CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge O Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE **1123/12**

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 **27** printed pages.

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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 standardisation 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)	**In paragraph 1, what does Rex find amusing about the young bird's appearance when Rex first sees him?** • (his large) <u>head</u> (and enormous beak)	**1**	
1(b)	**<u>Using your own words</u>, explain what Rex means by the bird's 'squawks of protest' (line 4).** Award 1 mark for each bullet up to a maximum of 2 marks: • **('squawks')** shrieks / screech / screaming / cries / croaks // loud / noisy / shrill // unpleasant sound / harsh noise // commotion / ruckus • **('protest')** angry / annoyed / complaining / resisting / not cooperating / unhappy // trying to get away // does not want / like it	**2**	*Bullet 1: ACCEPT shout <u>loudly</u> / chirp <u>noisily</u>* *Bullet 2: LOOK FOR any suggestion of resistance / annoyance / reluctance*
1(c)(i)	**Identify <u>one</u> thing the bird does which is 'mischievous'. (line 8)** • stealing // takes (shiny) items / things from the neighbours	**1**	*ACCEPT: 'He'd begun stealing shiny items from increasingly annoyed neighbours'*

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1(c)(ii)	**How does the bird's mischievous behaviour cause problems for the boys' parents?** Award 1 mark for any of the following bullets: • it annoys the neighbours // neighbours complain / are (increasingly) annoyed // (increasingly) annoyed neighbours • the parents / they are embarrassed / ashamed // parents / they have to apologise	**1**	*Text needs recasting.*
1(d)	**From paragraph 3, give two features of the bird's upbringing that will make it difficult to return this bird to the wild.** Award 1 mark for each bullet up to a maximum of 2 marks: • has not learned to / cannot find own food // has been given food • has not learned to / cannot spot predators • has had no parents to teach (him) / learn (from) // has no parents to set an example / be a (role) model • was not kept wild // been treated like a pet // been in captivity (from an early age)	**2**	*Credit correct responses where they appear, even if both responses are in one limb or if a correct answer straddles both limbs* *e.g. has no parents to teach him to find food = 2 marks (bullets 1 and 3)* *ACCEPT plural pronoun for 'he' / 'his', e.g. they have been treated like a pet* *ACCEPT 'difficult when a bird's been in captivity with no parents to teach by example' = bullets 4 and 3*
1(e)	**Explain why Odin gives a 'petrified croak'. (line 22)** • he is scared / terrified of the bird / raven // he feels threatened by the bird / raven	**1**	

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1(f)	**In paragraph 6, how do children visiting the centre feel about Odin?** **Give <u>two</u> details from the text to support your answer.** **Feeling** Reward any sense of being **frightened** or **worried** however expressed: • scared / panicked / threatened / anxious / uncomfortable (1) **Details:** Details must come from separate bullets Award 1 mark for each detail up to a maximum of 2 marks: • jumps on / lands on people's / children's shoulders // 'peck (affectionately) at their ears' • 'disconcerting' • (children / they) 'squealed' / screamed • 'shouts of alarm' • 'dancing round, beak open' // 'beak open, eyes gleaming' • '(revelling in the) mayhem' // causes chaos (2)	**3**	*ACCEPT a feeling and details wherever they appear.*

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1(g)	**From paragraph 7, give <u>two</u> reasons why Julie is annoyed with Odin.** Award 1 mark for each bullet up to a maximum of 2 marks: • imitates / copies / mimics / masters Rex's / her husband's / his / my <u>voice</u> • confuses her // she is tricked / fooled / manipulated • she is busy // he wastes her time // my / his busy wife • he does it on several occasions / often / always	**2**	

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<table>
<tr><th>Question</th><th>Answer</th><th>Marks</th><th>Guidance</th></tr>
<tr><td>1(h)</td><td>Explain <u>using your own words</u> how Rex's feelings about the bird change over time.

Give <u>three</u> details from anywhere in the text to support your answer.

<table>
<tr><th>Rex feels ✓</th><th>Supporting textual detail DET</th></tr>
<tr><td>1 amused</td><td>'he was huge' / 'a comically large head' / 'out of proportion' / 'an enormous' beak'</td></tr>
<tr><td>2 surprised / shocked / amazed</td><td>'he was huge' / 'an enormous' beak / 'There was only one bird that could be' / 'our indestructible raven' / 'Most striking of all were his intelligent black eyes'</td></tr>
<tr><td>3 impressed / fascinated / admiration</td><td>'he was huge' / 'a bright red throat' / 'Most striking of all were his intelligent black eyes' / 'our indestructible raven'</td></tr>
<tr><td>4 responsible / a professional interest / detached</td><td>'My plan was to get the bird back into the wild' / hoped that 'he'd join the wild ravens', 'fly away to his own kind'</td></tr>
</table></td><td>3</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

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Question	Answer		Marks	Guidance
1(h)	**5 worried / concerned / anxious / disturbed / uncertain / afraid** **NOT hopeless / helpless / desperate / frightened**	'this one would be tricky' (to return to the wild) / has 'been in captivity' / has 'no parents to teach by example' / 'no fear of people' / 'Odin refused to leave' / 'a hopeless case' / 'We'll never get rid of him' / 'a nuisance' / 'mischief' / 'behaviour was getting worse' / 'was never going to leave us' / 'imagined many birds had been killed, including Odin' / Odin 'perched precariously'		
	6 frustrated / annoyed / challenged / tired (of him) / **disappointed / discouraged** **NOT disconcerted / angry / determined / embarrassed**	'a nuisance' / 'Odin refused to leave' / 'a hopeless case' / 'We'll never get rid of him' / 'jumping out to land on people's shoulders' / 'revelling in the mayhem he was causing' / 'irritating' / 'imitating my voice' / 'behaviour was getting worse' / 'demanded serious measures' / 'mischief' / 'a delinquent bird' / 'cementing large concrete blocks' around the cage		

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Question	Answer		Marks	Guidance
1(h)	**7 sad / upset / loss / misses him / pity / devastated**	'imagined many birds had been killed, including Odin' / 'made a brave start rebuilding the sheds' / 'mournfully' / 'avoiding the remains of the cage' / 'I mentioned wistfully it had housed our raven' / 'a bedraggled Odin' / 'shivering violently'		
	8 hopeful / relieved / happy / affection / protective / caring	'My plan was to get the bird back into the wild' / hoped 'that he'd join the wild ravens' / 'There was only one bird that could be' / 'called up in a hopefully endearing voice' / 'Odin come to Daddy' / 'scooped into my arms' / 'taken home'		

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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 sentence from the text.** **'Later that month, I was nearly proved wrong.' (line 41)** **What does the writer want to suggest to us about what is going to happen next?** • Odin leaves / flies away / disappears / escapes / is lost // something will make Odin leave	**1**	

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2(b)	**Read this sentence from the text:** **'We'd expected the worst, but the scene at dawn was a picture of carnage, like an army of giants had wreaked havoc outside: most of the trees in the area had been blown over, the whole world seemed torn apart, unfriendly and unfamiliar.' (lines 44-46)?** **What <u>two</u> impressions does the writer want to convey to the reader about the storm in this sentence?** Award 1 mark for each bullet up to a maximum of 2 marks: • devastation / ruin / destruction / chaos / catastrophe / <u>great</u> damage / <u>huge</u> mess • like a battlefield / war • (army of giants part of) folklore / mythology / fiction • <u>trees</u> are toppled / knocked over / vulnerable / defenceless • alien / unnatural / unrecognisable / strange / landscape / scene • (it was) hostile / violent / dangerous / monstrous / massive / <u>very</u> strong // he / (they were) frightened / shocked	**2**	
2(c)	**Explain why the writer uses the word 'lifted' rather than 'moved' in the expression 'it had been lifted from its concrete blocks and tossed onto its side.' (line 47)** Award 1 mark for any of the following bullets: • (to show) upwards movement // it was pulled <u>up</u> / raised / uprooted / elevated / flew <u>up</u> / carried • (to show) the strength / power / force (of the wind) // the wind was strong / powerful / forceful • (to show) how easy it was (for the wind) to move it	**1**	

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2(d)	**Read this sentence from the text:** **'Julie and I had already made a brave start on rebuilding the sheds, mournfully avoiding the remains of the cage.' (lines 50-51)** **What effect does the writer suggest by using the word 'brave' to describe Julie and Rex's start on rebuilding the sheds?** Award one mark for each bullet up to a maximum of two marks: • they were courageous / strong • it was a huge task // it was difficult / not easy / a challenge // needed a lot of effort // had a lot to do • they were showing optimism / being positive / confident / moving on / overcoming sadness / not giving up / determined / resilient / facing what lay ahead // a fresh / new start / a restart	**2**	*FOCUS is on 'brave', not 'mournfully avoiding'* *Bullet 3: LOOK FOR a positive state of mind/attitude*

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2(e)	**Identify <u>one</u> example from the text below of how the writer uses language effectively to describe Odin.** (1) **'Weak cheeping revealed the smallest shadow of a bedraggled Odin perched precariously at the top of the tallest tree and shivering violently. Seriously shaken by his experience, he wasn't in a trusting mood. At the risk of appearing a complete idiot, I called up in a hopefully endearing voice, 'Odin, come to Daddy.' The bird's response was immediate. With a croak of relief he dropped from the tree like a bundle of black rags, landing at my feet. Normally he hated being picked up, but on this occasion our indestructible raven was more than willing to be scooped into my arms and taken home.' (lines 58-64)** **Explain the impression the writer creates in the example you have identified.** (2)	**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 ✓</th><th>Explanation ✓</th></tr>
<tr><td>1 ‘Weak cheeping revealed the smallest shadow’</td><td>frail, loss of energy, spirit, strength, vulnerable // faint noise // contrasts with his noisy ‘squawks’ // shrunk, not big // hard to see // barely alive // pitiful</td></tr>
<tr><td>2 ‘a bedraggled Odin perched precariously at the top of the tallest tree’</td><td>dishevelled, scruffy, messy, dirty, wet // has been through a lot // pitiful // clinging on // sense of danger, he might fall // vulnerable // solitary</td></tr>
<tr><td>3 ‘shivering violently’</td><td>shaking, trembling, involuntary movements // (shaking) excessively, non-stop, uncontrollably // cold // ill // suffering, in shock, scared, traumatised // pitiful
Do NOT accept ‘shaken’ for ‘shaking’</td></tr>
</table>
</td><td></td><td></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>4 ‘Seriously shaken’</td><td>extremely, very, terribly // stressed, in shock, scared, traumatised, upset
extremely stressed = 2 ticks, very shocked = 2 ticks</td></tr>
<tr><td>5 ‘With a croak of relief he dropped from the tree’</td><td>(gives) a throaty, deep sound // responds to, recognises Rex’s voice // return of energy, recovery // pleasure, happiness // (drops) quickly, straight away // eager // feels safe enough to fall // shows faith, confidence (in Rex)</td></tr>
<tr><td>6 ‘like a bundle of black rags’</td><td>a pile, heap // (feathers/wings are) torn, damaged // lifeless // worthless // ugly, dirty, messy // has gone through a lot, suffered // unrecognisable // pitiful</td></tr>
<tr><td>7 ‘indestructible raven was more than willing to be scooped into my arms’</td><td>a survivor // resilient, tough, strong // incredible, amazing, miraculous // allows Rex to lift him // happy, ready to be looked after, welcomes security, comfort // tired, no energy, passive // has to be lifted, carried // bond, affection</td></tr>
</table>
</td>
<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>
</tr>
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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 reasons why so many people buy sneakers made by the big brands, according to Text B.** **You must <u>use continuous writing</u> (not note form).** **Use your own words where appropriate.** **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: 1 everyday / essential / regular footwear // people from all walks of life / different people wear them // everyone / anyone wears them 2 sporting endorsements // contracts signed with (top) athletes // sporting hero / (top) athletes promote / advertise them // to wear / buy the same (footwear) as a sporting hero / (top) athlete / basketball idol 3 a (must have) fashion item / a trend // want to be up-to-date / fashionable / to show off // status symbol / prestigious / luxurious 4 for comfort	**20**	*1: LOOK for the idea of range / variety of people or everyday footwear* *2 + 6: LOOK FOR a reference to sport* *7: LOOK FOR a suggestion of effort made*

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance

3(a)	5 technology / innovation (in manufacture) // technical wizardry
	6 enhance / improve / help sporting performance // can play sport / run / better / fast(er) // good for athletes
	7 people collect / pursue / hunt them // a hobby
	8 different / new models / designs // can wear a different pair every day
	9 can trade / sell / exchange them // an investment
	10 can bond with others // (be in) a community / a club (of sneakerheads)
	11 their history / story
	12 (big brands produce) limited editions / rare sneakers // sneakers produced in small quantity / on sale for a short time		

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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

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3(b)	**Imagine you are Matthew Chang, director of the footwear brand Vida.** **You are interviewed by a fashion journalist who is writing an article about sneakers.** **Give your answer to the journalist's question, using information from the text.** **The journalist's question: Many people think that Vida sneakers are boring.** **What is your opinion and why?** **Relevant perspective:** Matthew Chang does not think Vida sneakers are boring **OR** also accept Matthew Chang accepts Vida sneakers may seem boring but they have other qualities / benefits 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 or 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 other creditworthy suggestions*

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3(b)	**Supporting details from the text** ✓ / **Developments** DEV **1 smaller, more sustainable brand // environmentally friendly, care about the environment // think about what they put on their feet** • nothing boring about sustainability, protecting the future // not made to be a collector's item // do not need celebrities, endorsements to sell them **2 famous, big brands are slow producing sustainable sneakers** • Vida sneakers are filling a gap in the market // compare big brands' half-hearted attempts despite their finances // big brands more concerned with profit **3 gaining popularity** • consumers are turning away from the big, predictable global brands // proof that they are excited by individuality rather than mass produced sneakers		

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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>4 large price tag // quality // durability // cheap, unbranded sneakers are thrown away and replaced

5 simple, classic designs

6 100% recycled material // return Vida sneakers to the company for recycling // other sneakers made of plastic, nylon, toxic glue // other sneakers end up in landfill, have a heavy carbon footprint</td><td>• price reflects skill in manufacture // economical since they will last a long time, no need to replace, value for money // price means they will not be thrown away // reduces overconsumption

• deliberate // stylish // timeless // avoidance of fashions trends // stream of new designs is unnecessary // no need to upgrade // message to buy less // consumers consciously rejecting fast fashion // simplicity and fewer parts make it easy to recycle
• keep sneakers out of landfill // educating consumers to be ‘green’ // nothing boring about company and customers having a social, eco conscience</td></tr>
</table>
</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
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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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