

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/11
Writing

Key messages

- Candidates should ensure they identify the key words in each task so as to satisfy the requirements of the question. This is particularly important in **Section 1**, especially when the word **and**, in bold type, indicates there are two parts to the bullet point.
- Candidates are advised to avoid exceeding the number of words for each response. Candidates should stay within the word limits and check their work thoroughly. Similarly, overlong paragraphs should be avoided.
- Candidates should ensure that tenses are sequential and consistent and that agreement is considered.
- Direct speech helps to improve a narrative but it needs to be accurately punctuated and paragraphed.
- The use of capital letters should have a clear purpose.
- Candidates would do well to be prepared with the skills to be able to write an engaging heading where a magazine article is required in **Section 1**.
- In **Section 1**, candidates should not lift sections of the scenario as an opening paragraph.
- It is not necessary to copy the essay title at the start or to count the number of words at the end of an essay.

General comments

The very best candidates in this exam continue to demonstrate enormous ability. This year there were very few no-responses, with the vast majority of candidates offering sustained responses to the questions in both sections. **Section 1** was done well by the large majority this year. Responses were usually effectively structured, with one paragraph per bullet point. In **Section 2**, the best essays were fluent and accurate, engaging and sustaining the reader's interest throughout. Vocabulary in particular was often a strong point with some impressive words being used, for example *labyrinthine*, *petrichor*, and *cerulean*. Tense and number agreement are the main weaknesses in accuracy for many, with some also confusing the pronouns *his/ her*. Candidates occasionally wrote a draft copy and copied this out, often with only minor corrections which could have been addressed in the initial response. This year, in **Section 2**, all of the titles were attempted, with the narrative titles being the most popular. A larger than usual number of candidates attempted the discursive tasks in this series with some success. Punctuation was also mainly sound, with an improvement in speech punctuation, but sentence separation errors still gave cause for concern with weaker candidates.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 – Directed Writing

In **Section 1**, candidates were asked to imagine that their cousin, a successful former student of their school, had just returned from living abroad. They had to write an article for the school magazine about their cousin's experience. This **purpose** and **situation** proved to be very straightforward for the majority of candidates. A successful answer had to include the following information:

- what their cousin achieved at school
- where their cousin went **and** what their cousin did there
- why their cousin was a role model for other students.

For bullet 1 it was necessary for candidates to give details of what their cousin achieved at school. Most candidates chose to focus on academic or sporting excellence or both. These details often linked effectively into bullet 2 as the successes mentioned led to university entrance, a scholarship or invitation to join a sports team/academy. Listing was a feature of this bullet point for a number of candidates who chose to offer a broad, sometimes unbelievable, raft of successes. Some candidates did too much for this bullet point which affected how much they were able to do for the other points. While the responses to the bullet points do not have to be of equal length, some balance is required.

For bullet point 2 it was necessary for candidates to give **both** where their cousin went and what their cousin did there. The majority of candidates were able to provide suitable details for both of these required elements which were usually conveyed in an enthusiastic and convincing manner. Locations that proved popular were Canada and the UK, with many candidates suggesting that their cousin had moved to these countries for higher education. Other reasons for the move abroad were humanitarian efforts or starting/expanding successful businesses, while a significant number of candidates suggested that their cousin had relocated in order to pursue a sporting career, usually as part of a professional sports team/academy. Some candidates offered logical development of their cousin's initial activity, for example by suggesting that their cousin had completed their degree before going on to secure employment/start a business. Weaker responses offered only a lift of the question saying that their cousin had simply been *abroad*, while others suggested that their cousin had visited another country on holiday, rather than having lived there. In these instances, candidates still provided details of what had been done on the trip which gained credit.

Bullet point 3 required the candidates to detail why their cousin was a role model for other students. A significant number of candidates initially specified why their cousin was a role model to them, with a number of these candidates then omitting to elaborate on why their cousin was a role model for others. Many candidates referred back to the detail they had provided in response to the first bullet point, suggesting that their cousin's work ethic in school and list of achievements made them worthy to be considered a role model. Others suggested that their cousin's achievements while abroad meant that they were a worthy example to others.

Candidates who were clear about the other requirements for Task Fulfilment produced appropriate and convincing magazine articles. The **purpose**, **situation** and **audience** were well within the grasp and experience of the vast majority of candidates. Most candidates coped well with the **format** of this magazine article. They did this by using a suitable headline and often a helpful by-line. A small number of candidates began with a letter format, but these responses were rare. Some candidates divided their response into columns with a few adding pictures, although candidates are not expected to adopt this approach. Overall, the vast majority wrote a suitable amount for **Section 1** and most captured the **tone** and approach very well. **Opinion** and **justification** arose naturally when bullet point 3 was answered.

Linguistically, candidates needed to remember that they were writing for a school magazine, which would be read by someone of similar age and interests. Most candidates produced a convincing piece of work by writing as accurately and naturally as they could. The better candidates were able to balance successfully the need to demonstrate their linguistic ability in an exam and yet ensure that the magazine article was natural enough to sound convincing. Some candidates lost natural fluency by attempting to use overly complex vocabulary, but these responses were rare. Overall, spelling was good, with many candidates able to spell even more complex vocabulary correctly. Many candidates would improve their accuracy by ensuring correct verbs/verb sequences and tenses and taking care with number agreement. Some errors were seen in idiomatic expressions and although these did not disturb communication, it should be remembered that where these expressions are used, they must make sense, be used in the correct context and provide unity and coherence to the piece of writing. There was confusion between the homophones *there* and *their*; *here* and *hear*, *passed* and *past* and *your* and *you're* for a number of candidates. For some candidates, capitalisation was problematic. Some candidates needed to remember that 'I' is always capitalised and should not contain a dot above it. In addition, vocabulary such as *kinda*, *wanna*, *cause* and *gonna*, which are not standard English words, was used by some candidates and it should be remembered that these should only appear in reported speech when colloquialisms are appropriate. Many candidates chose to end their article with a moral, but this was not always relevant.



Section 2 – Creative Writing

Question 2

Describe the neighbourhood around your school. Include what you like most about it and what you like least. (Remember you are describing the atmosphere and any people as well as the place.)

The descriptive title was less popular this year, with relatively few candidates choosing this task. Where it was chosen, candidates often produced ambitious and successful descriptions of the neighbourhood around their school which ranged from a *leafy suburb that is pleasing to the eye*, to a *maze of vegetation*, or a *few isolated homesteads*. Responses focused on details of the natural beauty of the surroundings, such as the *soul-stirring sight of harlequin gardens* as well as the people who populated these areas including the *swarm of businessmen and women in their office attire scurrying to meetings*. There was good use of figurative language, including examples such as *trees stationed in front of the school fence like sentries* and the *flood of foreign insults which wash away your happiness and soak your day in misery*. Olfactory imagery was used to effectively convey atmosphere from the sweet scent of the *decadent and undeniably scrumptious confectioners* to the less appealing *choking, smothering fumes* of passing traffic. Contrast was often used to good effect with candidates focusing on the difference in the neighbourhood before and after the school bell, or the change between day and night and linking these temporal shifts to what they liked most and least about the area. The writing of some candidates here was impressive, with a wide range of ambitious vocabulary being used to successfully convey an impression of the area.

Weaker responses to this question tended to rely on the repetition of more basic vocabulary such as *beautiful, quiet, loud* and *busy* with some focussing not just on the neighbourhood surrounding the school, but inside the school itself. As in previous years, another weakness seen here with some responses was where candidates described the neighbourhood only briefly as a preface to a more narrative-based approach.

Question 3

Do you think it is better to be the only child in a family or is it better to have brothers and sisters? Give reasons and examples to support your view.

This title was slightly more popular than argument questions in previous years, with responses seen for both sides of the argument. Candidates generally approached this question logically, offering their personal opinion, supporting this with anecdotal evidence, before considering the opposing view and concluding by restating their own position. Appropriate connectives to present argument and counter argument in a coherent whole were used in some responses. Reasons for considering it better to have brothers and sisters included having people to share chores with, having someone non-judgmental to turn to in times of difficulty and being able to support one another in the care of aging parents. In opposition to this, many candidates asserted that being an only child was preferable due to being the sole recipient of parental affections and material resources. As in previous years, it was clear that some candidates had not planned their response before beginning to write and found they did not have enough material to produce a sustained response. In these cases, responses were repetitive, usually rephrasing a single idea and showing little development.

Question 4

'Going to university is the best way to get a good job.' Do you agree? Give reasons and examples to support your view.

This argument essay was not a very popular choice and again it was clear that some candidates had selected this question without carefully considering if they had enough material for a sustained response. There was a balance among candidates who chose this question between those who were in favour of a university education as a route to a good job and those who felt that a more entrepreneurial or experience-based route was more likely to lead to success. It was clear that the financial implications of pursuing a university education were considered a major disadvantage by many candidates. While candidates could often see the value in attending university to gain employment in specific fields, such as medicine, teaching or law, they considered that many jobs were accessible without attaining a degree and that, in fact, employers would be more likely to value 'real world' skills developed through entrepreneurial endeavors or through having moved straight from school into employment. A small number of candidates considered the value of the transferable skills that a university education would help to foster, such as communication, time management, organization and confidence, while others considered the benefits to employability of having in-depth knowledge in a particular subject.

Question 5

Write a story which includes the sentence: ‘When he answered my question, I knew what I had to do next.’

Along with **Question 6**, this was a popular choice with candidates who chose to respond to this question producing a wide range of interesting and original narratives across a range of genres including mystery, fantasy, romance and adventure. The range of topics tackled reflected all teenage concerns, such as romance and social success, while there was a clear interest in horror stories and thrillers. Many of the responses seen focused on family scenarios with long held parental secrets being revealed to suspicious children, or extra-marital affairs being discovered. Other scenarios included elaborate criminal operations and even an exam cheat whose friend felt morally obliged to inform the Principal of his wrongdoing. There were a number of scripts where the mandatory sentence was not included, or where it was placed at the start or end of the narrative with seemingly no connection to the rest of the response. Candidates should remember that the sentence that needs to be included should be incorporated convincingly. Some candidates were able to do this in a highly successful manner, making the given sentence pivotal to their story, while in other responses it was simply quietly inserted. There were a number of candidates who underlined the given sentence or placed it in inverted commas however this is unnecessary (unless, in the case of inverted commas, it is part of direct speech). It is, on the other hand, important that the given sentence remains in its original wording meaning that candidates need to plan for, and maintain, the tense and gender.

Question 6

Write a story in which running plays an important part.

This was a popular choice, with the question giving rise to many lively and engaging narratives featuring a broad range of scenarios. Many candidates chose to write about an athletic event, carefully building tension as their character approached an important race. These narratives often featured a difficulty mid-race which their character would invariably overcome at the last moment to secure victory. Other scenarios included evading the pursuit of a wild animal and attempting to escape from those with criminal intent. A number of candidates wrote about kidnapping or imprisonment and, in some cases, these narratives incorporated running at the last minute having devoted much time to conveying the detail of their character’s captivity. Candidates should ensure that where the question specifies that the chosen subject should play an ‘important part’ that this is the main focus of the response.



ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/12
Writing

Key messages

- Candidates should ensure they identify the key words in each task in order to satisfy the requirements of the question. This is particularly important in **Section 1**, especially when the word **and**, in bold type, indicates there are two parts to the bullet point.
- Candidates are advised not to exceed the maximum number of words in **Section 2**. Doing so rarely improves the writing.
- Candidates should ensure that tenses are consistent.
- The inclusion of extreme violence and/or sexual content is not appropriate.
- In **Section 1**, candidates should not lift sections of the scenario as an opening paragraph.
- Careless handwriting can often make full stops look like commas and suggest a lack of proper sentence separation.

General comments

In a year which saw a global pandemic, centres must be congratulated on preparing candidates for this examination. Similarly, candidates are to be admired for completing the examination with no obvious change in the quality of the work. There were very few short or irrelevant responses and the very best candidates in this exam continue to demonstrate great fluency and accuracy. Vocabulary continues to be very impressive, with a better use of connectives such as *Hence, Moreover and Furthermore* this year. Tenses and agreement are the main weaknesses in accuracy for many. **Section 1** was done well by a large majority with responses being well structured. Some candidates need to be clear about the text type required as it will not be a letter every year. In **Section 2**, the argument essay was more popular this year but these essays should only be attempted by candidates who can argue in detail. Sentence separation errors still give cause for concern with weaker candidates, as does the use of text speak.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 – Directed Writing

In **Section 1**, at the request of the Principal, candidates had to write a magazine article about making their school more environmentally friendly. This **purpose** and **situation** proved to be straightforward for the majority of candidates. A successful answer had to include the following information:

- what the school already did to help the environment;
- details of the candidate's idea **and** how other students could help;
- how the whole school would benefit from the idea.

There were several different approaches adopted by candidates to the idea of being *environmentally friendly*. Most spoke about how the school did and could remain *green* and *eco-friendly*. Others spoke about making the physical environment of the school *friendly* in the sense of *pleasant*. Third, some candidates referred to the environment of the school in a non-physical way and spoke about the school having anti-bullying and other policies to ensure that the school was an *emotionally* friendly environment. It must be stressed that all three interpretations, or indeed a mixture of them, were valid and all three allowed the candidates to complete the task fully and successfully.



For bullet point 1, it was necessary to outline the successful ways in which the school had already been made environmentally friendly. Most candidates were clear that their schools had provided litter bins, cut down on the use of paper, painted their surroundings and implemented some policies aimed at producing greater co-operation between staff and students. Much was made by many candidates of the *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle* policy already seen in many schools.

Where candidates failed to gain full credit for this bullet point it was because they failed to give specific examples and simply relied on saying that the school had always done its best to protect the environment.

For bullet point 2, candidates had to suggest a new idea that would build on what was already being done by the school and say how fellow students could be involved. This could be a completely new idea or something which extended an existing idea. Candidates were keen to target the use of plastic within the school, usually in the form of canteen cutlery. There were schemes, such as pupils bringing their own metal cutlery or providing their own lunch boxes to reduce the use of plastic. Other schemes involved clearing beaches of plastic, installing recycling bins dedicated to different kinds of waste, refurbishing the school premises to make them more people friendly and adopting policies which would bring staff and pupils closer together. Many candidates suggested planting trees and flowers in the school grounds, doing deep cleans of the school, and cycling to school to cut down on pollution. Some of the ideas were extremely ambitious and often involved solar panels. Most candidates performed well on the Task Fulfilment criteria with respect to bullet point 2 because they did both parts of the bullet point; students were asked to help with planting, cleaning, fundraising and making relevant posters.

A number of candidates made this paragraph too long and jeopardised their chances in subsequent bullet points; some candidates merely listed far too many ideas and would have been better off supplying greater detail for fewer ideas.

Weaker candidates found it difficult to suggest anything new and fell back on repeating what had been said in bullet point 1, but with a little more detail so that they recommended *more bins* and so on. There was also a tendency amongst weaker candidates to turn this bullet, as well as bullet point 1, into an overlong narrative, typically one involving cleaning local beaches and tourist sites.

Bullet point 3 required the candidates to say exactly how the school would benefit from the new idea, not how it already benefited from the existing situation. It had to be the school which benefited but, in this context, *school* could mean the school itself or the staff and students. The most successful candidates were able to see many school benefits and link them to the wider picture. So, the increased recycling in the school helped the world in general and some could see the possibility of selling the recycled waste to add to the school's finances. Further benefits included a more conducive environment for study, happier students and greater co-operation with staff. Most candidates saw their school benefiting from an enhanced reputation which in turn would lead to greater recruitment of staff and students.

The weakest candidates said little that was specific and relied on expressions such as *if these ideas are implemented, then the school and students will benefit* but they never quite said how. Some, unfortunately, neglected to mention that the school itself benefited at all but concentrated simply on the general benefits for the wider environment.

Balance is required in selecting material for Task Fulfilment and it usually pays to keep the bullet points fairly equal in length. Also, it does not help to add overlong introductory and concluding paragraphs. In the case of this question, a number of candidates used overlong introductory paragraphs about the state of pollution in the world, whereas the emphasis in the task as a whole should have been on the school.

Candidates who were clear about the other requirements for Task Fulfilment produced appropriate and convincing magazine articles. The *purpose, situation* and *audience* were well within the grasp and experience of the vast majority of candidates, although direct addresses to fellow students could have helped a lot in making the audience even more clear. The *tone* in the articles was generally appropriate. *Opinion* and *justification* arose naturally when bullet points 2 and 3 were answered. If there was a general weakness in Task Fulfilment this year, it was that relatively few candidates coped very well with the *format* of a magazine article. Most candidates did include a magazine article title. These ranged from the appropriate and snappy *Go Green* to merely copying part of the rubric. There were some minor attempts to include a sense of speaking to their peers with the use of question and exclamation sentences when they asked for help – *Come on, school! We've got this!* – but, in truth, the majority of the responses could just as easily have been textbooks or letters. In fact, a number of candidates did write the article as a letter with a letter format.

Linguistically, candidates needed to remember that they were speaking to a school-based audience. Better candidates were able to sound convincing and employed a mix of formal and informal expression, without descending to slang or text speak. Candidates demonstrated their knowledge of this topic with words such as *campaign*, *biodegradable*, and *initiative* being used regularly. Overall, spelling was satisfactory, although a very common error here was to misspell *environment*, even though it was in the question. Many candidates could improve their accuracy by using capital letters properly, ensuring correct verbs and tenses and avoiding omitting articles.

Section 2 – Composition

Question 2

Describe what the place where you live is like in the early morning and in the early evening. (Remember you are describing the atmosphere, the activities and any people as well as the place.)

The descriptive title this year was more popular than in previous years, and was attempted by a wider range of candidates than is normally the case. A description of their area was something most could write about in some detail. Most candidates were also helped by structuring their responses in two contrasting halves, speaking both about morning and evening. There were also some interesting and unusual approaches: one candidate wrote from the perspective of a cat. While most wrote about their outdoor surroundings, many recreated the world inside their houses. The very best responses employed the full range of senses to give accounts of their surroundings and were better this year at creating the atmosphere of the place they knew very well. One candidate wrote about the sun *melting into the sky as the darkness of the evening overpowers the sun*. Some very powerful images were employed to good effect – children going to school *like a group of white doves*. Another mentioned *the tinkling of the cat's collar* while yet another spoke of a family argument from the morning disappearing by the evening *like sweat evaporating from skin*. Vocabulary was often very impressive.

Less able candidates relied too much on narrative, turning the title into a story, while others used rather general or clichéd language, such as *birds chirping* and *the sun's rays blazing*. It never helps merely to list aspects of the location rather than describe them and on repeating the words *beautiful*, *happy*, *colourful*, *amazing* and *environment*. The control of tenses was often a weakness in this composition. The present tense was used well by most but others fell into and out of the past tense, seemingly without reason.

Question 3

'In the future, schools will not exist and all education will be done online at home.' Would this be a good thing? Give reasons and examples to support your view.

This title was a popular one. The question was made all the more relevant by the events of 2020 and candidates having had a great deal of experience of online learning. It had an initial attraction for most because candidates enjoyed the chance to get up later, dress more casually and not have to face the difficulty of travel to school. There were also attractions in being able to look up information quickly on the internet to help with studies. However, the vast majority of candidates preferred the idea of face to face education in schools because most believed that school was about socialization as well as academic work. Furthermore, some candidates missed the sporting facilities at school and the chance to spend time with friends and be outdoors. Also, the more time candidates spent at home, the more they saw the negative side of online learning at home. They became aware of the cost of technology and the internet, something not everyone could afford. They saw the possibility of abusing the system and the dangers of laziness and falling standards when they were not closely supervised. Many complained of distractions caused by younger siblings and one candidate even complained of being asked to do more chores when at home. Stronger responses had a clear structure, contrasting both sides of the argument, while weaker ones were disorganized and somewhat rambling and repetitive.

Question 4

'People are influenced more by their friends than by their families.' Do you think this is true? Give reasons and examples to support your view.

This argument essay was not a very popular choice and was answered by relatively few candidates. The great majority of those who did tackle this question were clear that friends were far more influential than families. They were adamant that, as teenagers, they spent far more time now with friends than they did with their families and so this was inevitable. The most often quoted example was that when choosing clothes to

buy, they would always ask friends rather than family. As always, candidates who choose the argument essay should ensure they have enough to say. There were a few impressive and mature arguments made by candidates who saw that friends can also be a bad influence as well as an influence for good. One particularly mature response argued that the influence of family was always stronger because it had been so fundamental in unacknowledged ways and had in fact led to the choice of friends in the teenage years.

Question 5

Write a story which includes the sentence: 'It was easy to see why everyone wanted to meet him.'

This was the most popular choice in **Section 2**. This was an accessible sentence to use and many candidates clearly enjoyed this topic. Almost all candidates found the given sentence was very easy to integrate convincingly into the narrative without changing the wording. The great strength of the writing responses to this question was the sensible structure employed by most. The centre of attraction was usually a well-known celebrity or sportsperson and most of the responses followed a similar pattern of the celebrity or sportsperson always having been a favourite of the writer. They were then praised for their talent and personality and quite by chance eventually met the writer in happy circumstances, usually at a concert or a game, where the writer managed to get an autograph or some other souvenir. In other responses, the story involved a handsome or beautiful new student in the school; the new student often became the boyfriend or girlfriend of the writer after initially seeming to favour others. Most of these stories were optimistic in outlook and led to some strong characterisation through the use of convincing dialogue. Used sparingly, and properly punctuated, speech can be highly effective. Some candidates overused the dialogue which prevented them from showing a full range of vocabulary.

Not all of the stories ended well. Some of the characters were a great disappointment when met in person. Some narrators felt overwhelmed in the company of the central character – *there were more people in the living room than at a zoo*. Whether the story turned out well or not, a straightforward narrative was sometimes lifted by an insight on the part of the narrator and by excellent vocabulary, as in one clever, witty and compassionate story of a *youthful, carefree and a perfect student persona* who as well as being rich and privileged was depressed and insecure – *Everyone met ..., but I was the first to meet his true self, while everyone else was absorbed in their narcissistic selves*.

There were a few examples in these responses of either unnecessary aggression or detailed sexual content and it is worth emphasising that neither is appropriate.

Question 6

Write a story about a person with a hidden talent.

This was another popular choice. Most of the stories were *rags to riches* narratives and there were many intriguing hidden talents. One typical story involved the *bad boy* of the class who *would rather be having a nap or watching people fighting on his phone* but who discovered he could sing beautifully. Another typical storyline involved the *real loner and introvert*, who *loathed* talking to anyone but was entered by his classmates for a public speaking contest as a joke. Up on stage, after having *escaped all the practices*, all his shyness disappeared and he delivered his speech *nonchalantly* as if it had been rehearsed. Another vivid story was about a very shy boy who learned to play the piano and who stunned his audiences, winning numerous awards – *His hidden talent took him far beyond his expectations*. This was among a number of pieces about underdogs, which seemed to be a thread running through many stories.

Weaker responses included routine, predictable stories, often characterised by a lack of variation in sentence types and simple vocabulary. The best responses contained sentence types and length of great variety with excellent vocabulary and punctuation. Paragraphing which helps the reader was also a characteristic of the better work.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/21
Reading

Key messages

- Candidates are advised to read both the texts and the questions very carefully to ensure the material is fully understood. Each question directs them to the paragraph or area of the text where they will find the relevant material to base their answer.
- Candidates might be encouraged to underline or highlight key words in the question, e.g. **Question 4(a)** 'What was the most surprising effect...?', or in **Question 5** 'Give two reasons...'. This will ensure the answers are focused.
- Candidates are advised for **Question 1(a)** and **Question 1(b)** to focus on identifying, specifically, the main overarching points from the text without the unnecessary inclusion of examples, repetition and extensions of those points. The inclusion of such irrelevant details in **Question 1(a)** was often transferred to **Question 1(b)** affecting the quality of the response here.
- Candidates do not have to use their own words in **Question 1(a)**; however, they ought to be aware that when substituting a word or phrase, it must be appropriate. While candidates need to be encouraged to write succinctly and avoid copying lengthy sentences, they must also be aware that brevity can exclude key information.
- In **Question 1(b)**, the focus is on clear expression; this will ensure a well-organised piece of writing that is easy to follow. Candidates should use the question to help structure the response in two halves: the ways sport has developed since ancient times, and the benefits of sport in the present day. The wording of the question encourages a chronological structure.
- Candidates are encouraged to write to the recommended length in **Question 1(b)**; overlong or short responses were self-penalising since they could not satisfactorily fulfil the criteria for Relevance or Coherence.
- For **Question 1(b)**, candidates have clearly been taught the importance of linking devices to establish coherence; it is essential that these are appropriate, and also that they are used selectively. Words and phrases which are not standard English, such as 'more so' and 'to add on', are best avoided. Many candidates would benefit from further practice using these devices in their summaries.
- Candidates should be aware that accurate punctuation in **Question 1(b)** can assist in the fluent and coherent presentation of content points.
- Responses to **Question 2** demonstrated an ability among many candidates to distinguish between factual and non-factual statements, such as opinions, in the non-fiction passage. Candidates should understand that opinion might well form only a part of the sentence and should be offered without the inclusion of additional information which might turn it into a statement. Candidates are reminded that **Question 2** relates to Passage 1, not Passage 2.
- In the multiple-choice vocabulary question, candidates should be encouraged to try out each of the possible words and decide which is the most appropriate in the passage with which they are dealing.
- In responding to the final question on the writer's craft, understanding of both literal and inferential writing is required. It was not always evident that candidates could distinguish between *meaning* and *effect*. Further practice on the approach to these questions would be beneficial. Candidates are advised to provide a straightforward literal meaning under 'Meaning' and for 'Effect' to comment on the impact of particular words or an image.

General comments

The majority of candidates attempted every question with the occasional omission of **Question 8(c)**. All candidates seemed to engage with the texts and the tasks and the majority seemed to find both passages accessible.

Responses were, for the most part, clearly written. A few candidates who wrote to excess – in **Question 1(a)** particularly – found themselves writing at the side or at the bottom of the page which can cause illegibility and this should be avoided. If the response needs to continue on additional pages, candidates should ensure that they identify the original question number, part and, if appropriate, the section which is being continued. This is particularly important for **Question 1(a)**.

In **Question 1(a)**, there were only a few instances of candidates putting information in the wrong section. In **Question 2**, a small number of candidates referred to the fiction passage.

Candidates were asked to answer questions on two passages: the first entitled 'Sport' and the second entitled 'Michele'. The first non-fiction passage explored the candidates' ability to read for ideas and the second fiction passage tested their reading for meaning. 22 marks were available for summary **Question 1**, with 12 of these marks being awarded for the assessment of the candidates' ability to select content points from the passage, 'Sport'. 10 marks were awarded for the assessment of their ability to express these points in a piece of writing which was relevant, well-organised and easy to follow. Almost all candidates wrote to the required length in **Question 1(b)**.

In **Question 1(a)**, the majority of candidates wisely adhered to the suggestion in the rubric that they might find it useful to use bullet points for their notes. Candidates generally scored well in this question with many marks of 8 or over and with a few reaching the full 12. These candidates avoided repetition, unnecessary examples and additional information.

A further question, **Question 2**, allotted 3 marks to the testing of the candidates' ability to read for ideas, in this case to distinguish fact from opinion in three different paragraphs of the text.

The second passage, 'Michele', tested the candidates' literal and inferential comprehension, their understanding of vocabulary, their ability to select appropriate quotations, their use of own words and their appreciation of the writer's craft. The remaining 25 marks for the Paper could be gained here.

Comments on specific questions:

Section 1

Question 1(a) was the first part of the summary question, carrying 12 marks. Candidates were asked to identify and write down the ways in which sport has developed since ancient times, and the benefits of sport in the present day, as outlined in the passage. The summary was to be based on the whole text, and 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 given points, there were 15 content points. The best responses were expressed concisely using the suggested bullet points. These responses avoided anything that was merely an example, repetition or extension of the main point while ensuring that words essential to making that point were included.

Less successful candidates offered irrelevant material, notably the inclusion of examples and repetition. Examples of such are given in dealing with the individual points below.

Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 described the development of sport since ancient times and, apart from the first given point, there were 7 content points which the candidates could make.

Paragraph 1 contained one content point that sport developed from the desire for competition. Reference to ancient art or rock and cave paintings was acceptable, but reference to a specific country, date or an individual sport, such as swimming and archery contests in Libya 8000 years ago, did not score since these are examples and would need to be presented as such with 'for example'. It was noticeable that many candidates did not include this point and their immediate focus was the second paragraph.

Paragraph 2 contained four content points. The first of these was that sport was formalised into tournaments. Several candidates included the acceptable but unnecessary extension about the Olympic Games and the god Zeus. However, many candidates gave '*devised as a religious festival to honour the god, Zeus*' as a separate point; this could not be credited since it was a reference specifically to the Olympic Games rather than sport in general. The second content point in this paragraph was that the best sportsmen were chosen for the military with most candidates including the necessary comparative '*best*'. The next two content points introduced the idea of widening participation, first with the creation of training areas. Substitution of '*areas*' with '*grounds*' or '*centres*' was acceptable, but it was essential that candidates indicate the training areas were '*created*' or offered an opportunity to play sport and that they did not simply write '*training areas*'. Some candidates were distracted by the unnecessary detail about sport being confined to the elite and wealthy, information which was not relevant to the question asked. The second point about widening participation was that sport became available to all or was an inexpensive pastime. The omission of '*all*', and the alternatives '*rich and poor*' or '*everyone*', made the point incomplete. Some candidates gave an example of sport as an '*inexpensive pastime*' as a separate incorrect point, referring to ball games in the park or on the beach.

In Paragraph 3, there were two content points. The first of these identified the emergence of professional sport or professional players. Alternatively, candidates could also score with investment in players. To focus solely on records being smashed was insufficient. Occasionally, this point was given in the next section, possibly since professional sport is something candidates are familiar with in the present day, but it could not be considered a benefit.

The final point in this section was the idea that sporting events have gone global or that there are more spectators than ever before. Own word substitutions for '*global*' – worldwide, international and viral – were also acceptable. The comparative adjective '*more*' was essential to indicate an increased number of spectators. Occasionally candidates were distracted by the reference to technology and television, focusing on convenience rather than growing popularity, e.g. *sporting events can be televised and viewed from home*.

The second section of the rubric asked for the benefits of sport in the present day. The remaining eight content points were in Paragraphs 4, 5 and 6. This excluded the given content point in Paragraph 4.

In Paragraph 4, there were two content points which were about physical health. The first point was that sport helps people to maintain a healthy weight or to lose weight. *Sport burns up calories* was also acceptable. This content point was often concisely and correctly made though occasionally candidates provided more than one of these answers as separate points. A few candidates gave examples of the number of calories that are burned when playing cricket or golf which by themselves could not be credited. There was less success with the following point in Paragraph 4. This content point focused on the fact that sport provides health benefits or the elaboration that sport reduces the chance or risk of developing illnesses or diseases. Many candidates offered the lift of lines 31–32, either as a single point or separated into two or more points about heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cholesterol, all of which were examples so were not creditworthy. Candidates could only score if these were presented as examples of health benefits and preceded by '*such as*' or '*including*', e.g. *reduced the risk of illnesses including diabetes*.

The two content points in Paragraph 5 both focused on endorphins. The first point to be made was to identify endorphins. This could be done simply with the single word '*endorphins*' or alternatively with an explanation of the hormone. Most candidates offered the former while the latter required reference to chemicals '*in the brain*' which triggered a positive feeling '*in the body*', details some candidates missed. These details were necessary to distinguish the explanation from the second point in the paragraph which focused on the mental impact of endorphins: a more positive outlook on life, a boost in mood and lower rates of depression. Only one of these effects of endorphins needed to be identified; some candidates gave two or three.

In Paragraph 6 it was possible to find four more content points. The first was the idea that team work or team sport fosters selflessness and most candidates included the essential reference to '*team*'. The next benefit was that through participation in sport we learn to lose or we are taught to accept defeat. The teaching or learning idea was necessary for a point to be creditworthy. Clarity of expression and careful lifting from the text was crucial here since a few candidates incorrectly offered '*we are given the opportunity to lose*' as a benefit. The third point in this paragraph was that sport teaches respect for authority or for the decisions of referees, umpires and coaches. Where candidates failed to make this point fully, it tended to be because

they omitted reference to authority or the decisions of referees, umpires and coaches, or they provided an unsuccessful own word alternative, e.g. *learn to respect other people*. The final content point was the benefit of achieving one's personal best or the sense of personal achievement. Candidates found this relatively straightforward though for those who had included irrelevance and examples for earlier points, there was often no space left for the inclusion of this point.

In **Question 1(b)**, candidates were asked to use their notes to write a summary of the ways in which sport has developed since ancient times, and the benefits of sport in the present day as outlined in the passage. They were advised to write between 150–180 words (the first ten of which were given) in a piece of continuous writing which was to be relevant, well-organised and easy to follow. Very few answers were shorter than the recommended length though a few were noticeably longer, extending on to an additional page.

The most commendable efforts were from candidates who expanded the relevant notes made in **Question 1(a)**, synthesising the material without repetition, examples or the over-use of unnecessary supporting detail. Although the use of own words is not compulsory, those who did use them, together with some of their own constructions to link the main ideas, created a fluency which was easy to follow. The best responses demonstrated an impressive coherence using a range of skilful and accurate linking devices including the effective use of punctuation and adverbial connectives. Weaker candidates relied on the repetitive use of 'and' or 'also' to link content and it was common for adverbial connectives, such as 'furthermore', 'nevertheless' or 'however', to be used either repetitively or incorrectly, often seeming to be placed at random at the beginning of a new sentence. 'On the other hand' and 'however' were regularly incorrectly used to move from the development of sport to the present day benefits. The quality of coherence was occasionally impacted by awkward attempts to link with phrases such as 'pursuing this further', 'in a nutshell' or 'adding on'. Some candidates made no attempt to link the content, and the result was a succession of simple or compound sentences which read rather like a list.

Many candidates who scored highly in **Question 1(a)** were able to transform their notes into a relevant summary. The best responses included only what was relevant and excluded unnecessary examples and additional details. These responses were balanced, giving equal consideration to both parts of the question. Several candidates scored more highly on identifying the benefits in **Question 1(a)**, while the first half of the summary often included irrelevant material. This was also evident among responses which relied on copying chunks of the text and which therefore included a lot of irrelevance about wrestling and swimming contests and ball games across the world. Nearly all candidates moved succinctly from discussing the developments of sport to the present day benefits.

In **Question 2**, which continued to test Reading for Ideas, candidates were required to identify an opinion from each of Paragraphs 1, 3 and 4. The key to answering this question is to identify words and phrases which are subjective rather than objective.

The opinion found in Paragraph 1 that '*there are beautiful rock paintings in Libya*' was frequently identified. This was recognised as a subjective description which not everyone might agree with. Some candidates incorrectly offered '*sport began to evolve from the desire for competition*', not recognising that this is a fact, supported by the evidence of ancient art.

Although the opinion found in Paragraph 3 that '*We all love watching spectator sport*' was identified by many candidates who realised that not everyone would agree with this claim, several candidates extended the quotation with a fact, '*but that doesn't keep you fit!*' meaning this answer was not creditworthy.

There was reasonable success with identifying the opinion found in Paragraph 4 that '*our greatest gift is our health*'; this opinion could be identified by the superlative adjective '*greatest*'. Some candidates were distracted by the use of '*unsurprisingly*' in '*sitting watching television, unsurprisingly, burns up virtually no calories at all*', a claim which is, in fact, true.

Several candidates scored two or three marks for this question though there are still some candidates who have an insecure understanding of the difference between fact and opinion and scored zero.

Instead of locating opinions in the paragraphs, some candidates provided a summary of each paragraph, e.g. Paragraph 3: *the writer discusses how sport has become global, or their opinions about the text*, e.g. Paragraph 4: *I agree that we should do more exercise*.

Section 2

Question 3(a) was a straightforward literal comprehension question, intended to ease the candidates into this second section. Candidates were asked why the wheat was particularly high that year. Almost every response picked out that *'it had rained a lot'* with very few omitting the necessary *'a lot'*. Lifting lines 1–2 *'In April it had rained a lot, and by mid-June the stalks were taller and more luxuriant than ever'* was an acceptable response.

Question 3(b) was an inferential question which asked why the writer had no idea how hot it was. Many candidates appreciated that the writer's age was the key factor here, but to simply state that it was *'because of his age'* or *'degrees centigrade did not mean much to him at that age'* was incorrect unless they clearly identified that he was *'nine'*, *'young'* or *'a child'*, information given earlier in the first line. It was acceptable to just state that *'the writer was young'* or, alternatively, to explain that *'he was too young to understand degrees centigrade'* or temperature measurement. It was, however, incorrect to state that *'the writer was too young to know it was hot'*.

Question 4(a) was a literal comprehension question which asked candidates to identify the most surprising effect of the hot weather. The wording here clearly identified that a single effect was required so candidates who stated that *'it crumbled the earth and killed the cattle'* were not awarded the mark. However, most candidates did provide a single correct answer that *'it killed the cattle'*, *'the heat took away your breath'* or *'the heat took away your strength'*.

In **Question 4(b)** candidates were asked why the countryside was deserted. Some candidates correctly stated that *'the adults stayed indoors'* or *'adults did not go out until the evening'*. It was incorrect to write *'everyone'* or *'people'* since this did not distinguish between the children who went out and the adults who stayed inside. Responses which just repeated the general idea that it was too hot or it was the hottest summer of the century could not be credited.

Question 5, a literal comprehension question, asked for two reasons why the writer was at a standstill and this was answered fairly well with more success with the first reason: *'his sister had fallen off her bicycle'*. There was less success with the second reason since several responses focused on the writer hearing his mother's voice in his head, lifting *'Are you or are you not her older brother?'* Candidates had to read on to recognise that it was the indecision he was facing – *'whether or not to go back to look after her'* – that was the reason why he was at a standstill.

Question 6(a) was the first of the questions on the Paper which required candidates to answer in their own words. They were to explain in their own words what the writer's sister did when she *'exploded into a wail'*. The key words *'exploded'* and *'wail'* were easily identifiable and generally this was well answered, often concisely: *'she burst into tears'*; *'she was crying loudly'*; *'she suddenly howled'*. It was essential for candidates not to stray too far from the key words so *'yell'*, *'complain'* or *'shout'* were not creditworthy explanations of *'wail'*. Occasionally candidates misinterpreted the question as *'why did the sister explode into a wail?'*, going on to answer the following question, **Question 6(b)**. A small number of candidates offered mere synonyms of the key words without any context. The exercise is not a simple vocabulary test.

Question 6(b) was another literal comprehension question and it was very well answered with many candidates scoring two marks. Candidates were asked to give two reasons why the writer's sister was unhappy. The first reason was that *'her glasses were broken'*. The inclusion of additional information that *'it was the third time she had broken her glasses since school had finished for the holidays'* was acceptable. The second reason was that *'her ankle was sore'*. A very small minority selected the detail from the opening of the paragraph that *'she was rubbing her ankle'* but this was an insufficient explanation for her unhappiness.

Question 7 was another very well answered question which asked how the writer knew that he and his sister were approaching the top of the hill. Almost every response said that *'the writer saw the sky'* or *'he saw a slice of sky'*. Although the additional reference to *'wheat'* was acceptable, a small minority of candidates, who having identified the sky and then gone on to mention the *'abandoned house'*, blurred their answer and could not be credited.

Question 8(a) was the second question requiring candidates to answer in their own words and this proved to be much more challenging and few candidates scored two marks. Candidates were asked to explain what the writer was doing when he said *'I was feigning a courage I did not feel'*. The key words were *'feigning'* and *'courage'*. Correct answers included *'he was pretending to be brave'* or *'he was acting tough'*. Candidates had more success in recasting *'courage'* with a range of alternatives including *'boldness'*, *'strength'* and

'*fearlessness*'. Incorrect responses were those which seemed to think that courage meant '*confidence*', '*determination*' or '*motivation*'.

'*Feigning*' was possibly quite an unfamiliar word but a few candidates demonstrated an ability to infer that it meant that the writer was '*acting*', '*faking*' or '*trying to appear*' brave in front of his friends. Many candidates incorrectly interpreted '*feigning*' as if the writer was trying to '*build up*', '*muster*' or '*look for*' bravery which lacked the idea of pretence or acting. While '*he tried to seem brave but did not feel it*' scored two marks for '*tried to seem*' ('*feigning*') and '*bravery*' ('*courage*'), candidates who wrote '*he seemed to be brave but he did not feel it*' only scored one mark for '*brave*'. This was because the answer for '*feigning*' here relied on '*he did not feel*' which is copied text so was not creditworthy. Candidates who reworked '*he did not feel*' such as in '*he seemed brave but he was not really*' could score two marks.

Other candidates did not always recognise this was an own words question and rather than focusing on the key words, looked for evidence of courage, writing about the writer '*working his way to the balcony*' or having to '*jump out of the window*'. As with **Question 6(a)**, synonyms without any context, such as the example below, could not be credited:

feigning – *pretending*
courage – *boldness*.

Question 8(b) asked for two pieces of evidence showing the house was abandoned and the question clearly specified that the evidence was to be found in the first room in the house. The first answer was that '*there were pigeons living it*' or '*a flock of pigeons took off with birds*' being an acceptable substitute for '*pigeons*'. To merely write '*a flock of pigeons*' was insufficient. The second piece of evidence was that '*plants grew through the floor*' with some candidates scoring by lifting lines 38–39, '*I had to struggle through a forest of wild plants which had sprung up through the tiled floor.*' While there were several candidates who scored one or two marks, there were a number who failed to score. This was primarily because candidates ignored the first part of the question and gave incorrect evidence from elsewhere in the house, notably in the second room where '*the floor had completely collapsed*' and '*bits of masonry and tiles fell down.*'

In **Question 8(c)** candidates were to pick out a single word used in Paragraph 6 which conveyed the same meaning as '*I tried to work my way*', the answer being '*manoeuvre*'. Several candidates gave the correct answer. Common incorrect answers were '*struggle*' and '*crawl*' which lacked the careful movement suggested by '*to work my way*'. Almost all candidates adhered to the instruction '*Give the single word*'.

Question 9 tested the understanding, in context, of words in the passage. The multiple-choice format allowed for candidates to take each of the four possible alternatives for the given word back to the passage and decide which was the most appropriate synonym for the original. Several candidates scored all five marks with many scoring three or four marks.

The most successful attempt was **Question 9(e)** with '*remembered*' being recognised as the closest meaning to '*recalled*' by nearly every candidate. Less successful were **Question 9(a)** where the word '*heavily*' was often incorrectly chosen for '*densely*', and **Question 9(d)** where many candidates incorrectly chose '*old*'. The more discerning candidates realised that in the context of the passage, '*broken*' was the more appropriate adjective to describe a '*ramshackle*' roof of an abandoned house. Similarly, for **Question 9(b)** the better candidates selected '*hot*' as a synonym for the figurative '*fiery*', realising that the countryside was not literally '*burning*'. Many candidates chose '*trick*' for '*ruse*' as the correct answer for **Question 9(c)**, assisted by the word '*fooled*' in the same sentence.

Question 10 was the section dedicated to the appreciation of the writer's craft and nearly all candidates tackled this more challenging question. In both **Question 10(a)** and **Question 10(b)**, candidates were asked to give, first, the meaning of a sentence as used in the passage, and then to give the effect of that sentence. As mentioned before in '**Key messages**', it is important that candidates distinguish between the two parts of the question. Too often candidates offered an effect as a meaning and vice-versa. No credit is given to candidates who simply identify a literary device, in this case a rhetorical question and a metaphor.

Question 10(a) directed the candidates to line 22, '*And, every time, who did my mother blame?*' The meaning could be answered in two ways. Candidates could either restructure the rhetorical question into a statement and recast '*every time*' or '*blame*' or repeat the rhetorical question structure and recast both '*every time*' and '*blame*'. Correct answers were '*his mother always blamed him*', '*every time he was held responsible*' and '*who did my mother always accuse?*' Almost all candidates provided the meaning as a statement and several scored a mark here. A common incorrect response was to offer a statement which retained both the original words: '*his mother blamed him every time*'. It was essential to capture the precise

meaning of 'every time' and 'blame' so words and phrases like 'often', 'usually', 'caused problems' and 'got into trouble' could not score.

The effect of this was that '*the writer feels it is unfair*' or '*irritating*' or that '*he is angry*' or '*frustrated*'. A judgement that '*he had too much responsibility*' or that '*his mother favours his sister*' was also acceptable. Some candidates offered the effect on the reader which was creditworthy so '*the reader feels bad for him*' or '*the reader feels sympathy*' both scored. However, single-word answers were not acceptable because '*frustrated*' or '*sympathy*' need some context to make sense. Common incorrect responses that '*he was responsible for his sister*' or '*he got into trouble a lot*' are merely observations rather than a consideration of the effect of the sentence.

There was greater success in giving the meaning in this question than the effect.

For **Question 10(b)**, the given sentence was from line 41, '*I was paralysed with fear*', and several candidates scored for the meaning with explanations such as '*he could not move*', '*he was frozen*' or '*he stood still*'. Some responses offered an effect here too, '*he was frozen with fear*', but because meaning and effect have to be distinct, this could only score one mark for meaning. Common incorrect responses stated that '*he was trapped*' or '*stuck*', both lacking any suggestion of no movement.

The effect part of the question was also quite well answered. Candidates could focus on the effect on the writer so '*he was scared*' or '*he was shocked*' were acceptable answers. Alternatively, the effect on the reader was also creditworthy with '*the reader feels suspense*' being awarded a mark. For this question, a single-word response was acceptable since an effect might well be '*tension*' or '*horror*'. Words such as '*worried*', '*nervous*' and '*puzzled*' were too weak to capture the idea of terror or fear. Common incorrect responses repeated attempts at the meaning that he could not move or he was stuck. A few candidates interpreted the effect as being what the writer did next and provided narrative details of him crawling along the beam.



ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/22
Reading

Key messages

- Candidates are advised to read both the texts and the questions very carefully to ensure the material is fully understood. Each question directs them to the paragraph or area of the text where they will find the relevant material on which to base their answer.
- Candidates are advised for **Question 1(a)** and **Question 1(b)** to focus on identifying, specifically, the main overarching points from the text without the unnecessary inclusion of examples, repetition and extensions of those points. The inclusion of such irrelevant details in **Question 1(a)** was often transferred to **Question (b)** affecting the quality of the response here.
- Candidates do not have to use their own words in **Question 1(a)**; however, they ought to be aware that when substituting a word or phrase, it must be appropriate. While candidates need to be encouraged to avoid copying lengthy sentences, they must also be aware that brevity can exclude key information.
- For **Question 1(b)**, candidates have clearly been taught the importance of linking devices to establish coherence, but it is essential that these are appropriate and also used selectively. Candidates are advised to consider the meaning of linking devices as there is sometimes inappropriate use of, for example, 'therefore' when there is no causal link between sentences. While 'firstly' can be a useful starting point, it is less effective to continue with 'Secondly' etc. Candidates should also be careful that 'lastly' is indeed the final point to be made. Another piece of advice to candidates could be to avoid the over-use of any linking device, especially 'and' or 'also'. Words and phrases which are not standard English, such as 'to add on', are best avoided. Many candidates would benefit from further practice using these devices in their summaries.
- Although punctuation is not being assessed in **Question 1(b)**, candidates should be aware that accurate punctuation can assist in the fluent and coherent presentation of content points. Coherence was sometimes impeded by the use of commas instead of full stops. Occasionally, there were whole stretches of sentences run together with no punctuation, requiring a re-reading to make sense of what had been written.
- Candidates are encouraged to write to the recommended length in **Question 1(b)**; overlong or short responses are self-penalising since they can not satisfactorily fulfil the criteria for Relevance or Coherence.
- In the multiple-choice vocabulary question, candidates should be encouraged to try out each of the possible words and decide which is the most appropriate in the passage with which they are dealing. This multiple-choice question is not a test of literal comprehension but an inferential test of deducing meaning from context.
- In responding to the final question of **Section Two**, understanding of both literal and inferential writing is required. It was not always evident that candidates could distinguish between *meaning* and *effect*. Further practice on the approach to these questions on the writer's craft will be beneficial. Candidates are advised to provide a straightforward literal meaning under 'Meaning' and for 'Effect' to comment on the impact of particular words and an image, or even structure or punctuation.

General comments

Candidates were asked to answer questions on two passages, the first entitled 'Major Sporting Events' and the second entitled 'Kevin'. The first passage, 'Major Sporting Events', explored the candidates' ability to read for ideas and the second tested their reading for meaning. 22 marks were available for the summary question, with 12 of these marks being awarded for the assessment of the candidates' ability to select content points from the text of 'Major Sporting Events' and 10 marks for the assessment of their ability to express these points in a piece of writing which was relevant, well-organised and easy to follow. A further question allotted 3 marks to the testing of candidates' ability to read for ideas, in this case to distinguish fact from opinion in the first, second and fifth paragraphs of the text.

The second passage, 'Kevin', tested the candidates' literal and inferential comprehension, their understanding of vocabulary and ability to infer meaning from context, their ability to select an appropriate quotation, their use of own words to answer a question, and their appreciation of the writer's craft.

The extracts seemed to be in the main accessible to the candidates. Subtleties in the literary text led to some discriminating questions allowing stronger candidates to demonstrate their comprehension skills fully. Responses suggested that candidates had been well prepared in the format and style of questions. Most candidates used their time well, very few scripts were unfinished and in general they coped well with the layout of the answer booklets. Where questions were omitted it tended to be the final question on writer's craft, but there were very few occasions when this happened.

Both spelling and punctuation were generally good, as were handwriting and legibility.

In **Question 1(a)**, almost all candidates put information into the correct sections.

In **Question 1(b)**, candidates were advised to write between 150 and 180 words and most candidates conformed to this limit. There were obvious signs of connecting phrases being taught to candidates but many times these became instantly repetitive and failed to enhance the flow of the writing.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1(a) was the first part of the summary question, carrying 12 marks; candidates were asked to identify and write down the benefits and drawbacks of major sporting events, as outlined in the passage. The summary had to be based on the whole text, and candidates were to write their answers in note form, and 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. The test here, as with all summary writing, was to present the overarching points and to be able to separate the overarching points from examples or supporting material.

There were several points in this summary task which contained examples which illustrated or supported overarching points. Several candidates did not make the overarching points, but offered examples or supporting evidence instead, and others spoiled otherwise correct overarching points by straying into the examples or illustrations once the overarching point had been made.

Excluding the provided content points, which were not rewarded with marks, there were 15 content points, of which candidates could identify any combination up to a maximum of 12, each carrying one mark. Most candidates expressed the points either in note form or in short sentences lifted from the text; although some responses presented long, verbatim copies of the text for each content point, many responses presented the points in a concise way. Candidates were not instructed to use bullet points, although the rubric suggested that they might find it useful to do so, and the sample points given to assist them used bullets; in fact, most candidates used bullet points.

Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 gave the information in the passage which described the benefits of major sporting events, and there were eight points (excluding the first, which was given) which the candidates could make. In Paragraph 1, there were two content points, (excluding the provided first point) which were that major sporting events bring people together from different countries or nations, and that these events earn income or wealth for the host country or city. For the first of these points, it was not necessary to say that the people who were brought together from different countries were competitors, spectators or heads of state, but if the candidate decided to mention these individual groups all three had to be mentioned, otherwise the sense of the passage was altered. Separating examples from overarching points meant that, if the Olympic Games or the football World Cup were mentioned, it had to be clear that these were examples of major sporting events and not the only events which could bring people together from different countries. For the second of the points made in the paragraph, it had to be clear that the host was a country or city; bringing wealth for the host, where it seemed that the host was being interpreted as an individual, meant something quite different and was therefore an incorrect response. Some candidates in this section repeated the idea of the given point, by referring to national anthems, medals or belonging to a particular part of the world; such answers were ignored as being unnecessary, but the candidate had wasted time in needless writing.

Paragraph 2 contained four content points. The first of these was that participants gain pleasure from competing in the sporting event, and the second was that viewing major sporting events raises the profile of

sport, or that it raises or shows the importance of keeping fit. The third content point in this paragraph was that athletes act as role models; if candidates added that this applies particularly to the young, this did not spoil the point but, if they wrote that athletes act as role models for young people, this once again blurred the distinction between the example and the overarching point. Some candidates seemed to think that 'role models' had something to do with modelling clothes; perhaps that is why they sometimes strayed into the irrelevant section of the text about the sale of merchandise. The final content point in this paragraph was that major sporting events show what endurance, training, skill, work or perseverance can achieve. As with other content points, reference to the particular examples given – in this case running, skating or goal scoring – had to be indicated as such in order not to spoil the overarching point.

In Paragraph 3, there were a further two content points, which were that major sporting events bring enjoyment to spectators, or that they unite spectators in common purpose or friendship. Merely to write that these events attract spectators was insufficient as that statement, although true, cannot in itself be seen as a benefit of major sporting events, which was the topic of the summary. Some candidates spoiled an otherwise correct response by referring to cricket fans, members of tennis clubs or football supporters; these were all examples rather than the overarching point and, if referenced, had to be indicated as being examples. The second content point in this paragraph was that sporting events can be watched at home or watched on television: a few candidates interpreted, incorrectly, the benefit as the removal of the need to travel, others as there being no need to worry about time zones.

Paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 gave the information in the passage which described the drawbacks of major sporting events, as outlined in the passage, and there were a further seven content points, excluding the given point. From Paragraph 4 candidates could make two points (excluding the provided first point), the first being that these events sometimes led to the mentality, or opinion, or view that sport is about winning at all costs; this point led logically on to the conclusion that this view of sport can lead to cheating. In fact, lifting line 34: 'the view that sport is about winning at all costs might lead to cheating' was sufficient to make both content points successfully and concisely. Some candidates wrote that there is a view that sport is about winning, but that was insufficient for the point as everyone who takes part in a sport is trying to win; it is the addition of 'at all costs' that is the drawback required by the question asked. Other candidates spoiled the point about cheating by writing: 'this leads to cheating by taking drugs', thus suggesting that all cheats take drugs, whereas the text made it clear that this happened only sometimes. Drugs did not need to be mentioned at all but, if they were, it had to be made clear that they were an example of cheating, through the use of words like 'sometimes', or 'for example' or even 'may' or 'might' or 'perhaps'.

Whereas paragraph 4 concerned participants of major sporting event, there was a shift in Paragraph 5 to the drawback of these events in relation to the host country with four content points covering this area, the first of these being that a huge or enormous amount of money is needed to host the event, or to build stadiums. Some candidates offered a reference to opening and closing ceremonies as a separate point, but this was an example and not a separate and valid point. Another drawback of major sporting events followed in this paragraph was that budgets for more useful things suffer; it was not necessary to give examples of these more useful things, namely, according to the text, healthcare, schools and roads, but if candidates chose to offer one, two or all three of these examples, it had to be clear that they were examples and not the overarching point. Some candidates copied the text at lines 40 – 41 'budgets for more useful things, such as healthcare, schools and roads, suffer' and that was correct, but many candidates who copied in this area omitted the word 'suffer' and so what they had written did not make sense and was therefore not the content point. The next content point to be found in the paragraph was that ticket prices were so expensive that local people cannot afford them or cannot afford to attend the event. It was insufficient to say that tickets were expensive, as some people obviously can afford them; the point required candidates to note the drawback for the local people. Some candidates instead wrote, or went on to write as a separate point, that depriving local people of the opportunity to attend is an injustice, but that is an opinion and not a statement and therefore had no merit as a summary point. The final point in this paragraph was centred around what happens after the event is over: stadiums lie empty, or there is no benefit for local communities. Many candidates got to the idea of there being no benefit for local communities, or that new stadiums lie empty, but these needed the addition of the idea that these were drawbacks which occurred after the sporting event rather than, by implication, during it.

In Paragraph 6, there was a further content point, which was that it is expensive to send participants to major sporting events. There was much success in identifying this but some candidates went on to give examples of medals or travel or equipment; if one of these was offered as if it were the overarching point, the response was spoiled.

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were asked to use their notes to write a summary of the benefits and drawbacks of major sporting events, as outlined in the passage. They were advised to write between 150

and 180 words (the first ten of which were given), within the space available in the answer booklet. They were asked to write up their notes from content points into a piece of writing which was relevant, well-organised and easy to follow; the most commendable results came from candidates who wrote well under relevance and coherence. Such scripts were characterised under relevance by adhering to the points of the text which were relevant to the question, avoiding the over-use of supporting details and examples, and also avoiding non-specific topic sentences, such as 'So we can see there are many benefits and many drawbacks of major sporting events.'

The most commendable responses were from candidates who expanded the relevant notes made in **Question 1(a)**, synthesising the material without repetition, examples and the over-use of unnecessary supporting detail. Although the use of own words is not compulsory, those who did use them, together with some of their own constructions to link the main ideas, created a real fluency. The best responses demonstrated an impressive coherence using a range of skilful and accurate linking devices. Weaker candidates relied on the repetitive use of 'and' or 'also' to link content and it was common for adverbs, such as 'furthermore', 'nevertheless' or 'however', to be used either repetitively or incorrectly, often seeming to be placed randomly at the beginning of a new sentence. Some candidates made no attempt to link the content and the result was a succession of simple or compound sentences which read rather like a list.

Under coherence, the better responses came from candidates whose writing was fluent, with a possible combination of similar or supporting points, with points linked in a way which aided the fluency and moved the answer on in a natural and helpful way. Better candidates used their understanding from the previous question, **Question 1(a)**, and attempted to select and paraphrase. The mark scheme allowed credit to be given for an attempt to make a content point; the point did not have to be fully made, as this assessment had been carried out in relation to **Question 1(a)**. This meant that, where an inaccurate content point had not been credited in **Question 1(a)**, for example, 'budgets for health, schools and roads suffer' it was regarded as relevant in **Question 1(b)**.

In **Question 2** candidates were to identify three of the writer's opinions, one from Paragraph 1, one from Paragraph 2, and one from Paragraph 5. The key to answering this type of question is to identify words or phrases which are subjective rather than objective, and in this case the words and phrases were 'reassuring' for the first opinion, 'nothing more thrilling' for the second opinion and 'terrible injustice' for the third.

These words supplied the first opinion that 'it is reassuring to see leaders of countries sitting together (chatting smiling and watching, when otherwise their names have been linked to hostility and suspicion towards one another.) The section of text before the bracket here was the key element which made the opinion, but the addition of the rest of the sentence, either in whole or in part, did not spoil the subjective nature of the opinion. The key subjective claim in the second opinion was 'There is nothing more thrilling than witnessing athletes at the peak of their (physical) fitness.' Finally, 'depriving locals of the opportunity to experience sporting events is a terrible injustice' was the key subjective claim which made the third opinion.

A small number of candidates offered their own opinions rather than the writer's opinion as required by the rubric. One or two candidates referred to the second passage for their responses. It was possible to gain credit for expressing the opinion of the text in own words; very few candidates attempted this method of answering and it is probably advisable to lift the opinion from the text.

Comments on specific questions

Section 2

As is usually the case, most candidates seemed to find the narrative text more challenging than the non-narrative Passage 1.

Question 3(a) was a literal comprehension question asking what opportunity Kevin's mother was referring to, the answer being that it was the opportunity to go to high school. This was the customary first and relatively straightforward question designed to ease candidates into this section of the Paper.

The lift of 'Kevin had recently started high school' was an acceptable response, as was simply 'high school'. Responses such as 'the opportunity to attend school' or 'the opportunity to get an education' were incorrect, as presumably Kevin's parents had received some form of early education rather than no education at all. A few candidates wrote, incorrectly, that Kevin's father could have been a teacher instead of working in a shop.

Question 3(b) was another literal comprehension question asking candidates for the evidence that Kevin's father was interested in his own education, and most candidates successfully said that the evidence was that he attempted or did the exercises from Kevin's textbooks. Incorrect responses were those which said that he helped Kevin with his homework or that he did Kevin's homework; mentioning that idea spoiled an otherwise correct response, as the question asked about the father's interest in his own education and not in Kevin's.

In **Question 4(a)** candidates were asked why Kevin's father had to try to 'edge closer to the mirror'. This was a discriminating inferential question where the level of difficulty had been increased. Very many candidates picked up on the first idea, which was that he was shaving. Some added extra information, such as 'to shave more accurately' or 'so that he would not cut his face'; such responses were correct but the addition of the extra information was unnecessary. But the second idea for a correct response was more elusive, being that he was making space for Kevin, or that Kevin was in his way, or that the room was tiny and there were two people in it, or that the room was tiny and Kevin had come in. Some candidates wrote that the room was tiny, but that was illogical as, if the room was tiny, the mirror would have been closer than it would have been in a bigger room, and so there would have been no need to 'edge closer' to it. The word 'edged' was the link with the father having to move in a small space that had seemingly become smaller because there were now two people in it. Some candidates offered responses like 'to see his face' but that was merely to offer the reason for having a mirror, not the reason for having to edge closer to it. Some candidates wrote that he wanted to see Kevin's book in the mirror, which is an unlikely and odd way to look at a book, and so such a response was considered incorrect. As they grappled to find the second reason why the father tried to 'edge closer to the mirror', some candidates gave the same reason twice, writing for example **(i)** he was shaving and **(ii)** he wanted to shave better. Others guessed an answer, such as 'he had poor eyesight', rather than using the evidence of the passage.

Question 4(b) was a fairly straightforward inferential question which asked why Kevin's father could not see the towel, the answer being that his face was covered in soap or that he had soap in his eyes. A few candidates wrote that he was covered in soap, which was inaccurate and vague, but generally there was much success with this question.

Question 5 was another two-mark question, asking candidates why Kevin's father called out the answers 'with great speed.' Most candidates successfully made the first point, which was that he was in a hurry, or that he did not have time. An incorrect response here was to lift 'he rushed out the door' although 'he was in a rush' or 'he was rushing' or 'he was rushing to go out' were acceptable. Some candidates wrote two versions of this point writing, e.g. **(i)** he was in a rush and **(ii)** he did not have time.' Only one of these duplicated responses could be accepted. Another common incorrect response was to write that Kevin's father wanted Kevin to do the work himself, but that was not a reason for calling out the answers 'with great speed.' The second mark in this question was allocated to Kevin's father being confident; an inference drawn from line 16: 'he confidently called them out with great speed', the inference being that someone who was sure he was correct would have the confidence to answer quickly without too much thinking.

Question 6(a) was the first of the questions on the Paper which required candidates to answer in their own words. They were to explain what the candidates were doing when they 'dropped their voices until Mr Waldo was out of earshot' with the expressions to be recast being 'dropped their voices' and 'out of earshot'. 'Dropped their voices' could be paraphrased by 'lowered' or 'reduced' or 'decreased' their 'sound' or 'volume' or even 'noise', or they could write 'they spoke quietly'. Additionally, 'dropped their voices' did not mean that they stopped talking or that they were silent, simply that they were talking or speaking more quietly or softly, or that they were whispering. In order to successfully paraphrase 'out of earshot', candidates had to infer that Mr Waldo was moving or had moved, and then to supply the idea that he had moved sufficiently so that he was unable to hear the candidates (not that they were unable to hear him, as it was the candidates who were talking and not the teacher.) This meant that entirely correct responses were something like: 'they whispered until Mr Waldo had gone away and could not hear them' or 'they reduced their volume until Mr Waldo was too far away to hear them.' Common incorrect responses were to write that the candidates were silent, or to supply the idea of Mr Waldo being unable to hear them while at the same time suggesting he was right there in front of them. Some candidates took their responses from lines 19 – 20, focusing incorrectly on the idea that Mr Waldo was the teacher who commanded the most respect; this was the possible reason for them dropping their voices but did nothing to paraphrase the expression. Other candidates appeared to confuse hearing and sight, writing, incorrectly, that Mr Waldo could not see them.

In **Question 6(b)**, candidates were asked for one word in Paragraph 4 which reinforced the idea of 'dramatic', the answer being 'theatrical'. This was generally well done and, given the fact that candidates had to look earlier in the text for the answer, rather than after the word 'dramatic', and given that the paragraph was a fairly long one, it was to the candidates' credit that so many of them were able to link drama with

theatre, thereby finding the required word. Common incorrect responses were 'crash', 'crack', 'snap' and 'slovenliness'.

Question 6(c) was another inferential question, asking what Mr Waldo was suggesting when he picked up the exercise book 'with the corner between thumb and forefinger.' Candidates were being asked to infer that the book was disgusting or dirty, or that he was disgusted by it; it was also acceptable to offer a more generalised response such as 'he hated dirty things' or that he had high standards of cleanliness or that he wanted the candidates to keep their book clean. Many wrote some version of this, although a lot of candidates offered the statement that dropping the exercise book out of the window was the answer.

In **Question 7**, candidates were asked why Kevin did not know immediately what Mr Waldo thought of his answers. This was a literal comprehension question where the two correct responses were separated by an irrelevant stretch of text. The first correct response was that Mr Waldo was expressionless, or that his face registered no emotion, and many candidates found this answer. However, many candidates strayed into the irrelevant stretch of text for the second answer, writing, incorrectly, the information from line 35: 'He would let a candidate ramble on and on with great imagination until that candidate faltered and admitted that he did not know something.' As this was a general point referring to how Mr Waldo treated all his students, it was not specific enough to answer the question being asked here, the answer to which was that it was a long time before Mr Waldo spoke, or that Mr Waldo was silent for a long time, or that he made Kevin wait a long time before he spoke. Another common incorrect response was to write that Mr Waldo let Kevin go through the whole exercise without interrupting him, or that he was waiting anxiously for a comment, but the text does not support the idea that the teacher should have interrupted him or that that would ever be a reasonable way for a teacher to behave.

Question 8 was the second of the questions on the Paper which required candidates to answer in their own words and asked how the students reacted to the situation when they 'giggled quietly behind their hands at Kevin's assertion' with the key ideas being 'giggled' and 'assertion'. There were very many ways in which the correct answer for 'giggled' could be captured, with words such as 'laughed', 'sniggered' or 'chuckled'. Phrases were also acceptable, such as 'they thought it was funny' or 'they were amused'. In order to capture the idea of 'assertion', words such as 'statement', 'claim' or 'answer' were sought, or phrases such as 'what he said.' Among candidates' responses, there were many correct paraphrases of 'assertion', such as 'excuse', 'justification', 'challenge' and 'comment'; words such as 'reason', 'reaction', 'confession' or 'certainty' were not acceptable responses as they did not fit the overall context of what was going on. Candidates were required to respond to the context in which Kevin was challenging the teacher. Many candidates re-cast 'behind their hands' and, although this was not being assessed, it did not obscure a correct response.

In **Question 9**, candidates were asked why it was 'too late' for Kevin. Many candidates picked up on the fact that it was the emotional effect of the encounter with Mr Waldo in the classroom which made it 'too late' for Kevin, so that correct responses were that he had been embarrassed or humiliated, or that all the class knew his father did his homework, or that all the other students had laughed at him. Incorrect responses were those which merely stated what had happened, for example his answers were wrong, or he said his father did his homework – this type of response did not address the hurt or shame which Kevin felt. Some candidates took the idea of lateness literally, writing, incorrectly, that the class was over or that the others had left or that Kevin would be late for his next class.

Question 10 took the form of five multiple-choice synonym questions. In each, candidates had to choose the word which best fitted the word being tested from four options. Here, candidates are advised to work out the best possible choice by taking each word back to the context and choosing wisely. As already indicated, this question should be seen as an inferential question rather than a straightforward vocabulary question. The most successful attempts were with **Question 9(a)**, where 'sometimes' was correctly chosen as the synonym for 'occasionally', with **Question 9(d)**, where 'paused' was correctly chosen as the synonym for 'faltered', and with **Question 9(e)**, where 'certainty' was correctly chosen as the synonym for 'conviction', the most common incorrect answer being 'hope'. Less successful were **Question 9(b)** where the correct answer was 'reversed' for 'backed', and where many candidates incorrectly offered 'supported', and with **Question 10(c)** where 'stressful' was the correct synonym for 'tense' and where very many candidates incorrectly offered 'frightened'.

Question 11, was the final question on the Paper, on writer's craft. In each section, **Question 11(a)** and **Question 11(b)**, candidates were asked to give the meaning of an expression as used in the text, followed by the effect of the expression. As in past series, many candidates were imprecise with their responses to meaning and often confused meaning with effect.

Question 11(a) directed candidates to the expression ‘the sweeping hand gesture brought the students quickly to their feet’ and asked for its meaning and its effect. Candidates could either give the meaning of ‘sweeping hands’, as in ‘he moved his hands’, or the meaning of ‘gesture’, as in ‘indicated’ or ‘signalled’. One of these re-castings had then to be linked to the result of the ‘sweeping hands’, or of the ‘gesture’, which was that the students ‘stood up’, or ‘stood’, or some other re-casting of ‘to their feet.’ Examples of correct responses were ‘he moved his hands and the students stood up’ or ‘he indicated to the students that they should stand up.’ Many candidates spoiled their answer here by dealing with one but not both of the areas to be re-cast, writing incorrectly, for example, ‘his sweeping hand gesture made them stand up’ or ‘his moving hands brought them to their feet’.

The effect of this expression could focus on either Mr Waldo or the students. Correct responses were that the expression shows that Mr Waldo was strict, or that he had authority, or that the students always obeyed Mr Waldo. A common incorrect response was to write that the students were afraid of Mr Waldo – that may have been correct, but was an inference drawn from the expression rather than its effect.

In **Question 11(b)**, candidates were directed to the expression “A shop!” Mr Waldo mimicked’ and asked for its meaning and its effect. For meaning, candidates could focus on either the meaning of ‘mimicked’ or a response to Mr Waldo’s tone as conveyed by the exclamation mark. If they opted for a re-casting of ‘mimicked’, they could write ‘he copied’ or ‘he imitated’ but had to add ‘what Kevin said’, and not simply ‘A shop!’ Some candidates misunderstood what Mr Waldo was mimicking, writing incorrectly that he was imitating how Kevin spoke rather than what he said. If they opted to respond to the effect of the exclamation mark, they had to write that Mr Waldo was mocking/ridiculing/laughing at Kevin’s father, or mocking/ridiculing/laughing at the fact that Kevin’s father worked in a shop, or that he was mocking/ridiculing/laughing at the idea of working in a shop, in general.

The key to seeing the effect here was to respond to Mr Waldo’s unpleasant character by writing that he was mean, cruel, uncaring or callous, or that he was enjoying humiliating Kevin, or trying to humiliate Kevin. Alternatively, candidates could write that the effect of the expression was that Mr Waldo was putting on a show or exhibition for the class.

