereotypical characters as well as unrealistic scenarios. Weaker candidates tried to make a story fit the title sentence with little regard to its appropriateness. For example, some stories involved the sentence being tagged on and it was not always apparent what the 'secret' could be. Candidates are advised to ensure that their story is relevant to the title. Linguistically there was some excellent vocabulary used by the better candidates. This title, as well as **Question 5**, proved how effective direct speech can be in providing character; however, direct speech and reported speech need to be used sparingly and be properly punctuated, especially in the use of speech marks or quotation marks.

4. Bullies.

This was quite a popular choice because with short titles such as these any approach is invited. Most candidates who attempted this went for the straightforward approach and treated the title discursively and wrote about different kinds of bullies. There were detailed descriptions of bullies at home, in school and in the work place. Many candidates gave a balanced viewpoint where the needs of the bully and the bullied were addressed. Indeed, some essays were very successful in analysing the reasons for bullying and the effects on bullies and victims. There were many credible psychological insights to do with insecurity which added weight and authenticity to the better essays. Many took a narrative approach and many of these were also successful. Less successful essays became mere lists of bullying which were not described particularly well and the succeeding episodes added little to what had already been established. Connectives such as 'Moreover' and 'Furthermore' can be very useful but only if they genuinely further the argument rather than attempt to disguise repetition of information.

5. Write a story about someone who returned to a village or town after a long time away. (You should include full details of why the person went away to show that it is an important part of your story.)

This was another extremely popular title. Many answers were either an updated version of the prodigal son story or were heart-warming accounts of how a poor villager left for the big city, made good and returned to benefit the home community – there was a very good one about someone who had gone away to study medicine, came back and opened a clinic for the poor. Some had very good moral lessons attached to them – either you can, or you cannot, escape the past. Less often the return was to take revenge on the person who had driven someone out of the village. As with **Question 3** good writing demonstrated a range of sentence structures and types and detailed vocabulary as well as an ability to develop a story with pace and detail, moving away from one dimensional characters and using direct speech to good effect. Less successful candidates found it difficult to use tenses properly when switching from what had happened in the past to the present. Also it is worth remembering in all essays that have two aspects that balance is necessary; often, so much time had been spent on why the person had gone away that there was not always time to focus on their return. Candidates can improve their performance by ensuring that their essay comes to an appropriate and clear conclusion.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/12
Composition

(Key Messages):

- In **Section 1** candidates should be familiar with all the criteria for good Task Fulfilment and use it as a checklist. Even candidates getting a low band mark for Language can still gain a good band mark for Task Fulfilment.
- In **Section 1** a balanced response to the bullet points is helpful.
- The proper punctuation and layout of speech can give problems and a greater focus on this would pay dividends.
- Concentration on correct tenses and agreement would improve the work of many candidates.
- Good brief plans for a piece of writing would be of more use to most candidates than a whole rough draft simply copied out.
- Candidates should clear up confusions between 'everyday' and 'every day'; 'less' and 'fewer'; 'bestfriend' and 'best friend'; 'avoid' and 'prevent'; 'take' and 'bring'.
- The words 'However', 'Moreover', 'Furthermore', and 'Consequently' should be used with the correct meaning and not just as arbitrary paragraph openings.

General Comments:

This examination saw changes in the syllabus for the Winter exercise with the Directed Writing moved to be **Section 1** and the Creative Writing becoming **Section 2**. The relative weighting of the two sections also changed with equal marks being given to both for the first time. Furthermore, the Directed Writing was assessed using Task Fulfilment alongside Language as the criteria. **Section 1** was done well by the vast majority. This year, in **Section 2**, one question dominated the candidates' choice to an extent rarely seen before. Time management for the vast majority was very good, especially with the change to the lengths of response required and very few candidates failed to manage this well. It was good to see that fewer candidates wrote drafts and then just copied them, although a significant number do still struggle to finish by doing this. Some candidates still waste time by copying out the question before attempting the answer. The strengths and weaknesses of the linguistic ability were very much those which have featured in previous reports: also, there was a great deal of very fluent, imaginative writing and accurate writing which was a joy to read.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 Directed Writing

In **Section 1**, candidates were asked to consider the problems of traffic in their area. As a result they had to write a letter to the Editor of the local newspaper outlining the situation and suggesting solutions and subsequent benefits resulting from those solutions. Although this was not necessarily a School-based scenario it would appear that traffic problems are universal and so it was well within the experience of the vast majority of candidates. Most responded extremely well to this task and were able to address all three bullet points. The scenario allowed for a wide variety of individual locations and related problems and this contributed greatly to the success and interest of the responses.

Candidates are reminded of the need to address all aspects of the given task. In order to satisfy the requirements of the bullet points this year a perfect answer had to have:

- a clear indication of traffic problems, with related details, locations, times of day etc.;
- realistic solutions, as far as this age group would be expected to supply them;
- details of the benefits that might follow for the neighbourhood.

In the first bullet point it was essential to be specific about the problems, rather than merely repeat that there were some. The second bullet point depended on finding solutions to what was mentioned for the first bullet point, although there was also room here to introduce further improvements even if the problems had not yet been mentioned. Bullet 3 did have to relate directly to the improvements mentioned in the second bullet point to gain credit.

The descriptors for **Task Fulfilment** in the syllabus make clear that candidates will be judged under headings of clear understanding of purpose, situation and audience; a correct format for the piece of writing; appropriate tone and register; the use of information to justify personal opinion as well as the sensible development and organisation of the bullet points. As far as **Task Fulfilment** was concerned this year, the highest marks went to those who kept their focus on the root causes of the traffic problems (rather than just saying that the traffic jams were two miles long) and shaped their response according to the descriptors. In **Task Fulfilment** it is the development of the ideas that will gain most marks. Therefore, the most successful candidates explained clearly the current problems, real or imaginary, selecting from areas such as the lack of traffic lights/robots, narrow roads, speeding, the lack of car sharing, and the large number of heavy vehicles at rush hours. All of these were clearly linked to the focus of the question, either overtly or by strong implication. Sensible suggestions were then made as to how these problems could be solved (new roads built, more policemen on duty, traffic lights repaired, one-way traffic systems introduced and staggered times for certain vehicles to use the roads, especially near Schools and offices). Benefits to residents included being punctual at Schools and places of employment, reduction in noise and other pollution, a calmer, safer environment and increased productivity for the region and country. Candidates usually were able to amplify the bullet points well and all seemed to have an opinion on the traffic and had been affected by it. Those who did particularly well were those who, having detailed and explained the problems, included additional material in the solutions and benefits rather than just repeat, for example, that candidates would be punctual and the neighbourhood would improve.

Less successful candidates did not always pinpoint the traffic problems and their causes but preferred to concentrate on personal experiences of several accidents which were the results of the problems. Often these accidents were simply the result of carelessness or not obeying traffic rules and therefore were less convincing as 'problems'. As a rule, it was true throughout the three bullet points that it was better not to try and list all the possibilities but to do fewer (about three or four points per bullet point) and do them in more depth and with convincing examples. Equally important is to write roughly equal amounts for each bullet and not let the response be unbalanced. Weaker candidates here made the mistake of writing a lot for the problems and very little on the solutions and benefits (sometimes just one line for each).

Generally, there was a very good awareness of audience through an acknowledgement in the first paragraph that the candidate was writing to the Editor of a newspaper about a specific topic. The best responses realised that there was a wider audience beyond the Editor, involving government ministers and the general public and that the Editor and his newspaper were merely the means of reaching out to that wider audience. However a significant number of candidates let themselves down here slightly by expecting the Editor to be much more able than he could be in solving the problems. Far too many expected the Editor to be the person who actively solved the problems, to the extent of getting the necessary money and putting any re-building in motion. The register was kept properly formal by most and only a very few lapsed into a casual approach. It was particularly pleasing to see that most candidates avoided the temptation of writing a **narrative** about accidents or travels on the road as this task was intended to be closer to a report than an account.

Many candidates employed an 'appropriate' format with the formal letter ending (usually 'faithfully' but also 'sincerely' and 'truly') following the guidance given in the rubric. Many candidates added a subject heading after 'Dear Editor' and this was accepted as appropriate in the circumstances. Very few candidates ended the letter inappropriately ('Regards', 'From') and very few ignored format completely. Organisation hardly varied, with candidates logically and sensibly following the bullet points in the order given. A very small number made use of paragraph headings to reinforce the organisation and although this looked more like a report, in the circumstances again, it did not cause a problem.

Overall, the vast majority wrote a suitable amount for **Section 1** and captured the polite, accurate, helpful tone and approach very well. Where many candidates scored more heavily than others was in the use of a persuasive tone with their solutions, either because they were said with such conviction or were obviously

viable, whereas some candidates did have some very optimistic solutions, expecting the government to build a number of motorways to cope with some very small problems they had outlined. Some candidates needed to adopt a less peremptory tone rather than saying to the Editor, 'you have to', 'you must', 'I expect you to' and 'I insist', especially as it would not be the Editor's job to ensure the work was done.

Linguistically, candidates found little difficulty in describing features they were familiar with to produce a convincing piece of work. For the same reason, spelling was generally good although there were common agreement problems with 'traffic jam' (where the plural would have been more correct) and 'congestions' (where the singular would have been more correct). Many less able candidates found difficulty in switching from past to present and future tenses, a trait also seen in **Question 1** of **Section 2**.

Section 2 Creative Writing

- 1. Describe and explain some of the ways in which you have changed since you started your present School and some of the ways in which your personality remains the same. (Remember that you are describing your personality and not just telling stories about yourself.)**

This was a popular question and was done well by a large number of candidates. Strong answers used the rubric to structure answers and coped well with moving from past to present tenses whereas weaker candidates found this transition difficult. The usual, and successful, approach was the chronological one with a reference to the candidate's primary School followed by the changes that had emerged throughout the secondary School career. Often this was pre-fixed by an opening paragraph suggesting that both changes and remaining aspects of personality would be covered. Most candidates mentioned how shy or naughty they had been in early School life and how they had grown in confidence, attitude and ability. This was generally due to increased team work, responsibility, debating and presenting speeches in secondary School. It was also interesting to see a number of candidates who were keen to set out the opposite, just how awkward they had become, how they were worse as the end of secondary School approached. The best candidates took the opportunity to explain these changes rather than just list them, often referring to the help that had been given by supportive teachers who believed in their talents and talking in particular about how developing communicative skills boosted their self-belief; on the other hand there were those who analysed unfortunate events which had led them astray. Most candidates were only too keen to refer to how their physical appearance had changed with the passing years to make them far more mature and fashionable and they made the writing very personal by judging whether they had improved or not! Weaker candidates relied on physical changes alone or ignored the guidance in brackets and wrote narratives rather than responding fully to this descriptive opportunity. In such cases, candidates often spoke about parents dying and how determined the candidate became to show friends and School how well they could do. As such it could just as easily have been a story about overcoming adversity and one that paid little attention to filling in character. The better essays were clearly balanced with as much attention given to what had remained the same in their personality, usually their adherence to family principles, religion, beliefs and culture, especially respecting elders; too many essays were unbalanced with very little reference to anything other than changes and so they lost the vital element of contrast. Some relatively unsuccessful candidates thought it was a question about comparing two Schools rather than the same person in two Schools. Others were confused by the word 'personality', either confusing it with 'characteristics' or treating it as a plural 'personalities' which led to some very awkward constructions. Contradictory assertions or failure to adapt tenses to cope with past and present situations was a significant feature of less successful candidates.

- 2. Which two ideas, customs or beliefs from a foreign country would you like to introduce into your country.**

This topic produced very few responses and may have attracted candidates who had relatives in, or other connections with, foreign countries and their customs. Amongst the small number of essays, Examiners commented that there were many interesting ideas, customs or beliefs mentioned including introducing nationalisation, conscription, lowering the age of adulthood, greater equality or greater opportunities to study abroad. Some were less ambitious, speaking of introducing kite-flying or well-known celebrations such as Hallowe'en. Successful candidates sometimes put their hopes into a context whereby they spoke about customs that had already been accepted in a society, beliefs such as a fear of black cats or how breaking a mirror is supposed to bring seven years bad luck. Again, some candidates gave depth to their writing by distinguishing between customs and beliefs while some said that importing customs from another country was not a good idea. A few candidates tended to repeat thoughts and it proved how important it is to plan a discursive essay to ensure that there are enough ideas to complete a worthwhile discussion without repetition. Some weaker responses were hampered by insufficient knowledge of other cultures, one candidate believing that criminals are still hanged in England, and this did prove once again that candidates

need to be very sure of their material in a discursive essay if it is to have sufficient weight or authority. Some candidates were led into generalisation a little, often taking the opportunity to mention any shortcomings they saw in their own society rather than talking about what they would like to introduce.

3. Write a story which includes the sentence: ‘They both agreed with the decision but were not happy about it...’.

This question was by far and away the most popular question this year, to the extent that it was often done by all the candidates in a Centre. With so many candidates doing the question, there were a number of commonly recurring themes: decisions over a marriage choice (there were lots of stories about relationships between two people of different religions or wealth which might equally have fitted **Question 5**); two candidates who disliked each other being put to work as a team in School; underperforming candidates being sent to a boarding School by their frustrated parents or eventually doing a university course against their parents’ wishes. There were lots of other, more individual, decisions: agreeing to rob a bank, two competitors co-operating for a competition, spending a night in a haunted library and many more. The responses were generally dramatic, interesting and often moving. Characterisation marked out the better essays with candidates making clear the struggle to come to terms with a decision that neither person wanted, mostly because it meant the narrator had to compromise over a deeply-held desire or belief. Some candidates could have been a bit more precise as to whether the characters actually ‘agreed’ with the decision. For example, many candidates wrote about two candidates who disliked each other in class but were put to work together. This turned out to be a decision they merely ‘accepted’ rather than ‘agreed’ with as there was little suggestion of a happy resolution. Less successful essays dealt in stereotypical characters and unrealistic scenarios. The greatest problem was with weaker candidates who tried to make a story fit the title sentence with little regard to its appropriateness. For example, some stories involved many people in the decision and yet the sentence was copied with ‘both’ being an important consideration. Similarly some wrote the narrative in the first person and were involved in the decision and yet the word ‘They’ was still used as it had to be. Linguistically there was some excellent vocabulary used by the better candidates; weaker candidates struggled with the tense of the given sentence as they had started with the use of another tense and then could not accommodate the given tense – or had to change it. This title, as well as **Question 5**, proved how effective direct speech can be in providing character but only, of course, when it is properly punctuated and used sparingly.

4. Puzzles.

This did not prove a popular choice, even though with short titles such as these any approach is invited. Most candidates who did attempt this went for the straightforward approach and treated the title discursively and wrote about different kinds of puzzles. These were almost always toy puzzles with jigsaw puzzles being the overwhelming favourite. These descriptions, and instructions on how to complete a puzzle, were informed by childhood memories and it was obvious what affection they were held in. Some candidates had a little more knowledge and had some interesting details about the history of such puzzles and some candidates had the vision to look forward to the ways in which puzzles will develop, as with mathematical puzzles and how they will change in a digital era. More able candidates appreciated how puzzles had helped them relax or mature intellectually and in their personality with greater patience, perseverance and powers of memory. Less successful essays became mere lists of puzzles which were not described well. Some did attempt a narrative title about people who had a puzzle to solve and there was one example of someone opening a boutique named ‘Puzzles’. Connectives such as ‘Moreover’ and ‘Furthermore’ are very useful but only if they genuinely further the argument rather than attempt to disguise a mere repetition of information.

5. Write a story in which love overcomes prejudice. (Remember that you should include full details of the prejudice, to show that it is an important part of your story.)

Very few candidates attempted this title. Good writing demonstrated a range of sentence structures and types and detailed vocabulary as well as an ability to develop a story with pace and detail, moving away from one dimensional characters and using direct speech to good effect.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/21
Comprehension

Key messages

Candidates need to develop greater skills in answering those questions which require them to answer in their own words, first learning how to identify key words in such questions. They should learn how to provide answers which require some processing of the text as well as the decoding of figurative images. They should focus on looking beyond the literal in inferential comprehension, while at the same time drawing their inferences from a context linked to the text. In the summary question they should read the rubric carefully and ensure that their answer fully addresses the question.

General Comments

The format of the November paper differed from previous sessions, with questions based on two shorter passages, 'Mobile Phones' and 'An Otter in the Air', completed in a common answer booklet.

Most candidates completed the paper, showing themselves to be familiar with the types of questions likely to be asked. They adapted well to the new layout of the answer booklets and most answered within the parameters of the allocated spaces.

The first text, 'Mobile Phones', explored the candidates' ability to identify opinions. 40% of the marks were available for the summary question, with 15 marks being awarded for the assessment of the candidates' ability to select content points from the text of 'Mobile Phones', and 5 marks for the assessment of their ability to express these points fluently and in their own words. Further questions afforded candidates the opportunity to exercise their personal observations or imaginative responses to the text.

The second passage, 'An Otter in the Air', tested the candidates' ability to understand literal and inferred meaning, their understanding of vocabulary, use of own words and their appreciation of how the writer used language to create certain effects.

Candidates were challenged by questions which required them to answer in their own words, or to give answers which required some processing of the text, decoding of images or inferential comprehension.

The new format of the summary question, both **Questions 1(a)** and **(b)**, generally encouraged candidates to write within the word limit and discouraged lifting from the text or from producing both fair and rough copies. There was very little irrelevance noted or evidence of candidates diverging from the rubric. Candidates are to be commended for the neatness of their presentation and clarity of expression.

Most candidates answered **Question 1(a)** in the bullet point format. Originality was noted in the summary report, **Question 1(b)**, and wholesale copying of the text was generally avoided. Spelling was mostly accurate and punctuation fair. The overall standard of written English was commendable.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 Reading for Ideas

Question 1 (a) was preparation for the summary question, carrying 30% of the total marks for the paper. Candidates were asked to 'identify and write down the advantages and disadvantages of mobile phones, as described in the passage.' The summary had to be based paragraphs 2 - 5 of the text and in this stage candidates were encouraged to give their points in note form and not necessarily in their own words.

There were 19 content points of which candidates could identify any combination up to a maximum of 15 points, carrying one mark each. Most candidates listed the points either in note form or in short sentences and in most cases candidates used bullet points or numbers for each point. By using this method candidates had adequate space in which to record all their responses. Only a few candidates copied whole sections from the text in continuous prose, thus restricting their ability to isolate the points and increasing the likelihood of reproducing sections of irrelevant or unnecessary text. In general, however, there were hardly any infringements of the rubric or instances of complete irrelevance or personal reflections.

Paragraphs 2 and 3 referred to the advantages of mobile phones and there were 10 points (excluding the first which was given) which the candidates could make. Most recognised that young people could give their parents a time to be picked up on return from an outing, that friendships were encouraged, that young people were encouraged to budget and that parents received fewer surprises in home phone bills. Candidates also noted that direct contact meant that others were not disturbed and that people could be contacted wherever they were. They also noted the convenience and cheapness of text messaging, the facility for taking photographs and for sending e-mails. They also noted that mobile phones helped small businesses to prosper.

Many candidates demonstrated their understanding of these advantages but a number lost marks by sacrificing detail and precision for the sake of being concise. Each individual response to the rubric should demonstrate a candidate's full understanding. Marks were lost, for example, by candidates who omitted to note that mobile phones encouraged the young (rather than people in general) to budget, that text messages, and not messages alone, could be sent and that small businesses, rather than businesses as a whole, could flourish.

Paragraphs 4 and 5 outlined the disadvantages of mobile phones and 9 marks were available (excluding the first which was given). Candidates responded well to the question and most recognised that they stopped people from making simple decisions and prevented people from living in the present moment. Mobile phones also caused disturbance on public transport but a number of candidates omitted to mention the location (buses, trains) and therefore were denied the mark. Candidates also noted that there was competition among young people to have the most modern phone, that texting in class hindered their studies and that text spelling and grammar were sloppy. It was understood that there were security issues for teachers when phones were confiscated, that the art of letter writing had been destroyed and that children called their friends instead of doing their homework.

There were a number of candidates who achieved maximum marks and a large number awarded half marks or above. On the whole the response to this new format for the summary has been most encouraging and Successful candidates were more likely to produce a list of notes or short sentences in bullet point form rather than in continuous prose. However, points should be fully made with appropriate agents.

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were asked to use their notes to write a summary, in their own words, of the advantages and disadvantages of mobile phones. They were asked to write no more than 160 words (the first ten of which were given) preferably within the space available in the answer booklet.

Most candidates completed the exercise and nearly all were able to do so within the given space. There was evidence that the previous task had helped the candidates focus on what was important, thereby avoiding any need to produce a rough draft. The majority of candidates made a recognisable attempt to reword the text by regrouping and paraphrasing the advantages and disadvantages. Generally, standards of syntax and spelling were good although original complex structures were rarer. Recurring problems appeared in the singular/plural agreement of nouns and verbs, the incorrect use of pronouns (*it* instead of *they*) and in the appearance of the intrusive comma and the overuse of the comma at the expense of the full stop.

Nearly all candidates adhered to the rubric and there were few instances of candidates promoting their own theories. Commendably, there were few short answers and candidates are advised that very short answers cannot justify a high mark since they cannot demonstrate a sustained use of own words or completely accurate use of English.

Question 2 asked candidates to select and write down two opinions contained in paragraph 4. Most candidates were unable to distinguish between observation and opinion; some candidates picked out the writer's wish that mobile phones be switched off on public transport but only the best candidates gained the full two marks.

Question 3 asked candidates to tick the box containing a correct statement about the writer's feelings about mobile phones. Most candidates answered this correctly by ticking the middle box. A few candidates ticked two boxes and so could not be credited with the mark.

Question 4 asked the candidates to use their own knowledge or experience to suggest two advantages or disadvantages (or a combination of one of each) of mobile phones. Consistent links were made between mobile phones and lying, deceit, cheating in examinations, illicit relationships, crime, accidents and emergencies. Less imaginative candidates selected ideas from the original text and others made no real distinction between a mobile and an ordinary telephone.

Section 2 Reading for meaning

Question 5 (a) asked why the writer rushed through the airport and most recognised that he did so because the plane was waiting to take off.

Question 5 (b) asked why the candidate thought the writer was trying to hold down the lid of the box. Many realised that he was trying to stop the otter from escaping. A large number of candidates suggested that the screw was loose and the wood splintered but this response was not credited.

Question 6 (a) asked for two reasons, according to the writer, to explain why Mij would not be considered an attractive travelling companion. Most candidates noted that the otter was scruffy but few recognised that he was noisy, failing to decode the reference to the 'horrifying vocal box'. Others incorrectly remarked that he was an otter (a rat, fish or dog) or made reference to the lady passenger.

Question 6 (b) was an 'own words' question, requiring the candidate to recast 'tolerance' and 'sympathy' in relation to the woman's likely attitude towards Mij. Common answers for '(no) tolerance' were *impatience* and *acceptance* and for '(no) sympathy' were *compassion*, *pity*, *mercy* and *care*. Only the best candidates were able to recast both words.

Question 7 (a) was well answered overall and candidates noted that the writer told the stewardess about Mij and asked her if she could put the fish, or food, in a cool place. Common wrong answers focused on the confusion between what he told the stewardess and what he asked her to do.

Question 7 (b), asking the candidates to explain in their own words what was unusual about the way the stewardess reacted to the writer's request, proved challenging for many. It required some recasting of the vocabulary to suggest that the stewardess was calm and unruffled (*took it in her graceful stride*) and that she either took the parcel as if it were valuable or special or treated the writer as if he were a VIP or a king (*as if I were travelling royalty depositing a jewel case into her safe keeping*). Weaker responses said that she was willing to take the fish. The very best candidates decoded the image of the fish as being special or the writer being treated as a nobleman while weaker ones reproduced the words from the text.

Question 8 (a) asked for the single word 'inertia' from paragraph 4 to continue the idea of doing nothing. A good proportion answered correctly. Common wrong answers were 'innocuous' or 'provoking'.

In **Question 8 (b)** many realised that Mij was in the mood to make a mess or to turn things upside down. Unsuccessful answers largely focused on Mij's desire to create confusion or to be destructive.

Question 8 (c) wanted to know why Mij climbed into the box and most candidates understood that he wanted to empty its contents by throwing out the wood shavings. Candidates who suggested that he wanted to make a mess or that he wanted to go to sleep or to make the room (sic) habitable were not credited.

Question 9 (a) required candidates to explain fully what was happening during the "wave of disturbance down the passageway". Many candidates suggested correctly that Mij was frightening the passengers or that he was running down the passageway but only a few were able to decode the image of 'a wave of disturbance', referring to his step by step or seat by seat movement down the plane.

Question 9 (b) asked why the writer referred to the stewardess as a goddess and many candidates lifted the supposition that she 'could have controlled a panic stricken crowd' rather than presenting the fact that she was calm or that she helped people or had calmed the woman passenger. There were also references to her being beautiful. Candidates are advised to adhere to the rubric rather than provide their own interpretation of a goddess.

Question 10 proved to be well-answered and candidates recognised that the writer could deduce no meaning from the gentleman who stared at him because he was expressionless and because he was silent.

In **Question 11 (a)**, the fact that Mij came back to the writer of his own accord was the answer to how the two were reunited but a majority of candidates suggested incorrectly that the stewardess was responsible for his return.

Question 11 (b) asked how the writer's reunion with Mij affected the writer's relationship with him in the future. Many candidates answered this by referring to the sowing of a seed of trust; this was not always clearly rephrased and left the meaning in some doubt. Other incorrect answers focused on either the writer's ability to trust the otter or the ability of them both to trust each other.

Question 12 was the vocabulary question in which candidates were required to show their understanding, in context, but not necessarily in direct synonyms, of 5 words from a choice of 8. Most candidates attempted 5 words and all adhered to the rubric by providing a single synonym or short explanatory phrase.

Inquisitively, meaning *curiously, wanting to know, nosily or questioningly* (but not *questionably*) was successfully attempted. **Scant** was a popular choice amongst candidates who generally knew that it meant *few, little or scarce* but in the context of the passage it did not mean *small or little* as some candidates suggested. **Provoking** produced correct answers such as *annoying, disturbing and irritating* and a few incorrect ones in *teasing and taunting*. **Craning** was also recognised to mean *stretching, straining and twisting* but neutral suggestions such as *turning or bending* were not credited. A few candidates chose **coherent**, meaning *clear or comprehensible*. Candidates struggled to provide suitable synonyms for **paraphernalia** such as *belongings, property and requirements* but not *things or equipment*. Synonyms suggested for **hoist** were *lift, raise and pull up* but *throw, pull and remove* were inadequate. A number of candidates were rewarded for offering *tidiness* and *organisation* for **order** but in context *rules, sequence, control, class, booking and request* were incorrect.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/22
Comprehension

Key messages

Candidates should develop greater skills in answering those questions which require them to answer in their own words, first learning how to identify key words in such questions. They should learn how to give answers which require some processing of the text and, having made their choice, not add in another attempt as a 'fail-safe' method which is more likely to deny an otherwise correct answer. They should learn how to decode figurative language. They should focus on looking beyond the literal in inferential comprehension, while at the same time drawing their inferences from a context linked to the text. Candidates are advised to write their responses within the parameters given on the answer booklet. Some candidates wrote the content points in **Question 1(a)** in pencil, before writing over the pencil in pen. This often led to writing which was difficult to read and is a practice which is best discontinued.

General Comments

The format of the November paper differed from previous sessions, with questions based on two shorter passages, the first being non-fiction and the second being fiction, with answers written in a common answer booklet.

Most candidates completed the paper, showing themselves to be familiar with the types of questions likely to be asked. In the case of the new style question, based on the reading of the whole passage and own knowledge or experience, candidates in general made sensible, if sometimes vague, responses. They adapted well to the new layout of the answer booklets.

Both passages, the first entitled 'Orangutans' and the second entitled 'The Chinese Money Lender', seemed to engage the interest of the candidates and to stretch and discriminate amongst them, and this was reflected in a wide range of scores. The first passage explored the candidates' ability to read for ideas and the second tested their reading for meaning. Twenty marks were available for the summary question, with fifteen of these marks being awarded for the assessment of the candidates' ability to select content points from the text of 'Orangutans' and five marks for the assessment of their ability to express these points fluently in their own words. Further questions tested candidates' ability to read for ideas, in this case to distinguish true statements from false ones, and to offer a response to the text based on their own knowledge or experience.

The second passage, 'The Chinese Money Lender' tested the candidates' ability to understand literal and inferred meaning, their understanding of vocabulary, use of own words and their appreciation of the writer used language to create certain effects.

The new format of the summary question, both **Questions 1(a)** and **(b)**, generally encouraged candidates to write within the word limit and discouraged lifting from the text or from producing both fair and rough copies. There was very little irrelevance noted or evidence of candidates diverging from the rubric. Candidates are to be congratulated on the general neatness of presentation.

Originality in **Question 1(b)**, where candidates were to write up their note form content points in formal, continuous prose, was not always in evidence. Nevertheless, many candidates did attempt at least to reshape the relevant details from the passage, with the substitution of their own words here and there where possible. There were a few very fluent own words answers and conversely a few others where a very limited understanding of the passage was revealed by random selection of unlinked phrases, making only fractured sense.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 Reading for Ideas

Question 1(a) was the first part of the summary question, carrying 30% of the total marks for the paper. Candidates were asked to identify the reasons why orangutans are an endangered species, and the steps that are being taken to protect them. The summary had to be based on paragraphs 2 - , and this year, for the first time, candidates were to write their answers in note form, where they were free to use either the words of the text or their own words. One content point under each heading of the rubric was given by way of illustration, although these given points were not rewarded with a mark.

Excluding these provided content points, there were eighteen content points, of which candidates could identify any combination up to a maximum of 15 points, carrying one mark each. Candidates were not instructed to use bullet points, although the sample points given to assist them used bullets; however, it might help candidates to focus more clearly on identifying content points if they were presented under bullets. But it must be noted that if a single content point is presented straddling two bullets, the mark will not be given.

Paragraphs Two and Three referred to the reasons why orangutans are an endangered species, and there were ten points (excluding the first, which was given) which the candidates could make. In Paragraph 2, there were six content points, (excluding the provided first point). Setting fire to their habitat in order to create land for agriculture takes place, their food is destroyed, and farmers kill them because they eat their crops. Money is given for killing them, the mothers are killed for food and the babies as captured as pets. In Paragraph Three, another three points were available, all linked to palm oil: orangutans' habitat is cleared for palm oil plantations, food made from palm oil is healthy, and bio-fuels can be made from palm oil.

The second section of the rubric asked for the steps which are being taken to protect orangutans, and there were nine available content points, (excluding the first, which was given.) In Paragraph Four, candidates could make five points (excluding the provided first point): companies are asked to make sure palm oil comes from orangutan-friendly sources, national parks are increased in size, better training is given to park rangers, there are more organisations dedicated to saving them and trees are planted in their damaged habitats. In Paragraph Five, the remaining four content points were available: people work voluntarily in an orangutan habitat, rescue Centres are set up, people are encouraged to adopt an orangutan and young people raise funds to pay for resources to protect them. This last point was often misunderstood as young people actually helping in the parks rather than fundraising.

A small number of candidates achieved maximum points and a large number scored half marks and above. Some candidates reproduced the given content points and were not credited with a mark. Although points could be made by producing a list of notes or short sentences in bullet point form, as indicated above, rather than in continuous prose, these points nevertheless need to be fully made with appropriate agents. Where marks were lost it was often because content points were incompletely made, e.g. writing that people work in orangutan habitats without reference to the voluntary nature of this work, that trees were planted without mention of the location, or that farmers killed them without reference to the reason. Perhaps more than in previous papers there were more content points requiring a level of detail, where marks were denied because points were incompletely made.

In **Question 1(b)** Candidates were asked to use their notes to write a summary, in their own words, of the reasons why orangutans are an endangered species, and the steps that are being taken to protect them. They were given the first ten words and asked to write within the space available in the answer booklet.

Most candidates completed the exercise and most were able to do so comfortably within the given space. There were a number of candidates who used their own words in a sustained manner and in a style which was always accurate, containing original complex structures. However, the general use of own words was less noticeable this year and many candidates selected from, edited and restructured the text well, without being innovative or original in their use of English, and there were some who copied most of their points directly from the text. Encouragingly, nearly all candidates attempted the question and adhered to the rubric. Candidates are advised that very short answers cannot justify a high mark, since they cannot demonstrate a sustained use of own words or completely accurate use of English.

Although the number of marks allocated to this task has been halved compared to previous years, the method of assessment remains unchanged. Furthermore, Examiners were not checking the number of content points in **Question 1(a)** against the number produced in **Question 1(b)**. But if many fewer points were made in **Question 1(b)** than in **Question 1(a)**, this would be reflected in the language mark. Writing

only, for example, six content points would be unlikely to be described as 'sustained' use of own words, whereas, conversely, writing fifteen content points might be sustained use of own words, though not necessarily. However, only those candidates who were competent and confident enough to grapple with the original text, re-shaping and re-casting it in original complex sentences, were able to gain many, or full, marks for style.

Common errors reported were failures of agreement in singular and plural, and misplaced or omitted prepositions. An error often occurred at the beginning of answers, where the introductory words were sometimes followed by 'destroy' or 'are'. Grammatical errors were apt to occur where unfamiliarity with the use of certain words or phrases in the extract led to their clumsy inclusion, e.g. 'they became pests to farmers and extermination programmes is being done against them' and 'palm oil plantations which is used in cosmetics'. Errors of number and agreement were quite common among weaker candidates, e.g. 'palm oil companies is being told', 'national parks is being increased', 'their mother are killed', 'funding organisation encourage people' and 'other organisation plants trees'. Errors of idiom included 'it is planted in large scale' and there were also some problems with verbs, such as 'Orangutans are being kill' or 'are suffer', and 'the land is clearing to planting palm oil'. Unfamiliar words were often miscopied, notably the confusion of 'pests' and 'pets', 'habitat' written as 'habitant' and 'palm' as 'plam'. Punctuation was for the most part reasonably accurate. Another common error was the use of the past tense instead of the present where required. In parts of the world where French is spoken, common confusion between English and French occurred with 'chance' being offered as 'luck', 'envy' for 'wanting to and 'worldly' for 'mundane'.

Question 2 and **Question 3** were the questions testing the new assessment objective in the revised syllabus, Assessment Objective 4, Reading for Ideas, where candidates are being tested on their ability to respond to the ideas of the whole text or a section of it. This section in general was well done. **Question 2** asked candidates to give an example of a concern about our planet, with a suggestion as to how this concern can be dealt with. A range of mature answers was presented. The question favoured those with a genuine personal concern about the environment, who had already given the subject some consideration. Most successful were those who focused on aspects such as global warming, pollution, deforestation or endangered species. Some took their cue from the passage and selected as their 'concern' a particular endangered animal, but did not always sufficiently define the problems they faced, writing simply 'the kestrel' or 'the brown bear'. Solutions were usually better expressed than concerns, although there seemed to be an element of expectation that governments could solve all problems simply by passing laws and strict enforcement.

The first and third statements in **Question 3** were false, and the second statement was true. Statement 1 was false because the text in Paragraph Two referred to 'vicious extermination programmes'. Statement 2 was true because the text in Paragraph Three described attempts to reduce carbon emissions as 'laudable'. Statement 3 was false because the text referred to attempts to conserve orangutans as 'encouraging in Paragraph Six. Around half of candidates scored full marks in this question. All the possible permutations on wrong responses appeared.

Section 2 Reading for Meaning

Question 4(a) asked for the parents' reaction to their son's decision to emigrate and, despite the attempt to make this a relatively straightforward opening question, most candidates found it challenging; a minority gave the correct words like 'concerned', 'sad' or 'worried' and a few picked 'misgivings' but were unsure how to use this unfamiliar word, with expressions like 'they were misgivings'. Most frequently candidates spoilt a reference to 'concern' by adding that 'they reflected it had been the right decision after all', which denied the otherwise correct answer. A few selected, incorrectly, 'he sighed contentedly'.

Question 4(b) was the first of the questions where candidates had to answer in their own words, after first identifying that the advantage of the country was unsurpassed employment opportunities. Acceptable synonyms for 'employment', by far the easier of the two key words to be re-cast, were 'jobs', 'work' or 'careers'. Acceptable synonyms for 'unsurpassed' were 'perfect', 'unrivalled' and 'excellent.' Virtually no candidates were able to express the idea of 'unsurpassed', although an appreciable number were successful with synonyms for 'employment'. Frequently these were qualified by words like 'many', but the full meaning of 'unsurpassed' proved beyond almost everyone. An issue with **Question 4(b)** and **Question 4(c)** was confusion over the fact that the first of these questions referred to the country and the second referred to the location of the apartment. Therefore the need to read the question carefully was highlighted.

The answer to **Question 4(c)** was that there were new cafes and restaurants, or that cafes and restaurants were springing up. Many candidates muddled the context of their answers with reference to inexpensive accommodation or excellent public transport service. Such irrelevance denied an otherwise correct answer.

Very few candidates carefully selected the reference to new restaurants springing up, to the exclusion of all else.

Question 5(a) was a discerning question correctly answered only by a small minority of candidates. Most candidates offered the meaning of 'another', failing to get behind its inference, that Peter and Marian had been to the market many times before, or had done a lot of shopping there. The closest most candidates came was the observation that it was not the first time they had gone to the market; they did not perceive that 'yet' meant more than just 'again'.

Question 5(b) also proved to be a discerning one, where very few candidates scored the mark for inferring the element of possible deception on the part of the stallholder. Only a few candidates referred to fakery or lying. On the contrary, a popular misconception seemed to be that 'claim' lent a *greater* assurance that the object was genuine, rather than the opposite. Some candidates came close to the correct response with the conditional, but incorrect, answer that the stallholder was unsure of how genuine the jade tortoise was. Most candidates felt the *stallholder* was making the difference between 'claiming' and 'saying', rather than these being the *writer's* words, so they failed to grasp the deliberate nature of the stallholder's attempted trickery.

Candidates fared better with **Question 5(c)** with a majority of candidates gaining at least one and frequently both marks. The two aspects of Peter's character were that he loved shopping and that he was inclined to be swept away by sales talk. The most common error was the choice of Marion herself as the agent rather than Peter, as in 'She did not share...etc.' A few referred to the purchase of the warrior and the tortoise as their answers, and a few thought Peter himself engaged in the smooth sales talk.

Question 6(a) was another question for which only a few candidates were able to find the correct answer. The majority selected phrases like 'the figure of a man' or 'no more than three inches high'. An impression was given that some candidates actually thought that the money-lender was a real man, and thus his three-inch height was the mysterious aspect. Because the reference to 'indecipherable inscriptions' occurred four lines beneath the 'somewhat mysterious' quotation of the question, this proved too challenging for most candidates, who clearly expected the answer to be found in the vicinity of the question's quotation. The question thus proved to be a very effective discriminator of those capable of careful and thoughtful reading.

Question 6(b) was rather better answered, with the majority emphasising that the shopkeeper was eager to persuade or convince Peter to buy, or simply to sell the money-lender. A few wrote that he was 'eager to appear out of nowhere'. Other wrong answers were given by those candidates who did not see the necessity to attribute an action to the shopkeeper, as prescribed by the question; therefore 'he wanted Peter to buy something' was incorrect.

In **Question 6(c)**, very few candidates gave the answer that the figure was made of gold or that it was gilded. The favoured answer was that it was made of metal or 'shiny metal', or that his spectacles or money were glittering. Some thought it was seeking to attract customers. Therefore, this proved to be another discerning question.

Question 7(a) asked candidates to find the single word in the paragraph which continued the idea of 'bewitched', the answer being 'spell'. Only a minority of candidates selected 'spell'; there was a wide range of wrong answers, the most popular being 'simultaneously', but also including 'curious', 'attention', 'rebuke', 'reflected', 'cast', 'positioned', 'confused', 'curiosity', 'charge', 'ill-fortune' and 'furrowed'.

In **Question 7(b)** very many candidates scored both available marks for writing that Marian furrowed her brow, or frowned, and that she told, or warned, Peter it was time to go for lunch. A popular wrong answer was to write that she was silent, picked up by the reference to the furrowed brow as being 'a silent rebuke'. But a mere reference to silence was incorrect, as Marian spoke when she told Peter it was time to go for lunch.

Question 7(c) was the second of the questions on the Paper which required candidates to answer in their own words. They were to explain why Peter was persuaded to buy the ornament, focussing on the key words 'fair' and 'ill-fortune', and then re-cast those words into their own. Acceptable synonyms for 'fair' were 'reasonable' 'acceptable', or 'good' and acceptable synonyms for 'ill-fortune' were 'luck' and 'good luck'. Marks were lost through use of 'cheap', 'discount', 'affordable', etc. or for the repetition of part of the key word in 'good-fortune', or for a reference to money, thus losing the focus of 'fortune' in this particular context.

In **Question 8**, candidates were asked to give the way in which Marian indicated that she was still annoyed with Peter, the answer being that she was silent. The majority of candidates answered this correctly, but

some spoilt their answers by placing the emphasis on the short-lived nature of Marion's silence. A sizeable minority picked as their answer reference to Marion's humour or linking her arm with her husband.

Question 9(a) carried two marks and there were three possible options here; any two could be given for one mark each. The most accessible option was the fact that Peter carefully or tenderly positioned the ornament on the shelf; omission of either the care taken, or of reference to the shelf, denied the mark. Most candidates scored the mark for this answer. The second option was to write that Peter was reluctant to drag or take his attention from the ornament when Marian called him. The third option was reference to the fact that Peter adjusted the ornament several times, or that he kept adjusting it; this had to be inferred at 'yet again' and the mere lift of 'yet again' was insufficient to score. Only a few candidates scored full marks here, although there was a great deal of success with the first and easiest option, which could be made by lifting from the text.

On the whole, most candidates inferred the answer to **Question 9(b)** correctly, which was that Peter believed that the ornament had caused Marian to win the prize in the competition. Reference to both the ornament and the prize were required. A few candidates offered the simplistic answer that 'he believed Marion had won the competition'. Some others suggested that he believed the salesman had been right, without this being sufficiently explicit.

Question 10 was the vocabulary question, in which candidates were required to show their understanding in context, not necessarily in direct synonyms, of five words or expressions from a choice of eight. Only the best candidates scored all five marks here. The first five words were attempted more frequently and successfully than the last three.

Most candidates who attempted 'intently' scored the mark for synonyms such as 'carefully' or 'closely'. A reasonable degree of success was gained by candidates who correctly offered 'spreading' or 'drifting' for 'wafting' and 'must' or 'most important' for 'priority'. Candidates scored a mark for writing 'tempting' or 'attractive' for 'tantalising', and for offering 'at the same time' for 'simultaneously'. There was little success with 'plethora', meaning 'great variety' or 'plenty', (with 'variety' (alone) being a popular incorrect answer), and with 'mundane' meaning 'ordinary' or 'boring'. Only a few candidates who chose 'unique' gave the correct synonym 'one of a kind' or 'unmatched'; most offered 'unusual' or 'different' which were both too weak. Because understanding only is being tested in the vocabulary question, grammatical form was not insisted upon. As in previous years, some candidates gave the question word in a sentence rather than trying to explain its meaning, but there were very few cases of this. As ever, there were some candidates who offered two or three synonyms for each word; such candidates must realise that only the first word offered will be credited.