CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge O Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE **1123/11**

Paper 1 Reading **October/November 2025**

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 50

Published

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the question paper and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

Cambridge International will not enter into discussions about these mark schemes.

Cambridge International is publishing the mark schemes for the October/November 2025 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level components, and some Cambridge O Level components.

This document consists of **26** printed pages.

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PUBLISHED

Generic Marking Principles

These general marking principles must be applied by all examiners when marking candidate answers. They should be applied alongside the specific content of the mark scheme or generic level descriptions for a question. Each question paper and mark scheme will also comply with these marking principles.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 1:

Marks must be awarded in line with:

- the specific content of the mark scheme or the generic level descriptors for the question
- the specific skills defined in the mark scheme or in the generic level descriptors for the question
- the standard of response required by a candidate as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 2:

Marks awarded are always **whole marks** (not half marks, or other fractions).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 3:

Marks must be awarded **positively**:

- marks are awarded for correct/valid answers, as defined in the mark scheme. However, credit is given for valid answers which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme, referring to your Team Leader as appropriate
- marks are awarded when candidates clearly demonstrate what they know and can do
- marks are not deducted for errors
- marks are not deducted for omissions
- answers should only be judged on the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar when these features are specifically assessed by the question as indicated by the mark scheme. The meaning, however, should be unambiguous.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 4:

Rules must be applied consistently, e.g. in situations where candidates have not followed instructions or in the application of generic level descriptors.

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GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 5: Marks should be awarded using the full range of marks defined in the mark scheme for the question (however; the use of the full mark range may be limited according to the quality of the candidate responses seen).
GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 6: Marks awarded are based solely on the requirements as defined in the mark scheme. Marks should not be awarded with grade thresholds or grade descriptors in mind.

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English & Media subject specific general marking principles
(To be read in conjunction with the Generic Marking Principles (and requiring further guidance on how to place marks within levels))

Components using level descriptors:

- We use level descriptors as a guide to broad understanding of the qualities normally expected of, or typical of, work in a level.
- Level descriptors are a means of general guidance and should not be interpreted as hurdle statements.
- Where indicative content notes are supplied for a question, these are *not* a prescription of required content, and must not be treated as such. Alternative correct points and unexpected answers in candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the knowledge and skills demonstrated.
- While we may have legitimate expectations as to the ground most answers may occupy, we must at all times be prepared to meet candidates on their chosen ground, provided it is relevant ground (e.g. clearly related to and derived from a relevant passage/text and meeting the mark scheme requirements for the question).

Components using point-based marking:

Point marking is often used to reward knowledge, understanding and application of skills. We give credit where the candidate's answer shows relevant knowledge, understanding and application of skills in answering the question. We do not give credit where the answer shows confusion.

From this it follows that we:

a DO credit answers which are worded differently from the mark scheme if they clearly convey the same meaning (unless the mark scheme requires a specific term).
b DO credit alternative answers/examples which are not written in the mark scheme if they are correct.
c DO credit answers where candidates give more than one correct answer in one prompt/numbered/scaffolded space where extended writing is required rather than list-type answers. For example, questions that require *n* reasons (e.g. State two reasons…).
d DO NOT credit answers simply for using a 'key term' unless that is all that is required. (Check for evidence it is understood and not used incorrectly.)
e DO NOT credit answers which are obviously self-contradicting or trying to cover all possibilities.
f DO NOT give further credit for what is effectively repetition of a correct point already credited unless the language itself is being tested. This applies equally to 'mirror statements' (i.e. polluted/not polluted).
g DO NOT require spellings to be correct, unless this is part of the test. However, spellings of syllabus terms must allow for clear and unambiguous separation from other syllabus terms with which they may be confused (e.g. Corrasion/Corrosion).

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Annotations guidance for centres

Examiners use a system of annotations as a shorthand for communicating their marking decisions to one another. Examiners are trained during the standardisation process on how and when to use annotations. The purpose of annotations is to inform the standard isation and monitoring processes and guide the supervising examiners when they are checking the work of examiners within their team. The meaning of annotations and how they are used is specific to each component and is understood by all examiners who mark the component.

We publish annotations in our mark schemes to help centres understand the annotations they may see on copies of scripts. Note that there may not be a direct correlation between the number of annotations on a script and the mark awarded. Similarly, the use of an annotation may not be an indication of the quality of the response.

The annotations listed below were available to examiners marking this component in this series.

Annotations

Annotation	Meaning
	Correct answer
	Relevant supporting detail
	Relevant Development of an idea or detail
	Relevant content point made (**Q3(a)** Summary)
	Candidate's own vocabulary and structures appropriately used (**Q3(a)** Summary)

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Question 1

This question tests the following reading assessment objectives (16 marks)

R1 demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings
R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1(a)	**From paragraph 1, identify <u>one</u> sound that suggests that a train is coming before the engine comes into sight.** Award 1 mark for any of the following bullets: • (track) rattles (faintly) • (warning) whistle (shrieks)	**1**	
1(b)	**<u>Using your own words</u>, explain what the text means by 'scanning desperately'. (lines 8-9)** Award 1 mark for each bullet up to a maximum of 2 marks: • **('scanning')** looking / searching (for) / trying to find / checking / observing • **('desperately')** urgently / madly / anxiously / eagerly / really wants to find something / in <u>great</u> need of / a matter of life or death	**2**	*'Scanning': NOT glancing / glimpsing* *'Desperately': LOOK FOR a sense of urgency or great need*
1(c)(i)	**In paragraph 3, Jacob is asked a question that confuses him. What is the question?** • You like circuses?	**1**	

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1(c)(ii)	**Why is he confused by the question?** • he has not noticed / did not know that he is on a circus train / he thought it was just a normal train • Because the question is unusual / seems out of place / random / unexpected (to him)	**1**	
1(d)	**Explain why Jacob says 'I feel like a mouse being bounced between two cats.' (line 40)** Award 1 mark for any of the following bullets: • (he feels) threatened / intimidated / he may be in danger // is powerless / scared / vulnerable / overwhelmed / trapped • they are in control / imposing / predatory • the men / they are having fun (at his expense) / are playing with / teasing him	**1**	

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1(e)	**In paragraph 4, what is Uncle Al's impression of Jacob before he finds out that Jacob studied veterinary sciences?** **Give <u>two</u> details from the text to support your answer.** **Impression** Reward any sense of **dislike** or **scorn** however expressed: • (he thinks) Jacob knows nothing relevant / is useless / young / privileged • ridicules / looks down on him // is sarcastic / sneering / unimpressed / judgemental (1) **Details** Details must come from separate bullets Award 1 mark for each detail up to a maximum of 2 marks: • 'just looking for adventure' // 'Mr College Boy' • 'smirking' / '(clearly) amused' • 'Study something useful?' / thinks he will not have studied anything useful • '(eyes gleam in) mockery' (2)	3	✓ Correct impression DET Supporting detail *ACCEPT an impression and details wherever they appear.* *Impression bullet 1: MUST have the sense of Jacob's education not being relevant to Al / specific to the circus* *The supporting details can be quoted or paraphrased. Allow slips in copying. A paraphrase must clearly convey the original meaning.*

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1(f)	**Explain what Camel and Uncle Al are thinking when they 'exchange glances.' (line 50)** Award 1 mark for each bullet up to a maximum of 2 marks: • he is almost a (real) vet // close to being qualified // studied veterinary science • he is educated / has knowledge / skills / experience • he could be useful to them / was what they needed // he could treat the giraffe / circus animals • they had misjudged him	**2**	
1(g)	**From paragraph 5, give <u>two</u> physical signs that indicate that the giraffe is ill.** Award 1 mark for each bullet up to a maximum of 2 marks: • pus (flowing) down / in (her long) nasal (passage) / nostrils / nose // (he swabs out her) infected nostrils • she is too weak <u>to move</u> // she does not move / is still **Explain <u>using your own words</u> Jacob's different feelings about the circus train and everything and everyone it carries.** **Give <u>three</u> details from anywhere in the text to support your answer.**	**2**	*Credit correct responses where they appear, even if both responses are in one limb or if a correct answer straddles both limbs*

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Question	Answer		Marks	Guidance
1(h)	**Jacob feels** ✓	**Supporting textual detail** DET	3	
	1 shocked / surprised / amazed / overwhelmed / stunned ACCEPT 'stunned' as a feeling or text detail DET but not both	'a massive engine explodes' / the loud sound of the train / 'passing so close, I'm hit by a wall of wind' / 'sudden sight, sound and stink (are too much)' / 'stunned' / 'Kid, don't tell me you didn't notice'		
	2 confused / clueless / puzzled ACCEPT 'puzzled' as a feeling or text detail DET but not both	'(what look) oddly like telephone poles' / 'Kid, don't tell me you didn't notice' / 'Notice what?' / 'I must look puzzled' / 'I blink at him'		
	3 hopeful / **relief** / the train offers **escape, a better life**	'it's travelling towards civilisation and food'		
	4 determined / committed / positive / confident / comfortable / belonging	'I cling tightly' / 'I pull myself upwards with everything I've got' / 'Too late,' I say. 'I'm staying' / 'come on, kid'		
	5 scared / worried / anxious / trapped / vulnerable / uncomfortable / under pressure / intimidated / inferior	'There's no dismounting without going under' / 'Two men are staring at me' / 'stumble backwards' / 'scanning desperately' / 'I scramble to my feet' / 'there's nowhere to go' / 'eyes gleam in mockery' / 'I feel like a mouse being bounced between two cats'		

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1(h)	**Jacob feels** ✓ — **Supporting textual detail** DET **6 amused** (by Uncle Al) — 'steps forward theatrically' / 'showman written all over him' / 'ridiculously curled moustache' **Jacob feels** ✓ — **Supporting textual detail** DET **7 pity / empathy / sad / concern** for the giraffe // a **responsibility** to treat her — 'pus flowing down' / 'She seems sad, imprisoned here' / 'she's too weak to move' / 'swab out her infected nostrils' / 'swaddle her throat with a soft cloth' **8 curious** — 'peer inside through small hole' **9 admiration / impressed / awe / amazed / excited / mesmerised / enjoyment / fascination / enthusiasm / happy** — 'the most elegant creature I've seen' / 'eyes are huge dark, beautiful' / 'the tent is massive' / 'like the deck and mast of a pirate sailboat' / 'packed solid, glowing and pulsing' / 'an enormous beast, the colour of storm clouds' / 'She's gargantuan' / 'I'm staying'		

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Question 2

This question tests reading assessment objective (9 marks)

R4 demonstrate understanding of how writers achieve effects and influence readers.

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2(a)	**Read this extract from the text:** **'It's late but this southern sun is still burning in a flame red sky. The terrain is flatter here too with dry, brown, trampled grass.' (lines 61-62)** **What <u>two</u> impressions does the writer want to convey to the reader in this extract?** Award 1 mark for each bullet up to a maximum of 2 marks: • hot / scorching // (sun is) intense / bright / blazing / crimson // (sky is) like fire • not hilly // strange / alien // different (terrain) to where he's from / the north • the terrain / land is parched / arid / scorched // no (sign of) rain / lack of water // nature / grass cannot / struggles to grow / looked dead / barren / wilted / (like) a desert • grass / land has been damaged / flattened // stepped on (by many) / (high) foot traffic / worn out / overused • harsh / inhospitable (terrain / landscape)	**2**	

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2(b)	**Read this sentence from the text:** **'At the edges, near the track, canvas tents have popped up like mushrooms.' (lines 62-63)** **What effect does the writer suggest about the tents by using the phrase 'popped up like mushrooms' to describe them?** Award 1 mark for each bullet up to a maximum of 2 marks: • have appeared quickly / unexpectedly // came out of nowhere / shot up • lots of them / many / all over / spread (over a large area) / everywhere • domed / circular / round (shape) • packed / close / together / clusters / bunches • all look similar / the same • magical / wonder / fairy tale	**2**	
2(c)	**Explain why the writer uses the word 'peer' rather than 'look' in the sentence 'I peer inside through a small hole in the canvas'. (line 65)** • looking / observing carefully / closely / with interest • difficult / straining to see	**1**	

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2(d)	**Read this extract from the text:** **'"Listen," says Camel softly. "If you got a life to go back to, I reckon that's what you should do."' (line 76)** **What does the writer want to suggest to the reader about Camel's feeling towards Jacob at this point in the story?** • he likes / has affection / compassion / is concerned / feels sorry for him // has his best interests at heart // doesn't want to pressure him	**1**	*LOOK for any suggestion of affection / encouragement / looking out for Jacob*
2(e)	**Identify <u>one example</u> from the text below of how the writer uses language effectively to convey the reactions of the audience in the big top:** (1) **Brilliantly painted red and gold carriages, their sides propped open to reveal lions and tigers, hypnotise the captive audience. Llamas and zebras bring wild whoops of delight. The big top is packed solid, glowing and pulsing with the sound of the audience laughing, clapping and whistling. Sometimes there's a collective intake of breath or ripple of nervous squeals as a trapeze flies by. The elephant looms against the far sidewall, an enormous beast the colour of storm clouds. She's gargantuan. Her skin is mottled and cracked like a scorched riverbed. She trots forward and the crowd erupts with glee. (lines 69-75)** **Explain the impression the writer creates in the example you have identified.** (2) Candidates **must** select from the following relevant examples <u>in part</u>, <u>whole</u> or <u>combined</u>:	**3**	

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<table>
<tr><th>Question</th><th>Answer</th><th>Marks</th><th>Guidance</th></tr>
<tr><td>2(e)</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th>Example ✓ 1 mark</th><th>Explanation ✓ up to 2 marks</th></tr>
<tr><td>1 ‘hypnotise the captive audience’</td><td>amaze, fascinate, attract (the audience) // (as if they are) spellbound, bewitched // cannot escape, powerless to move // have never seen anything like it</td></tr>
<tr><td>2 ‘(Llamas and zebras bring) wild whoops of delight’</td><td>uncontrolled, unrestrained reactions // energy // shouts, cries // pleasure, excitement, enjoyment // have never seen anything like them (llamas, zebras)</td></tr>
<tr><td>3 ‘(packed solid,) glowing and pulsing’</td><td>a mass of energy, alive // vibrating // unity, togetherness // warmth, pleasure, happiness, delight</td></tr>
<tr><td>4 ‘laughing, clapping, whistling’</td><td>non-stop appreciation, continuous noise // fun, happiness, excitement // different noises</td></tr>
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<table>
<tr><th>Question</th><th>Answer</th><th>Marks</th><th>Guidance</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>2(e)</td>
<td>
<table>
<tr><th>Example ✓</th><th>Explanation ✓</th></tr>
<tr><td>5 ‘a collective intake of breath’</td><td>respond as one, together // gasp, hold their breath // astonished, amazed, shocked // fear, tension, worry (for the trapezist’s safety)</td></tr>
<tr><td>6 ‘ripple of nervous squeals’</td><td>a (small) wave of noise (from the crowd), noise spreads // high-pitched sound, shrieks // fear, worry (for the trapezist’s safety)</td></tr>
<tr><td>7 ‘the crowd erupts with glee’</td><td>explosive, like a volcano // sudden // noisy, loud // energy, powerful reaction, passionate // uncontrollable // all react at the same time // happiness, excitement</td></tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Explanation: LOOK FOR understanding of the connotations / impact / effect of particular word(s) / image / technique <u>only in the identified example</u>.

Explanation: These ideas are suggestions. Candidates may offer other creditworthy ideas.</td>
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Question 3(a)

This question tests the following reading assessment objectives (10 marks)

R1 demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings
R5 select and use information for specific purposes

and the following writing assessment objectives (10 marks)

W2 organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect
W3 use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3(a)	**Summarise the arguments against climbing Mount Everest nowadays, according to Text B.** **You must <u>use continuous writing</u> (not note form).** **Use your own words as far as possible.** **Avoid copying long sections of the text.** **Your summary should be no more than 150 words.** **<u>Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer and up to 10 marks for the quality of your writing.</u>** Use the Marking Criteria for **Question 3** (Table **R**, **Reading** and Table **W**, **Writing**). **INDICATIVE READING CONTENT** Candidates may refer to any of the points below: • numbers have skyrocketed / shot up // (over) 800 / hundreds / lots climb it (a year) // over 9000 // queue / line up (to climb) • (climbing it is) not notable / impressive / no recognition • (just) for social media / to post online // showing off • <u>not</u> doing it first // do <u>not</u> have to figure out how to do it • any (reasonably) fit person can do it • can <u>pay</u> / <u>hire</u> / people / Sherpas to help • <u>Sherpas</u> make it easy / carry (heavy) loads / do the work // climbers travel light // <u>hi-tech / ultra-modern</u> equipment / ropes / ladders	**20**	*1 ACCEPT 'sheer numbers' // thousands* *pay Sherpas / people to carry loads / do the work = 6 + 7* *ACCEPT 'icefall doctors' for Sherpas*

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance

3(a)	• (can do) other (more) affordable / mentally beneficial activities / trekking / rafting / kayaking // (can) climb other peaks for less money // expensive (to climb)
	• risk to life / dangerous // other activities pose a low(er) risk / are safe(r) // (melting) ice is unstable
	• many (climbers) are not professional / seasoned / experienced
	• not the only way to see it // trekking routes provide views
	• (technically) not the tallest mountain
	• microplastic / waste / belongings (found / left) // an environmental impact		

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Marking criteria for Question 3(a)

Table R, Reading: Use the following table to give a mark out of 10 for reading.

Level	Marks	Description
5	**9–10**	• A wide range of relevant ideas (R1) • Ideas are skilfully selected and used (R5)
4	**7–8**	• A good range of relevant ideas (R1) • Ideas are carefully selected and used (R5)
3	**5–6**	• A range of relevant ideas (R1) • Relevant ideas selected; may include excess material (R5)
2	**3–4**	• Some relevant ideas used; may include indiscriminate selection (R1 and R5)
1	**1–2**	• Some ideas referred to; limited evidence of selection (R1and R5)
0	**0**	• No creditable content

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Table W, Writing: Use the following table to give a mark out of 10 for writing.

Level	Marks	Description
5	**9–10**	**A relevant response that is expressed clearly, fluently and mostly with concision** • The response is well organised (W2) • The response is the candidate's own words and/or structures where appropriate with a range of vocabulary which clarifies meaning (W3)
4	**7–8**	**A relevant response that is expressed clearly with some areas of concision** • The response is organised (W2) • The response is the candidate's own words and/or structures where appropriate (W3)
3	**5–6**	**A relevant response that is generally expressed clearly** • There is some evidence of organisation (W2) • The response is mainly the candidate's own words and/or structures where appropriate (W3)
2	**3–4**	**A relevant response that can generally be followed** • There are areas of the response expressed in the candidate's own words and/or structures (W2 and W3)
1	**1–2**	**The response lacks clarity** • There may be long explanations or the response may be brief (W2) • There is occasional use of own words and/or structures (W3)
0	**0**	• No creditable content

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Question 3(b)

This question tests the following reading assessment objective (5 marks)

R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3(b)	**<u>Imagine you are a local businessperson living near Mount Everest.</u>** **You are asked a question by a journalist who is writing an article on adventure tourism.** **Give your answer to the journalist's question, using information from the text.** **<u>The journalist's question</u>: Some people want to ban foreign tourists from climbing Everest due to the negative impact they have on the area.** **W What is your opinion and why?** **Relevant perspective:** The local businessperson does not want to ban foreign tourists from climbing Everest. Responses might use any of the following ideas / details:	**5**	*TEXT DETAILS (left-hand column) can be given without developments* *DEVELOPMENTS (right-hand column) can link to any supporting detail <u>or</u> be given without text detail* *For DEVELOPMENT, look for expansion of a point or detail, or an idea not explicit in the text but a valid inference* *DEVELOPMENTS are examples; candidates may offer <u>other</u> creditworthy suggestions*

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3(b)	**Supporting details from the text** ✓ / **Developments** DEV • **(good for) tourism businesses // eateries // guesthouses // trekking, rafting, kayaking** • **contribute to local economy // a large part of Nepali economy //** (support) **the livelihood of local people** • **harsh conditions** • other businesses would shut down // locals would lose income // tourists improve / raise living standards • ban would impact negatively on local and national economy // fewer tourists mean less money // alternatives to a ban – establish a tourist quota, restrict number of climbers, increase permit fee • the climate and geography offer few alternatives to make a living		

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<table>
<tr><th>Question</th><th>Answer</th><th>Marks</th><th>Guidance</th></tr>
<tr><td>3(b)</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th>Supporting details from the text ✓</th><th>Developments DEV</th></tr>
<tr><td>

- **service industry around mountaineering // pay, hire Sherpas, icefall doctors to guide, help climbers, climbers are clients**
- **climbers can raise awareness of climate change, melting glaciers**
- **climbers travel through Nepal** (to reach Everest), **booking activities, accommodation**
- **government, Sherpas are trying to clean the mountain // new rules to help with waste management**

</td><td>

- lose a valuable source of revenue // locals depend on climbers for employment // part of Sherpa history, identity // people might have to move elsewhere for this kind of work
- important for people see for themselves the effects of climate change and act on it // spread information via social media
- climbers do not just come to Nepal to climb Everest // taking away the attraction of climbing Everest will impact on other businesses elsewhere in Nepal
- action is already being taken // must educate tourist climbers (rather than ban them)

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Table R, Reading

Use the following table to give a mark out of 5 for reading.

Level	Marks	Description
3	**4–5**	• Consistent and relevant perspective offered • Ideas are supported and developed
2	**2–3**	• Generally relevant perspective offered • Some attempt to support or develop
1	**1**	• Some awareness of opinion or attitude
0	**0**	• No creditable content

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