

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/12
Reading Passages (Core)

Key Messages

- It is important for candidates to differentiate clearly between the two parts of **Question 1(g)**. The first part of the question requires definition of specific words indicated in italics. The second part of this question requires an explanation of how the language of the complete phrase quoted on the question paper helps to convey a particular aspect of the passage.
- Candidates are reminded that **Question 2** is an extended response task and is primarily a test of their Reading skills. It is important that they show their understanding of the key points of the passage by following the requirements of the question, but not be over-reliant on the language of the original.
- With **Question 3**, candidates should ensure that they look for overall general points in **3(a)**, rather than listing illustrative examples of them, and that they attempt to focus and reorganise these points to address the question clearly when writing their answers to **3(b)**, using their own words where possible to show their understanding.

General Comments

In general, candidates were well prepared for this paper, the first appearance of the revised question paper format, and responded with interest to the subject matter of the reading passage. Overall, the sub-questions that constituted **Question 1** discriminated successfully, with those who had focused on close reading of both the passage and the questions scoring high marks. Candidates are advised to read both passages and questions carefully and to ensure that they focus closely on the precise requirements of each question when giving their answers. They should also take note of the total number of marks available for each question as this is an indication of the number of discrete points required in an answer that gains full marks – for example, a question carrying two marks is likely to require two points to be made for a complete answer. Although this may seem an obvious point it is one that candidates should keep in mind as, in the heat of the examination, it is very easy to assume that some points are so self-evident that it is not necessary for them to be included in an answer; however, if these are valid points, they can only be rewarded if they are clearly stated by the candidate. The key discriminator in **Question 1** in this paper was how successfully candidates had engaged with the connotations of key words within the passage (especially in **Question 1(g)(ii)**). Centres are encouraged to emphasise to candidates the importance of thinking carefully about a writer's choice of words and of how to explain their appreciation of specific vocabulary as used in the context of the passage. It is important for candidates to remember that credit cannot be given to answers which explain the meaning of a particular word by using the root word as a different part of speech (e.g. 'endure' and 'Bresciano showed endurance').

Candidates appeared to respond well to the subject matter of the passages and there was little evidence of serious misunderstanding of the main points. It is important for candidates to keep in mind that although the italicised introductory paragraphs that are printed at the start of each passage are not, in themselves, the focus of any questions, they nevertheless include information that is intended to provide context for the passage and that this information may be of help in answering **Question 2** in particular. For example, those candidates who took note of the fact that the first passage was set in the eighteenth century and who took this into account in their responses tended to produce more convincing letters than those who landed at Tangier Airport and contacted their relatives by mobile phone! Candidates are also advised, when answering **Question 2**, to keep in mind that this is an extended response task and that it central to this task that what they write must be firmly tethered to the original passage – the third bullet of the rubric of the question allows candidates to write imaginatively beyond the details contained in the passage but it is important that their original ideas are derived logically and convincingly from details contained in the original.

Nearly all candidates were well prepared for **Question 3** and showed a good understanding of what is required when writing a summary. Most responses identified at least six relevant points about the Gibraltar

Straits Bridge and then rewrote these as a single paragraph clearly focused on the requirements of the question. The most successful responses were those that turned the words of the original passage that formed the basis of the notes in **3(a)** into the candidates' own words in the response to **3(b)** and it should be emphasised that the ability to use one's own words in order to convey understanding is a key requirement in this question, however, it should also be mentioned that there was very little evidence of indiscriminate lifting of lengthy sections of the original passage, and that most candidates conveyed their understanding through selective lifting.

Candidates' presentation of their answers was of a satisfactory to good standard throughout. All approached the paper conscientiously and would appear to have tried their hardest; there were only a handful of candidates who failed to complete all three questions adequately and no evidence that there were serious problems arising from having to answer the paper under timed conditions.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates answered this straightforward question correctly and gained the one mark available by identifying that the fact that shrubs/grassland had been 'burnt brown' was an indication that the summer in Gibraltar had been a hot one. It was important, however, that the answers stated more than the shrubs had been 'burnt' as this word on its own did not give the precise detail that was required.
- (b) This question asked for *two* things that Bresciano noticed that showed that the ship was still close to the shore. Most candidates gained one mark by identifying that those on board were sufficiently close to make out that the goats they could see were *grazing*, but fewer gave the second detail that they could also see that the goatherds were *watching* the ship.
- (c) This question was also worth two marks; most understood that the dolphins stopped following the boat because they went off to look for shoals of mackerel, but in order to gain both available marks it was necessary to give the reason *why* they were looking for them which was because they wanted food. Some candidates misunderstood the passage and claimed that the dolphins stopped following because they were tired.
- (d)(i) This question was answered correctly by a large number of candidates who correctly stated that Bresciano wanted an adventure/to explore further into Morocco, or that he wanted to know more Arabic.
- (ii) Again, a large number of candidates correctly identified two of the three following reasons as to why Bresciano was concerned:
- He was concerned about his sister (and aunt)/wanted to protect her/take her back.
 - He was concerned about his father's health.
 - He knew he was needed to help run/concerned about the family business/business in Tangier.
- (e) This question asked for an explanation as to why Bresciano was not concerned by the change in sea conditions and the majority of candidates correctly stated that he was accustomed to rough waters from his childhood, or that he used to go fishing with his father. The most common incorrect response was to refer only to his buttoning his jacket and preparing to endure – candidates should be aware that it is sometimes necessary to look beyond the immediate context of a question to find the exact detail required for a correct answer.
- (f) There was evidence that some candidates had confused details from the passage about Bresciano and Lempriere, as a small, but significant, number claimed that the latter used to go fishing with his father as a child. The two correct points were that Lempriere wanted to be a sailor when he was younger and that he spent his childhood in the island of Jersey (statements such as 'he visited Jersey as a child' were not sufficiently specific to gain a mark).
- (g) Answers to this questions require evidence that the candidate has shown some understanding of the language used by the writer. Part (i) requires simple definitions of vocabulary used in the passage (with the words to be defined indicated by the use of italics) and **g(ii)** requires candidates

to show an appreciation of how the language of the whole phrase containing these words produces a specific response in the mind of the reader. It is important that candidates are clearly aware of the different focus of each part of the question.

In order to answer **g(i)** correctly it is necessary to explain clearly the meaning of the word indicated in the context of the passage as a whole. So, suitable synonyms for *exhilarating* would be *thrilling/exciting/inspiring*. *Enigmatical* could be defined as *mysterious/puzzling/riddle-like/magical*; *endure* by *undergo/put up with/face* and *petered out* by *died out/dwindled*. With this last example it was important that candidates' definitions showed an understanding that the phrase implies a slow falling off of the conversation so, *stopped* was not adequate as a definition. Overall, most candidates showed a general understanding of the meaning of at least two of the words that they attempted to define, but only a few were able to give sufficiently precise definitions to gain more than one of the three marks available.

Responses to **g(ii)** were, in general, also lacking in precise explanations of how the phrases helped the reader to understand Bresciano's thoughts and feelings while on his sea journey. The least successful did little more than repeat the definitions given in **(i)** and could not, therefore, be awarded any further marks. The key requirement of this question was to focus comments on *how* the language used conveyed Bresciano's thoughts and feelings and so it was necessary to consider any explanations from the character's perspective. For example, the description of the dolphins might suggest the joy Bresciano felt by seeing their uninhibited display (which would have gained one mark) and how this feeling also helped to convey his own sense of excitement at the freedom of being away from the drudgery of the office (which would have secured the second mark available). The description of Morocco as 'that wild and enigmatical land' could suggest Bresciano's eagerness to explore the mysteries of the exotic country to which he is travelling, his phlegmatic outlook and the confidence built up by his sailing experiences when he was younger is conveyed through his reaction to the oncoming rough weather (buttoning his jacket, etc.) and his understanding of the sufferings of his companion is shown by his allowing the conversation to die out as he appreciated Lempriere's increasing discomfort. All of these examples would have been accepted as appropriate and convincing responses to the language used by the writer although it is important to acknowledge that there are other different and equally valid interpretations that candidates could have made.

It has been necessary to consider at length candidates' responses to this question as it produced, overall, the least successful responses of all questions on the paper; it is hoped that the preceding comments will be of help to teachers preparing candidates for this paper in the future.

Question 2

As mentioned in the General Comments section above, **Question 2** is an extended response task and, therefore, is primarily a test of Reading rather than of the candidate's linguistic expression; this point is indicated by the fact that ten marks are awarded for Reading and only five for Writing. Overall, the standard of written expression was of an at least satisfactory standard, with little evidence of blurred meaning in the candidates' responses. Most candidates adopted an appropriate epistolary register and structured their writing through the use of paragraphs. The main limitation of many responses was that the writers were over-dependent on using the language of the original passage with the result that most answers gained marks in Bands 2 or 3. Some attempt to write more originally in the character of Bresciano would have led to higher marks being gained for this element of the question.

Most responses also fell into Bands 2 and 3 for Reading. In order to produce a better than satisfactory response to this task it is necessary for candidates to address all three bullets given in the rubric to the question, but also to appreciate that these bullets are increasingly demanding so that the description of the journey requires straightforward understanding and the ability to select appropriate details from the relevant section of the passage; the second bullet asking for an account of what Bresciano did on arrival in Tangier requires not only some reference to his first impressions of the town, but also some reference to meeting with his friend Abraham and resolving his immediate concerns for his sister and Aunt and, finally, there should be some development of the hints contained in the passage as to how he would plan to spend the rest of his time in Morocco. Although there is no clear explanation given in the passage itself of what his plans are, candidates could develop on his wish to see more of the country, to learn Arabic, his friendship with Abraham and Lempriere, but also his awareness of the need to return to Gibraltar to look after his father and his business. Responses achieving marks in the Band 1 range would be expected to develop these points into a substantial paragraph and also to express ideas throughout in the candidate's independent language and not to be over-reliant on using the language of the original writer.

Question 3

The overall successful level of the candidates' responses to the Summary question has already been commented on. Most candidates gained at least six or seven marks for the note-making element of this question and should be complimented on the fact that, overall, the notes were clearly focused on the requirements of the task without containing irrelevant or extraneous material. The main limitation of responses to this part of the question was a tendency to separate different details of one main point in the hope that they would be accepted as discrete points. For example, the first two sentences of the final paragraph of the passage contain a range of different examples all referring to the main point concerning ways in which people can cross the bridge and, therefore, all a candidate was required to do was to identify the general point rather than list the different illustrations. Future candidates are advised to concentrate on looking for the overall key points and try to avoid the distraction of supporting examples.

The points listed in the Mark Scheme relating to the main features of the bridge for this question are as follows:

- 1 designed by Eugene Tsui
- 2 longest bridge in the world
- 3 revolutionary design/unlike any other bridge
- 4 involves both conventional bridge and underwater tunnels (N.B. Do not allow statements that the bridge 'floats' without evidence of further understanding)
- 5 man-made island in the middle will be created
- 6 about 14.5 km in length
- 7 has ecological features – windmills/underwater turbines/wind and water power farm
- 8 this will provide power (12 billion kilowatts) for the mainland
- 9 does not disturb natural ecology of the region
- 10 stretches from Spain to Morocco/links to Africa and Europe/Links Tarifa and Point Cires
- 11 shipping lanes will be undisturbed
- 12 will carry motor vehicles/trains and pedestrians/cyclists, etc.
- 13 pedestrian areas will have garden features, etc.

As mentioned earlier, written expression for part **(b)** of this question was generally of an at least satisfactory level with most responses being clearly focused on the task. There was, however, a significant amount of lifting of the language of the original which meant that many responses were placed in Bands 2 and 3 for this element. Those preparing for this paper in future are encouraged to concentrate on developing the skill of expressing their understanding by using their own words, but should also keep in mind that this requirement does not mean that they should look to paraphrase every word of the original. The key point for Core candidates is that they should show as clear evidence as they can that they have understood both the passage and the question; this can be indicated effectively by reorganising and manipulating the points and language of the notes they have made in answer to **3(a)** and ensuring that their answers have a clear introductory topic sentence (such as 'The planned link between Gibraltar to Africa will be the longest bridge in the world') on which they can focus the main points of their answer.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/22
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for **Reading (40 marks)**. In addition, there were up to **ten marks** available for **Writing**: five marks in **Question 1** and five marks in **Question 3**. Candidates are advised that in order to aim for high marks in this component they should:

- read both passages very carefully, including any introduction offered to a passage
- read the questions carefully to identify key details, for example the required perspective in **Question 1**
- pay attention to each section of a question
- spend time planning responses to address the specific requirements of each of the tasks set
- use a range of appropriate vocabulary
- select only the material that is appropriate for the response to the question
- check and edit their responses carefully
- plan the structure and sequence of the material in responses
- adapt writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- ensure that ideas are developed and fully explained in **Question 1** and **Question 2**.

General Comments

Candidates' responses to this paper indicated at least some familiarity with the demands of each task, along with an awareness of the need to use material from the passages to answer the questions. Responses covered a wide range, and though there were examples of candidates replaying the text rather than addressing the detail of tasks specifically, most appeared to have been entered for the appropriate tier and were able to demonstrate at least general understanding of both tasks and texts.

Responses to the tasks suggested that candidates had found the passages generally accessible, had planned their use of time helpfully and had finished within the two hours. Instances where candidates had missed all or part of a question were extremely rare across the cohort as a whole. Most candidates had paid attention to the guidance offered with respect to the length of their answers and almost all appeared to find the numbering of the bullet points in the answer grid for **3(a)** a helpful reminder of the need to offer 15 points, one per line.

There were very few significant misunderstandings of the general content of the passages, though there was evidence that some candidates needed to read and interpret the detail of both texts and tasks more carefully. For example, in responding to Passage A **Question 1**, a number of candidates wrote from the point of view of the narrator and/or a tourist to the area rather than from the perspective of one of the original prospectors as the question required. Careful attention to detail, including revisiting the passage to refine understanding, is essential if candidates are to offer convincing evidence of their reading skills at higher levels.

Copying was rarely an issue in **Question 1**, with relatively few candidates over-reliant on the language of the passage, though some lifting of key phrases and/or close paraphrase was fairly common – 'thrown out into the void,' and 'seemed to clang shut behind us', were too often reproduced or awkwardly reworded. Replaying indiscriminately the narrator's experience was a feature of a number of less successful answers. Candidates are reminded that in order to demonstrate the skills necessary for higher levels, they need to use and interpret the evidence in the text – explicit and implicit – standing back from the passage in the light of the question. Details from the text should be used to inform and support their ideas, rather than repeated mechanically.

Answers to **Question 2** showed at least some awareness of the need to consider and explain meaning and/or effect rather than simply label devices. Those who had taken careful note of the instruction to select four choices in each half appeared to have benefitted from that advice – taking time to consider which four

choices they would offer in each half. Consequently, they were able both to offer a range of potentially interesting selections and to discuss each of their choices at some length. For higher marks, candidates need to ensure that they are making precise and appropriate choices of words and phrases. These choices each need to be explored and explained in some detail to show understanding of how the writer is using language in the particular instance under consideration.

In **Question 3** responses, it was encouraging to see that many candidates had understood the need to identify 15 distinct points from Passage B in part **3(a)** and then organise these points into a fluent, concise prose response using their own words in **3(b)**. There was evidence that the instruction that they did not need to use their own words in **3(a)** had been understood – some chose to use their own words when it helped to clarify a point and selected ideas in the language of the text for other points. On occasion, choices needed to be more careful in order to avoid changes of meaning and factual inaccuracy. For example, suggestions that Carter had ‘engaged the services of two antiques’ were not accurate. At times, candidates wrote at length recounting and exemplifying Carter’s decision making process, rather than offering concise and clear points addressing the specifics of the task. For higher marks, candidates should ensure that they capitalise on the opportunity when planning their prose response in **3(b)** to revisit and refine as required their points in **3(a)**, for example to avoid repetition of ideas in these notes.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to keep in mind that 20% of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing – planning and editing their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, imprecise meaning and awkward expression.

Most responses had some sense of audience in **Question 1** and were aware of the need to adopt a more impersonal, informative style required in **Question 3**. However, inappropriate choices of vocabulary at times detracted from the overall style of an answer, showing limited ability to communicate shades of meaning and occasionally obscuring intended meaning altogether. Whilst Writing is not assessed in **Question 2**, candidates should ensure that they consider carefully their own choices of vocabulary when attempting to describe the effects and meanings of the selections they are discussing. In some instances, candidates might have been able to demonstrate more convincingly understanding of the language used by the author had they used vocabulary more precisely themselves. Likewise, checking and editing all three answers more thoroughly might help some candidates to ensure they are offering more secure evidence of their skills to Examiners.

A clear focus on the specific instruction and wording of a question during the planning of an answer will allow candidates to work to identify relevant detail in the text, cover all aspects of the task and target marks at the higher levels.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

Imagine you are one of the original prospectors who came to this canyon from far away 150 years ago. Write a letter home to your husband or wife. You should describe the difficulties of the journey, explain the living and working conditions at the settlement, and explore what the future may hold, depending on whether or not your husband or wife joins you.

Base your letter on what you have read in Passage A. Be careful to use your own words.

(20 marks)

There were some superb examples of empathic engagement with the passage for **Question 1** with neatly integrated supportive detail and development woven in impressively. At the top end, responses were thorough and convincing, often poignant, with a strong sense of purpose and approach. Candidates at various levels recognised the addictive nature of gold fever, the danger faced en route and the challenges of living and working conditions. Most were able to offer at least generally relevant responses to the task, though not all had considered carefully how to shift perspective from that of the narrator to that of ‘one of the original prospectors’ arriving ‘from far away 150 years’ before and interpret details to support that viewpoint.

Stronger responses to the question used ideas from the passage carefully and consistently – evaluating and modifying the evidence presented by the tourist-narrator to form the basis of an original prospector’s letter home. The ‘air conditioning’ offering relief to the modern day visitor was suitably absent from the details of an original prospector’s account and had clearly prompted for many the realisation that there would have been little or no escape from the searing heat 150 years before. Better answers linked in here evidence of how this affected the horses and other travellers too (as suggested by the photographic evidence noted by the narrator). Those candidates who understood the need to read through the passage and select, then identify and organise their ideas to address the specifics of the task were often most successful – simply repeating aspects of the passage without considering the perspective required necessarily limited the range of ideas open to some candidates. Those who made reference to the existence of a museum in the canyon had often not successfully understood the need to shift perspective from the present day to what would have been there initially before the courthouse was converted.

Some of the best answers offered an overview from the prospector’s standpoint rather than simply transfer the narrator’s views and experiences to the speech. Even some relatively modest answers were able, for example, to develop their response to the third bullet in terms of family dreams and concern for the loved one who might be too vulnerable to survive the journey or the tough life of a mining community. Rather than present material chronologically as it arrived in the passage, the strongest answers reworked details of the narrator’s experience to fit a projection of life for the original prospectors as suggested by details offered later on. For example the steep 22 kilometre climb, far from being completed speedily, was suggested as being challenging and slow for the dehydrated horses pulling an overloaded wagon. By taking this approach – reading the passage as a whole, then selecting and connecting points during planning – candidates were able to produce a more consistent overview, make full use of details in support and formulate a convincing response from the prospector’s viewpoint. Modern-sounding health and safety considerations like seat belts and barriers were often not mentioned where consideration had been given to selection of relevant detail – instead observations of the potential for accident, with some answers even suggesting how the vehicle might have found itself ‘far below’, proved most effective.

Strong answers created a suitable style for the letter. Recognising that it was written to a spouse after some delay, many were able to decide on and stick to a level of formality they considered appropriate and were often reassuring or encouraging in tone offering a highly convincing voice for the writer and sensitive to the imagined audience for their letter. Where candidates had considered their audience and purpose less carefully and followed a more formulaic response, the overall effect at times suffered. The pattern of repeating question details in the opening paragraph by way of introduction as adopted by some candidates, for example, meant some rather stilted and less convincing beginnings – ‘My dear sorry I haven’t written...I was one of the prospectors who went to the canyon 150 years ago. It was unforgettable for me.’ Similarly, momentary lapses of stance and setting such as suggestions that their partner should ‘book a flight to join [them] next week’ indicated some responses might have been more thoroughly planned.

Better responses were clear that they were writing from the perspective of an original prospector and used the bullet points offered to help them plan their ideas effectively. Some of the best responses had a strong sense of their future plans from the start, and organised their ideas to address the third bullet from the beginning rather than necessarily follow the order of the bullets in the question. The best answers offered observations and explanations clearly linked to and supported by textual detail, teasing out points, for example to suggest both the mental and physical effects of life as a miner. A number picked up on more subtle details suggested by the photographs, noting the physical effect on the young miners and the horses and developing ideas based on the demands of workload/competition, scarcity of provisions and environmental challenges.

In mid-range answers, uneven treatment of the bullets might often have been addressed at the planning stage – in part by paying attention to the instruction in the question to write as an original prospector, not the narrator of the piece. Crucially, rather than replaying material, a number of candidates could have improved answers by considering the implications of the information they were reading. Some candidates touched on points about the miners’ lives by simply replaying examples from the text, thus missing opportunities to interpret and explain those points fully, develop or support them. For example, to note that there was a courthouse was potentially relevant, but more convincing when considered as evidence of the fights, disputes and harsh competition surrounding the letter writer.

Care with spelling might also have improved a number of mid-range answers. Whilst responses to **Question 1** are not assessed specifically for accuracy in spelling and grammar, inaccuracies can dilute evidence of understanding. For example, a ‘cannon’ is not the same as a ‘canyon’, and the suggestion that a journey has been ‘exhaustive’ is rather different from suggesting the journey was ‘exhausting’. In a number of answers, a tendency to misinterpret assessment objective W3 meant answers attempted to target ‘range’ at

the expense of 'appropriate' vocabulary. Candidates need to be precise in their choices, making sure their intended meaning is clear. At times insecure use of vocabulary disguised meaning. Candidates need to be using vocabulary with a sense of purpose and precision rather than trying too hard to work in some of their more exotic acquisitions – for example 'resplendent sun' was too complimentary to express the threatening nature of the intense heat in either passage. At worst, redundant use of adjectives affects both the clarity of the response and the evidence of understanding it is able to communicate – 'I recently arrived in this transcendent place where I contemplated many eccentric things. The place looked ostentatious – everyone agile' demonstrates no evidence of close reading or understanding of the ideas in the text.

The first bullet recounting the journey was usually the most detailed, containing several points about the difficulties faced and the conditions of the roads. In less good responses, the points were made by using the words of the passage, for example, 'For 22 kilometres we climbed steeply' and 'seeing no signs of life or habitation.' A lot of letters written were heavily reliant on the original wording and some wrote in the same time period as the passage, referring unhelpfully to air conditioning, four-wheel drives, and including the words of the tour operator, 'Take a trip...'. Many referred to the river below without developing the point and likewise simply repeated the details of the two signs seen by the narrator without careful consideration of when and why each of them might have been placed there. Some commented in quite general terms about the dangers of the trip and their fears but did not support these assertions with specific detail from the passage. There was some misunderstanding about the use of ropes, some responses did not include the reason for their journey and few mentioned fellow travellers.

Candidates offering stronger answers were able to adapt the detail and create a convincing sense of period. References were made to the wagons and their precious supplies, and fears for the welfare and safety of the horses. Some contained clearly expressed thoughts and feelings about the travelling conditions, the difficulties they faced as early prospectors, the mental and physical effects of the journey and their hopes for the future. Some had positioned themselves as amongst the earliest prospectors and were thus involved in constructing the road themselves.

The second bullet required candidates to use the clues in the passage to develop suggestions as to how living and working conditions might have been in the time of an original prospector. Where candidates had not paid attention to the detail of the task and/or the need to modify material, this second part of the letter contained the most misunderstandings and mis-readings. Less good responses did not modify the details from the passage and described the settlement as long abandoned with only the courthouse as a museum remaining. Some referred to photographs found in the museum of young miners 'staring dully into the camera' and tourists visiting the area. Better responses used the detail in the passage to describe their own haggard faces and their own conflicts connected to staking claims. There were some detailed descriptions of panning for gold taken directly from the passage with little adaptation, missing opportunities to go further. Failure to write in the correct time period made it difficult in this second bullet to include a range of suitable references and to create a convincing account of the living and working conditions.

In good responses this second part contained the most development and the most convincing sense of period. The harsh conditions were clearly described using less explicit clues from the passage. References were made to the poor homes and food, long hours in the hot sun, exhaustion and despondency. Better responses referred to the lack of food due to the barren land, the problems of obtaining supplies, the poor state of the horses and the violent and competitive atmosphere. Development was often imaginative and fully related to the passage whereas less good responses invented more loosely connected narrative and drifted away from the evidence in the text.

Some letters were written as the wife, though opportunities to write about the specific problems faced by women as a minority in that situation were not always taken.

The best answers firmly linked their ideas for the third bullet to details in the passage. Plans often included reference to various parts of the passage, creating a cohesive and persuasive response. They outlined why their partners should not join them – for example, that the journey was too dangerous, the lifestyle too harsh and the prospects poor. Where plans included a feverish invitation to join them, the rationale suggested was often in terms of a second pair of hands increasing the chances of finding gold and all that might bring them. In less good responses plans for the future were not fully formed.

Those written in error from the perspective of the present day narrator to their partner offered inappropriate invitations to take the same trip, as a holiday break, and try their luck at prospecting, or issued warnings not to come as the settlement was already abandoned and there was no gold. The best responses from the correct perspective had often decided on the precise point of writing, allowing them to capitalise on details noted in the text. Suggestions that others might be beginning to lose heart and to talk of abandoning the

settlement were offered in some of these answers, alongside a deliberate sense of misguided optimism. Some looked to the future, hoping that the new courthouse being built would bring stability and help to establish a more civilised community. Many outlined the benefits of their potential new-found wealth.

Less successful responses made few references to the passage and included quite general points about their invented families or repeated previous details. The least successful answers were often thin, repetitive or short. A number of these answers at lower levels had not picked up on the clear instruction in the wording of the question to write from the perspective of someone who came to the canyon '150 years ago'. Whereas isolated anachronisms such as safety barriers and signs giving information about the gold rush were slightly less of a concern, it became impossible to address A2 convincingly if the courthouse was now a museum, the houses already washed away, and the efforts of the writer and his companions directed by a tour guide.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- ensure that you adopt the correct voice and persona by reading the question carefully
- read the passage carefully and return to check key details as you plan your answer
- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- adapt material from the passage to make it an appropriate response to the specific task set
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- leave sufficient time to edit your response
- extend and develop relevantly a number of the ideas you include – do not just repeat them.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of (a) the road and its surroundings in paragraph 3, and (b) the effect on the writer of panning for gold in paragraph 6. Select four powerful words and phrases from each paragraph. Your choices should include imagery. Explain how each word or phrase selected is used effectively in the context

(10 marks)

Rather than offering a series of notes for each choice, more successful responses to **Question 2** often take the form of continuous prose, allowing candidates to explore their choices fully and connect their ideas where appropriate. Though candidates should analyse and explore each of the examples they select, responses that simply list possible ideas miss opportunities to extend the discussion and offer evidence of understanding at a higher level. Partially effective explanations are a feature of mid to low range answers and are often the result of a failure to explain fully the precise meaning of words selected and/or how exactly each specific example is working within context. Marks are given for the relevance of the words and phrases chosen to answer the question, and for the quality of the analysis. Credit is given in **Question 2** for the ability to select a range of interesting or unusual examples of words and phrases relevant to the focus of the question in each section. Responses that go on to explore and explain meanings of the words are awarded further marks. Responses that also explore the effects that the use of particular words have on the reader can score up to the highest mark of ten.

The most successful responses to **Question 2** showed precise focus at word level, purposefully selected a number of key examples in each half – including images – and answered both parts of the question equally well, unpicking choices in each to consider exactly how these were working in context. Stronger answers were able, for example, to explain the sense of threat and presence created by 'loomed' and discussed the temptation implicit in the word 'lured' rather than merely commenting on being trapped.

Less secure understanding led some candidates to suggest more factual language choices such as 'spasms in my back', 'comforts of civilisation' and 'partially washed away'. Others offered part choices where only a section of an image had been selected. Some answers settled for a general explanation of a string of potential choices all bracketed together to show, for example, 'the power of the river' and/or copied whole sections of sentences without careful identification of the key words/phrases within. Better answers began to consider the connotations and associations of particular choices – for example, noting that 'roars' was reminiscent of the noise made by wild beasts such as lions, bears or even monsters, and developing the analysis to discuss the threat and unpredictability this suggested, with the best answers often going on to investigate how that linked to the snake-like movement suggested by 'writhed'.

Similarly, the very best answers were often equally careful in both halves to unpick the layers of meaning in relation to choices. Strong responses to part **(b)** for example considered how 'fever' suggested that the lust for gold turned in to a kind of illness that was contagious and how 'succumbed' added to that sense of both

giving in to temptation or greed, as well as dying from the effects of that disease. Good answers often did more than explain that 'sapping away' meant a loss of energy, going on to consider the precise suggestions of sapping away/sap and able to discuss that sense of a gradual loss of (liquid) life and vitality, as if the life force were draining out.

There was some evidence that a small number of candidates had spent time counting the exact number of words in their response – this is not necessary and is unlikely to be a good use of their time. Guidance on the length of the response is offered to indicate the likely length required to address a task successfully. Responses that offer significantly less or attempt to write substantially more may well be self-penalising – either leaving insufficient opportunity to explore choices in detail or putting themselves under unnecessary time pressure and resulting in less precise and carefully focused explanation. Similarly, answers that chose to ignore the advice to offer four choices in each half were in danger of offering insufficient evidence of understanding and/or less targeted responses containing a number of less effective or even inappropriate choices, diluting the evidence that they understood how language was being used.

Less successful responses tended to list far too many 'choices' and offer superficial, half-formed ideas, frequently relying heavily on repeating the language of the original. Whilst the best responses were often able to work towards establishing links, contrasts and connections within the language used, some attempted to impose an overview from the start and narrowed down the scope of their discussion unhelpfully. Noting 'water imagery' in part (b) might have been a useful starting point for a discussion of a number of choices though was by no means the whole picture and at times led to mis-readings such as interpreting 'swam' to mean that the sieve was physically floating away upstream in reality.

In attempting to spot general techniques and devices rather than respond to the specific examples in context, some answers missed opportunities to move beyond Band 4. For example, the vague assertion that 'writhed and frothed present kinaesthetic imagery and show how the river was moving', demonstrated little understanding without going on to explain how exactly writhed and frothed differed and the precise effect of each word individually, then combined. For the most part, candidates were able to show that they at least recognised potentially interesting examples of language use and had something they wanted to express in relation to their choice – offering at least some sense of the meanings and/or effects of their selections, even if only in a very generalised way at times. Imprecise use and understanding of vocabulary limited a number of explanations in this question too though. For marks in the top bands, candidates need to demonstrate that they are thinking about and exploring how the language is working. Quality of analysis rather than feature spotting needs to be the emphasis.

The following example, taken from a candidate's response this examination series, is given as an indication of what constitutes an appropriate type of response to the question. It is not intended to be a model answer and might well have been improved further.

(a) the road and its surroundings in paragraph 3

The writer uses the phrase 'writhed and frothed' to describe the river. This brings the image of a very fast flowing river which cannot be controlled – this makes it seem more dangerous. 'Writhed' makes it sound like a wild animal trying to free itself, possibly a snake. This adds to the sinister image.

'Sheer rock face' effectively brings to mind an immense towering sheet of rock. 'Sheer' also makes me imagine its huge strength and power. The word 'face' could also suggest a literal face which is always watching the travellers.

The phrase 'rusty, broken-backed carcass' brings a vivid image of the vehicle. It indirectly makes the vehicle seem like a creature ('carcass') which has died. 'Carcass' makes it sound painful and makes it seem like the 'death' of the vehicle was violent. 'Broken-backed' is a hyphenated word and an alliteration and gives rhythm as well as an image of a damaged vehicle – it evokes feelings of pity for the vehicle. 'Rusting' suggests that the vehicle is weathered and has been decomposing for quite some time. It also brings to mind a reddish brown colour.

'Clinging' is used by the writer to personify the road on the precipice. It gives the impression that the road is terrified of the height and is literally 'clinging' for support. 'Clinging' is also very powerful as it brings an image of deep fear and makes you imagine the desperation to hold on to the rock to escape doom.

(b) the effect on the writer of panning for gold in paragraph 6

'Succumbed' suggests that the writer was originally dubious about the gold fever, but eventually was taken over by it. 'Succumbed' could also suggest that the gold fever is like a real illness and that one is helpless against it.

The writer uses the phrase 'kaleidoscope of fragmented fantasies' to describe their thoughts during the gold panning. It suggests that there are many thoughts ('kaleidoscope') which are rushing very fast, too fast to be whole thoughts; hence they are fragmented. The phrase also gives the effect of very hopeful and positive thoughts which are rapidly being formed but are unreal. 'Fragmented' could also indicate that the writer is not in their right mind and that their 'fantasies' are unrealistic and flawed. The alliteration also gives rhythm.

'Swirled' – this continues the image of changing thoughts and creates a surreal but happy image. It also reflects the swirling gravel. The phrase 'energy sapping' could suggest that the gold is almost parasitical as it has 'sapped' away life. Energy sapping could suggest that along with life being drained away, hopes of gold are also diminishing over time.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- ensure that all your choices are relevant and identified precisely using quotation marks
- take time to choose the best examples within each paragraph rather than listing possibilities
- when offering a phrase as a choice, discuss how each of the words within it is working
- do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle
- try to explain both how and why a particular word or image might have been used
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them
- avoid generalised, 'empty' comments, such as 'the writer uses lots of adjectives to describe...'
- if you are not sure about effects, offer a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- do not just label choices, discuss them in some detail
- to explain effects, think of the connotations and associations of the word(s) being used
- leave time to re-read and add to your answer.

Question 3

(a) Notes

What did Carter have to do before being ready to embark on his excavation, according to Passage B? Write your answer using short notes. Write one point per line. You do not need to use your own words. Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer. [15]

(b) Summary

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about what Carter had to do before being ready to embark on his excavation.

You must use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible.

Your summary should include all 15 of your points in Question 3(a) and must be 200 to 250 words.

Up to 5 marks are available for the quality of your writing.

[5]

(20 marks)

Pleasingly, almost all candidates had understood the need to identify just 15 points in **3(a)** and that points added after the 15 would not be credited unless replacing a crossed out answer earlier on. Selecting and identifying points meant that candidates had to read and plan their answers carefully both to avoid repetition and to organise their ideas sensibly. There was more than one way in which points could be logically grouped and these options were reflected in the mark scheme. There were a total of 20 potential points available from this one passage allowing generous leeway for candidates looking for 15. Most were able to identify at least seven points from the passage. Better, more focused, answers typically scored two thirds or more of the available content marks. **Question 3(b)** responses that did well had used their points from **3(a)** carefully – organising them purposefully into a concise, fluent prose response rather than relying on

repeating points in the order or language of the passage. There was some suggestion that answers at the top end had revisited points in **3(a)** during the planning stages of **3(b)** in order to edit and refine points in this part of the question – leading to clearer more distinct points in **3(a)** and an efficient and well-focused response in **3(b)**.

To answer this question successfully, candidates needed to first identify 15 points that were relevant to the question, listing them clearly – one per numbered line, in note form. Candidates are reminded that they are only credited with a maximum of one mark per line. Candidates are not required to use their own words in this part of the question, though better answers had often chosen to do so for clarity, for example where points were implied and/or exemplified more than once in the original text. Some noted Carter had to include equipment for providing light in his supplies rather than offering separate examples of candles and/or torches; others avoided lists of examples by noting he had taken reference materials and/or the means to record his finds. Answers, though in note form, needed to be sufficiently clear and focused to identify the point in hand. The question asked what Carter had had to do and stronger answers often used this as a framework for their response, including verbs with each point to help focus their notes – for example, *get* permit from authorities, *leave* gifts for the director of antiquities and *find* good site for camp. Less successful answers sometimes tried to do this but repeated the same verb throughout. On occasion, this detracted from the content they were trying to communicate or clouded the sense of a point through injudicious choice – for example ‘carrying reference books’ and ‘carrying supplies’ both made sense in context whereas ‘carrying a drove of donkeys’ did not.

Errors of number when noting some ideas (for example, incorrect use of singular or plural) served to blur points on occasion too. Carter had clearly had to assemble more than one tent, had hired workmen not (a) workman and had taken more than one reference book. There are no marks to be scored for Writing in **3(a)**, however, checking responses for accuracy in spelling and grammar is clearly essential if candidates are to avoid the potential danger of negating points through careless slips. Candidates should pay particular attention, for example, to correct any spelling errors that might change meaning. ‘Hard’ donkeys are not the same as ‘hardy’ donkeys; ‘donkeys’ and ‘monkeys’ are quite clearly different animals. Care needs to be taken too if selecting verbatim from the text to ensure that the selection remains accurate out of context – for example asserting that a ‘team had to be assembled consisting of a foreman’ was not accurate since the team was more than just the foreman.

The majority of candidates demonstrated an awareness of the appropriate style for a summary, with very few examples of wholesale copying though occasionally some replayed the passage or even added in further speculation and detail, resulting in less concise answers. The most successful responses re-ordered and re-grouped the relevant information from the passage, with a clear focus on the question. The best answers had considered carefully both the content and organisation of their answer, writing in fluent sentences, within the prescribed length and using their own words as far as possible. They avoided writing introductory statements and making comments, and concentrated on giving a factual objective summary.

In a number of answers, the inclusion of irrelevant and/or repeated material diminished the focus and depressed the Writing mark.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- read the question carefully and underline the key words
- re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify precisely the content points required
- list relevant points clearly in as few words as possible
- read through your list of points in **3(a)** checking each is distinct and accurate
- plan the structure of your response in **3(b)** – for example organising and sequencing content logically
- write informatively and never comment on the content of the passage.
- be careful to give only information that answers the question
- you can choose to use your own words in **3(a)** and must use your own words in **3(b)**
- do not add further numbered points in **3(a)** past the 15 required
- pay attention to the guidance for length in **3(b)**
- do not add detail or examples to the content of the passage
- avoid repetition of points.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/32

Directed Writing and Composition

Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for Writing, although there were ten marks available for Reading in **Question 1**.

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

- use an appropriate form and adapt their style with the intended audience in mind
- structure ideas logically and organise their writing effectively
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions or engaging, credible narratives
- construct sentences accurately and vary sentence types to create effects
- select appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary and use it with precision.

General Comments

Examiners found that in the great majority of scripts a secure understanding was shown of what was expected in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition, and of the different skills required in each. Most responses, at all levels of achievement, were developed and there were very few brief or under-developed scripts. Examiners noted a clear understanding of the instructions on the question paper at all levels of ability and very few candidates indeed misread the rubric or completed more or fewer than the number of questions required. Candidates appeared to be well-practised in timing their responses so that sufficient time was given to each question. There was sometimes too much concern about the number of words used in responses, especially in **Question 1**, as candidates perhaps took too literally the guidance given on the question paper about word count.

Most responses showed a committed engagement with the topic in **Question 1**, often with a sound grasp of the main ideas. Nearly all candidates, across the mark range, expressed their ideas in their own words and were not overly dependent on the passage for the wording of their answers. There was very little copying of words and phrases from the passage. Better answers here also tended to structure their responses in their own way to support a cohesive argument of their own. Weaker candidates tended to reiterate the points in the passage, often in the same sequence, and although there was a general understanding of the ideas, there was less comment on the different points in the passage. Occasionally, insufficient use was made of the reading material, and responses drifted into a general discussion about education and pressures on students rather than a commentary on the ideas in the passage.

Better responses paid attention to the audience and style required for a formal letter in response to the article. There was a clear sense of audience at the top of the mark range and in some responses the same slightly mocking, deliberately exaggerated tone of the passage was adopted successfully to undermine the writer's ideas. Many, however, used a more straightforward style and there were some occasional lapses in the formal register expected here.

In the compositions, the two genres were attempted in fairly equal numbers. Better responses in the composition section as a whole were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected. Descriptive pieces at this level were both detailed and cohesive. Weaker descriptions tended to be less well-constructed, to have an overlong introduction or to drift into narrative. There was some misreading of the word 'workshop', but examiners focused more on the quality of the description rather than the exact interpretation of the word. Narrative responses given marks in the higher bands were organised well although most were fairly straightforward chronological accounts. Weaker narrative writing was characterised by inconclusive or unsatisfying endings, sometimes with simple storylines which lacked credibility. Composition responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in

particular genres, such as the importance of credible characters and plots in narratives and the use of interesting details and images in descriptions.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1: Directed Writing

Read carefully the newspaper article in the Reading Booklet Insert and then answer Section 1, Question 1 on this Question Paper.

Write a letter to the writer in which you respond to the ideas and arguments in the article. You may agree or disagree with what the writer has written.

In your letter you should:

- **identify and evaluate the writer's views**
- **use your own ideas to support your comments on the writer's views.**

Base your letter on what you have read in the article, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the two bullet points. Begin your letter, 'Dear Sir or Madam...'

(25 marks)

25 marks were available for this question, of which 15 were for the quality of writing and 10 for the understanding and use of the content in the passage.

High marks were awarded where the ideas in the passage were scrutinised thoughtfully and where the letter was accurately written in an appropriate style and form. Better responses here tended to adopt a formal but expressive style and handled the ideas in the passage confidently, often selecting and discussing specific points and arriving at a considered point of view. The writer's deliberately exaggerated claims were well understood at this level and were sometimes referred to in order to undermine his/her arguments. A range of different ideas from the passage was addressed discretely and opinions and anecdotes from candidates' own experience were pertinent to the arguments presented in the passage. In the middle range of marks, the general principles of the writer's ideas were understood and were reproduced with perhaps a little discussion and development of some ideas, usually the effects of overloading young children with academic work. Sometimes candidates rewrote the examples given in the passage, perhaps changing the wording but not necessarily evaluating the ideas. Weaker responses tended to take at face value the writer's exaggerated claims about what young children had to learn in schools and showed a limited understanding of the different points made.

The marks for Reading

The best responses adopted a consistently evaluative stance towards the ideas expressed in the passage and recognised the deliberately provocative tone and exaggerated claims of the speaker. Some very good answers used the contrast in the article between schools in previous generations and now and challenged the assumption that education was better in the past. Some used the writer's own descriptions of the past to suggest that such an education would not equip students for the modern world and highlighted the lack of understanding on the writer's part of the context of modern education. The need to speak several languages or to have a good knowledge of science or mathematics was justified in these good responses in different ways and many took issue with the portrayal of teachers as greedy or cynical, suggesting that they had a better understanding of the competitive nature of modern education and employment than the writer. Others approached the task in the voice of a parent, arguing that it was no bad thing that a child's life left little time for dangerous or time-wasting influences such as social media or internet gaming. The responsibilities of a parent were sometimes addressed, showing real insight into the writer's implied criticism of modern parenting that allowed children to be 'tortured' at school. Some excellent responses argued persuasively that parents who indulged their children and did not instil in them a good work ethic were themselves at fault. Where candidates broadly agreed with the ideas in the passage, high-level responses examined how modern schools had been caught up in a competitive and reductive system which preyed on parents' fears for their children's future and exploited these anxieties for money. At the highest level, a cohesive argument emerged which paid due regard to the different points made by the writer but also provided a strong overview of the principles behind the views expressed.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 2 where the ideas were evaluated to some degree. A mark of seven was awarded for many responses where there was clear evaluation of one or two ideas in the passage although some points were reproduced with limited critical comment. At this level, responses tended to identify the exaggeration in the passage and to discuss some key points, such as reasons why children's education needed to be more rigorous now than in the past. Other points sometimes dealt with more evaluatively included the need for children to work hard but have leisure time as well in order to stay healthy. These evaluative points, even where other ideas were accepted at face value and reproduced, were often enough for Examiners to award a mark of seven, but a more sustained critical approach was needed for a higher mark.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 3 where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the passage but without the evaluation mentioned above. Responses at this level showed a sensible understanding of the main ideas in the passage such as the effect of over-working young children on their health and happiness. Candidates at this level tended to mention and agree straightforwardly with some of the arguments such as the unnecessarily advanced curriculum being taught and the need for a more balanced life for students. Personal opinions and anecdotes added some substance to the answers at this level without really adopting the critical stance required for a mark in the higher band. Candidates sometimes missed the deliberate exaggeration of the 17 languages or the EU fish quotas and there was sometimes a slight misreading of the emphasis of the passage with reference to bullying. Here, and often lower in the mark range too, the point about bullying was misread as implicitly condoning such behaviour but a mark of five or six could be given where there was sufficient, often straightforward understanding and reproduction of a range of points, with some overall grasp of the issues.

Weaker responses showed more misunderstanding, drifted away from the passage or addressed the material thinly. Some at this level referred to the general idea of students being over-burdened with school work but did not include the more specific points made. Others disagreed with the writer in a simple, assertive way, often citing examples of better schools and ideas about education but without linking these to the passage. There were some misreadings, either of the bullying point mentioned above or comments were made about calculators being used in modern day education which showed a misunderstanding of the point being made. Some responses began reasonably well, showing some grasp of the ideas in the passage but were diverted into more general comments about education and schools and the need for things to change.

A mark of two or three was awarded where there was some connection with one or two of the ideas in the passage but limited understanding of them, with four given for responses which covered the material thinly but showed some grasp of ideas considered. A clearer grasp of the points of view represented in the passage, the way the writer looks at the past compared with the present and the mocking style with which the ideas are presented would have improved candidates' performance here.

Marks for Writing

15 marks were available for style and a sense of audience, the structure of the answer and the technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Style and audience

A formal tone was required for a letter to a recipient not personally known and most responses were written in an appropriate register. Most candidates chose to write in their own voice, as school students who could shed a different light and a young person's perspective on the topic. Others wrote as a concerned parent, either agreeing with the writer or expressing different views about the role of a parent in a child's education.

Relatively few responses adopted a strong, authoritative style characteristic of Band 1 responses although some excellent scripts used a similar ironic style to that of the passage and ridiculed the nostalgia and exaggeration of the writer. Most responses were fairly straightforward, however, and a real sense of audience and a strong, individual voice was quite rare.

In the middle to lower mark range, the style was often appropriate if plain. There were sometimes at this level lapses in candidates' awareness of the intended audience. Colloquial expressions not used in the passage sometimes appeared in responses, such as 'kids' or 'mugging up'. A suitable letter format was used by almost all candidates although sometimes the valediction at the end was forgotten or the letter began on the same line after the greeting.

Structure

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for Writing, handled the material confidently and presented their own arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a convincing argument which was clearly derived from the ideas in the passage but was not dependent on its structure and sequence. In these responses, the point of view of the candidate was made clear from the introduction and there was an overall coherence to the response. At the highest level, an overview of the issues involved was given. The discussion focused on the nature of childhood and the role of education in it, with salient points from the passage selected and scrutinised but used as part of a wider argument.

Responses given eight or nine for Writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the article in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed. Candidates tended to track through the points in the passage, agreeing with some and disagreeing with others in the sequence in which they appeared. There was usually a clear introduction and a concluding paragraph which often gave a personal opinion about the topic in general in a straightforward way.

Some weaker responses given marks below Band 3 were less coherent in structure and more dependent on the sequence of paragraphs in the passage. If the passage was sketchily understood, this often led to a confused and contradictory sequence of ideas.

Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a Writing mark in Band 1. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. Precision in the control of a subtle and provocative style resulted in some very high marks in this component although Examiners found responses at this level were quite rare.

Responses given eight or nine were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Although the style was usually appropriate and the level of formal language was sustained, a range of quite basic spelling and punctuation errors was evident. 'Tuition', 'nowadays' and 'torture' were commonly mis-spelt and errors of sentence separation began to creep in.

While some of these minor errors could be compensated for by a secure sense of audience or a varied vocabulary, faulty sentence structures and weak grammar often kept Writing marks for **Question 1** in Band 4. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic grammar errors, such as missing determiners or a lack of agreement, which meant that Examiners could not award in Band 3 where mostly correctly structured sentences and secure grammar, even in a plain style, are required. Tenses were also fairly often misused or inconsistently used at this level.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Be prepared to disagree with the writer and to criticise his/her arguments.
- Think about the key arguments in the passage as well as the specific points being made.
- Aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well as some depth in evaluating them.
- Be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly. Think carefully about the right style for a speech, an article or a letter, for example.
- Check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing full stops, and for grammar errors which make your writing awkward and stilted. These will inevitably reduce your mark.

Section 2: Composition

Question 2: Descriptive Writing

Describe the inside of a workshop and the person who owns it. (25 marks)

OR

Describe what you see and experience as you dive downwards to explore under the sea. (25 marks)

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range, although there was a distinct preference for the second. In both, responses at all levels were developed and sustained. There was a tendency for rather overlong preambles for both questions before the description

really began. There was some misunderstanding of the idea of a 'workshop', with some candidates imagining shops selling various goods or in some cases a more general interpretation of 'workplace'. Examiners also found that in the second question some responses drifted into narrative or sometimes gave details which did not ring true, such as being chased by whales, sharks or sea monsters.

The best responses to the first question gave a detailed and evocative description of the interior of the workshop. There was no confusion with a narrative and the senses were often used subtly to evoke objects, sounds and smells reminiscent of such a place. At this level, sometimes minutely observed details or sounds were used to create a complex atmosphere. One response described how the owner of the workshop blended in with his workshop seamlessly, 'as if his face was carved out of the same materials as the things around him and infused with the same scent of craftsmanship and skill.' Even where the meaning of 'workshop' was not quite understood, Examiners found that at this level, the writing was original with a clarity of detail and the images created were effective and evocative enough for a mark in Band 1.

Middle and lower range responses tended to be a little more stereotypical or less well realised in content. The description of the workshop and the owner were not always integrated into a whole, cohesive description and lists of tools and machinery were included rather than the atmosphere of the place being created. The introduction or preamble usually involved some straightforward account of how the narrator came to be in the workshop and this sometimes overwhelmed the descriptive content a little. In quite a few responses, for example, up to half of the response was spent on explaining how, where and why cars broke down and had to be taken to the workshop, with rather less focus on describing the workshop itself and the owner.

The second question was attempted by candidates across the whole mark range. Good responses were also characterised by originality and careful realisation of the scene selected. Some responses focused very effectively on the thoughts and feelings of the narrator, a sense of tension and fear in some cases being effectively described initially and replaced by wonder and serenity by the end. These cohesive devices worked well to integrate the details described and produce a well-crafted piece of writing. In other high-level responses, the sights and sounds of an underwater world were described in minute detail, often with a pervading sense of awe and sometimes with the added complexity of menace.

In the middle range, there was more clichéd content, although often there was a clear attempt to evoke atmosphere and some effective details were included. Descriptions at this level tended to focus on what the fishes and plants looked like and the actions made by the narrator, sometimes becoming more clearly narrative.

Band 4 responses were more narrative than descriptive in focus, relying on a rather basic account of the preparation for the dive and becoming a series of actions with limited descriptive content. Some descriptions at this level started well but quickly became unlikely scenarios or lists of many different fish or entirely narrative in focus.

Marks in Band 1 and high Band 2 for style and accuracy were awarded for the most controlled writing in which a wide range of descriptive vocabulary was used precisely and often sparingly. Band 1 responses were characterised by an assured and effective style in which surprising and striking effects were achieved using carefully chosen language and imagery.

In the middle range and below, a more straightforward vocabulary was employed and where there was sufficient control of grammar, sentence structure and enough technical accuracy, a mark in Band 3 was awarded. In some cases, the writing was overwhelmed by strings of verbless sentences so that Examiners were precluded from awarding marks in Band 3. Repetitive vocabulary and a more limited range of sentence structures were also evident. Also prevalent at this level was the imprecise use of ambitious vocabulary which was sometimes so inappropriately and frequently used as to make the meaning unclear.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

- Try to avoid overlong introductions and explanations which are not descriptive in focus.
- Remember the key features of descriptive writing.
- Choose your vocabulary carefully. Simple, well-chosen words are better than ambitious ones used wrongly.

Question 3: Narrative Writing

(a) Write a story called 'A Moment of Doubt'. (25 marks)

OR

(b) Write a story in which an item of great value or beauty plays a part. (25 marks)

The first question was the more popular of the two options although there were relatively few which merited marks in Band 1 for content and structure. Those that did usually interpreted the title as a moment of moral dilemma in which a doubt about a friend, partner or family member led to a revelation or moral lesson. Although this kind of narrative was evident at all points in the mark range, the more successful stories paid close attention to the creation of credible characters and there was often a thoughtful evocation of the narrator's inner thoughts and feelings. Moments of self-doubt also featured strongly in some effective narratives. Sporting triumphs or academic successes put in jeopardy by self-doubt sometimes worked well.

Average responses tended to be more straightforward, well-sequenced narratives, often with similar content to those given higher marks, but with less effective characterisation and shaping of tension or climax. Where responses showed some overall cohesion and some awareness of the reader, it was possible for Examiners to award marks in Band 3, even if the story itself was poorly resolved or not very credible. Weaker responses lacked real narrative content and drive, or were confusing and unengaging stories.

The second question was a little less popular but again elicited responses across the mark range. Many effective stories relied on a strong moral message, as in the first question, although not all of these worked well. There were various interpretations of 'an item of great value or beauty'. Abstract ideas such as the love or respect of one's family, self-respect or honour featured fairly frequently. More concrete and perhaps more conventional interpretations were nonetheless sometimes equally successful, with many stories involving the theft of the Kohinoor, the Mona Lisa or other jewellery heists. Better responses created a build-up of tension and were resolved in interesting ways. Some of the characterisation of detectives and criminals was a little predictable and derivative but still engaging and well-realised and at the highest level both characters and plots were carefully created.

In the middle range, narratives tended to be less sophisticated and more action-packed although the writing did not have the pace or variation evident in better writing in this genre. Some were straightforward tales of robberies or kidnaps and Examiners were able to award marks in Band 3 where there was enough overall coherence, the sequence of events was clear and there was some thought given to the creation of characters.

Weaker responses tended to have more simple storylines or included events or details which were not relevant to the story. Events sometimes overwhelmed the narrative and were unexplained by the motivations of the characters. The ordering of events was also weaker at this level: characters suddenly remembered vital details in a rather forced way, for example, in order for the plot to be resolved.

This question also seemed to attract retellings of published stories and Examiners found it difficult to reward highly those responses where the content of the narrative was already known. Guy de Maupassant's 'The Necklace' and other short stories from popular culture including the Pokemon series were retold by quite a few candidates, for example. Narratives that were a better fit with titles on previous papers were also evident. At Band 4 and below, responses showed a limited awareness of how characters, events and climax are combined to produce an effective narrative.

Marks for style and accuracy varied considerably among those who chose the narrative option. Better responses used a range of sentence structures and well-chosen vocabulary to help create specific effects and to add colour and pace to their narratives. At this level dialogue was used effectively to establish and develop characterisation although speech punctuation was not always accurate. A controlled, competent style secured a mark in Band 3 and even where candidates wrote in a fairly pedestrian style but punctuated sentences accurately, Examiners could award a mark of seven or eight. Again, speech punctuation was often a weakness at this level. Weaknesses in constructing sentences, errors in grammatical agreement and frequent mistakes in basic spelling resulted in marks for style and accuracy below Band 3. A few responses were very faulty in style, often with very weak grammar, making it difficult to follow the meaning. These were given marks lower than Band 4.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved

- Plan from the start how to resolve your story in an interesting way.
- Consider more creative interpretations of titles and avoid simple retellings of stories you have read.
- Characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader.
- Check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/04
Coursework Portfolio

Key Messages

In this component, candidates should aim to:

- reflect in their writing their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them;
- choose assignments that challenge them to write at the highest standard of which they are capable;
- write independently of undue guidance from published materials or from teachers;
- demonstrate variety of style, use of language and genre in the three assignments;
- write in fluent and varied sentences separated by full stops and clarified by the appropriate use of commas and other punctuation;
- revise, edit and correct first drafts in their own handwriting;
- proofread their work carefully, as marks are deducted for typing errors.

General Comments

There were 48 entries for this component from 4 Centres. The standard was high and the work was attractively presented. All Centres fulfilled the requirements of the syllabus.

Good Practice

- There was evidence of much personal writing that reflected modern Indian culture.
- Candidates were given a wide range of choice in deciding the content of all their assignments.

Task Setting

Tasks set for **Assignment 1** reflected the concerns and interests of individual candidates and were nearly all sufficiently challenging for their levels of ability. Given the small number of candidates, the range of types of task was wide. Titles of narratives and descriptions set for **Assignment 2** were imaginative. There were some problems in the candidates' choices of text for the third assignment. Many of the responses did not engage with and evaluate ideas and opinions from the text. However, Centres gave appropriate marks for reading. These problems are discussed later in this report.

Assessment of Coursework

The standard of assessment was generally sound. Centres with a number of candidates presented a satisfactorily wide range of marks, varying from the top of Band 2 to the middle of Band 4.

Writing

A general explanation of the model of assessment may be of assistance to Centres. In the Examination as a whole, different objectives are tested in different questions. For writing in coursework and in **Paper 3**, content, structure, style, and accuracy are assessed in broadly equal measures, there being a nominal ten marks for each. While the final mark for writing is not, of course, given arithmetically, there is little room for trading off achievements in one objective against another. This is because these objectives are not tested elsewhere. For example, spelling, punctuation and grammar are not assessed in **Papers 1 and 2**, so it is clearly important to give accuracy its full weight in order to preserve the balance of assessment.

Content

Most folders scored well for content. The first assignment often contained varied and sound argument, backed up with appropriate factual evidence. There was some original and personal thought that made the work interesting to read. Some of the second assignments also included interesting and relevant detail that engaged the imagination of the reader. The detail in other narratives was sometimes too mundane to provide much interest.

Structure

The arguments in the first assignment were structured in a satisfactory order overall and some attempt was made to provide connectives, although they were sometimes predictable and unconvincing. Sequencing of ideas within paragraphs was not always so well done and occasionally paragraphs consisted of lists of sentences rather than progressive argument. The structure of the work in **Assignment 2** was generally successful. Some of the responses in the last assignment lacked an overall structure and were presented in a random order.

Style

In some work there was a lack of fluency caused by over-reliance on short or simple sentences. There was some incidence of awkward expression. Most candidates made an effort with the range of vocabulary and there were only rare examples of confusion caused by over-ambition. Some candidates wrote in comparatively simple structures and language and, where the content was also simple, this sometimes led to lenient marking.

Accuracy

In some folders it appeared that accuracy (spelling, punctuation and grammar) had not been sufficiently weighted in deciding the final mark. This was especially true where the objectives of content and structure were strong, the range of language was wide, but where there were a number of errors of various types. However, where there was over-marking for writing this was generally only by one or two marks, and a good deal of the work of candidates was free from frequent error.

Adjustments made by the Moderator to Centres' writing marks were slight and consisted of raising as well as lowering them.

Assessment of Reading

Despite the problems where candidates did not meet the descriptions in the mark scheme, the standard of assessment of reading was generally accurate, and the Moderator's judgments did not vary by more than a single mark at any time.

Administration by Centres

Administration was good with only minor problems as noted below. Centres provided all the necessary documentation for the Moderator to carry out administrative checks. One Centre did not provide the lowest marked folder from their entry in the sample. In one Centre's sample there were some discrepancies between the marks agreed at internal moderation and the marks on the folders, but these were corrected by the Moderator before the folders were read.

Summary of the Contents of the Sample Pack, for Centres' Reference

- The folders required from each centre by Cambridge
- In addition, the top and bottom folder in the Centre's mark range
- The CASFs (WMS) for all the candidates in the Centre
- The Moderator's copy of the MS1 or electronically submitted mark list
- An early draft (see below) of one of the assignments
- A copy of the article used for **Assignment 3**, preferably with the candidate's annotations.

Annotation

In order for the Moderator to check whether style and accuracy had been correctly assessed, it was essential that Centres should annotate all errors on final drafts. However, many errors were not annotated and it is requested that Centres should address this in future.

Drafts

Early drafts were provided and Centres followed the correct procedure of giving general advice at the end of the work and not indicating specific errors. However, it is recommended that when the first drafts are returned, candidates should edit, revise and correct them. They should use a coloured pen so that the Moderator can see how the process of redrafting has been carried out.

Internal Moderation

The Centre with the largest number of candidates carried out an internal moderation, and changes to the marks were clearly indicated on the Candidate Assessment Summary Form, as required.

Authenticity

There were no issues of authenticity. Centres are reminded that where candidates refer to websites for information a check should be made to ensure that the resulting work is wholly original.

Comments on Specific Assignments

Assignment 1

Where essay-type arguments were set, candidates were given ultimate choice. The result was that the writing was interesting both to the candidates and to the reader. Topics included:

- *Did Neil Armstrong really land on the moon?*
- *Should mothers stay at home?*
- *Were humans made to fly?*
- *Keeping pets in urban India.*

There were several accounts of trips, for example to Nasa and Japan. These were well done with plenty of informative detail. The Moderator was looking for sound structure and sequence of ideas within paragraphs, plus some comment on the effect the trip had on the candidate.

There were also some accounts of work experience, which required an evaluation of the experience as well as some selection of detail that avoided the obvious. One account of work in a biscuit factory was unusual and original.

Assignment 2

Candidates should be reminded that it is in this assignment that they have their best opportunity to display a wide range of appropriate vocabulary. Writing plain and simple language is not appropriate to a description and rarely so in a narrative. It is through language that a story can provide tension and excitement for a reader, and the right words help candidates to write convincingly. Some candidates wrote well, but others were content with simple language and structures.

Some candidates found it difficult to sustain their stories. Their writing started by engaging the reader's interest, but the events that followed and the build-up of tension were not convincing and did not always avoid the obvious. Other narratives were well planned and maintained interest to the end.

The choice of titles was often good and included:

- *The silent man*
- *The figure in the long, dark cloak*
- *Feeling low, no one to hug*
- *Then he smiled.*

Titles such as these infer all sorts of interest and excitement, and candidates were wise to explore them to the utmost. It was not really a good idea to solve the identity of the figure in the cloak too simply. It would have been better to have kept the air of mystery to the very end.

There were also some descriptions, including a good one of an express train from Mumbai. This had plenty of detail and the writer created a description of what could only have been an Indian train. Another example was a description of the last lesson of the afternoon, which was a very appropriate task that could be completed by writers of different abilities.

Assignment 3

There were some problems in the choices of texts for this assignment. Some of the texts were strongly informative and gave very little opportunity to candidates to select ideas and opinions and to evaluate them. Candidates certainly wrote summaries, suitable for marks in Band 3, and were sometimes able to develop some ideas within the context of the text. One candidate detected bias but was unable to develop this idea. Other candidates drifted away from the task by including anecdotes from their own experience. Several candidates wrote about font sizes, pictures and other presentational features that were not relevant to this assignment.

It is wise to find argumentative texts, and best of all, ones that are controversial. Candidates can then select ideas and opinions, explain them and evaluate them. Evaluation starts with differentiating between fact and opinion and proceeds to identifying inconsistencies in an argument and explaining bias in a writer's views.

One candidate in the sample responded to two advertisements for cars. Unfortunately the advertisements contained virtually no reading material, so this was not a proper test of the candidate's reading.

Two candidates responded to literary texts. Both were successful in that they discussed ideas from the texts. However, the response to *All the world's a stage* was disappointing because of a misunderstanding of what Shakespeare was trying to achieve at that point in the play. The response to *The solitary reaper* was better informed.

The candidates who responded to the text on *Sport and aggression* did remarkably well. The original text was written in a wayward style and it was not easy to dwell on any of the ideas. However, three out of four candidates grasped some of the writer's arguments and also the shortcomings of the text as a whole.

Final comments

These folders were mostly well done. There was plenty of evidence of hard work and the result made reading them a pleasure.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/05
Speaking and Listening

Key Messages

The main messages:

- **A broader range of approaches are recommended in Part 1.** Generally, candidates should try to make their **Part 1** presentations livelier by perhaps incorporating more creative presentational styles, but certainly by relying less on reciting factual information. There is scope for further creativity in **Part 1** – e.g. taking up a ‘voice’ or presenting a dramatic monologue. Presenting empathic work using literary texts often leads to quality work.
- **Preparing for Part 1.** It is permissible for teachers to work with their students to ensure that suitable topics are chosen. Differentiation by task setting is encouraged for this component. A more capable student is likely to attempt a more ambitious presentation and to engage with more sophisticated content - and such a student should be encouraged to do this. Moderators recommend more teaching of general speaking and listening skills in the context of a topic-based presentation and a subsequent, follow-up discussion. Over-rehearsal with students is not encouraged, but broad-based coverage of useful methodologies is encouraged.
- **Preparing for Part 2.** In **Part 2**, Moderators would like to hear stronger evidence that candidates are aware of their expected role in the discussion. The candidate’s role should not be that of a passive interviewee, but should be one which is more proactive and seeks to engage with the listener in a collaborative and discursive manner.
- **Timings.** Please restrict **Part 1** to 4 minutes, and **Part 2** to between six and seven minutes – as specified in the syllabus. It is difficult to justify the awarding of high marks to **Part 1s** which are short (less than three minutes) and it is counter-productive to allow **Part 2** to run over seven minutes. The timings for the two parts of the test are distinct – i.e. short **Part 1s** cannot be compensated for with longer **Part 2s** (or vice versa).
- **Digital recordings.** Please would all Centres use digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or a USB drive. Please use recognised audio file formats that can be played by common computer software (e.g. mp3, wav, wma). A list of the candidates in the sample, their numbers, and the mark given to each, either on the CD cover (but not on the CD itself please) or on a separate sheet is appreciated. Please rename the individual tracks on the CD to the candidate number and name only (instead of track 1, track 2, etc.).
- **Warm ups and other conversations.** Some centres are reminded that it is not appropriate to conduct or record a warm up for this examination. Students should begin speaking by delivering their **Part 1** oral presentation. Indeed, at no point during the whole test should there be discussion of general matters.

Messages relating to assessment:

- In **Part 1**, Moderators advise Examiners to be sure that a candidate has met the criteria for Band 1 fully before awarding 9 or 10 marks. If an individual presentation is of the standard, factually-based, reportage style, even if well done, then a low Band 2 mark is likely to be the highest available, and a Band 3 mark perhaps more appropriate.
- More mundane and pedestrian presentations should be placed in Band 3.
- Candidates who present very short **Part 1** recordings or those which rely too much on notes are not likely to achieve higher than Band 4, where ‘delivery is not secure, resulting in some loss of audience interest’ is the most likely and appropriate descriptor.
- Extremely short **Part 1** recordings (less than one minute) are likely to satisfy only the Band 5 criteria: ‘Content is mostly undeveloped...and the audience is generally lost’.
- Very long **Part 1** recordings do not satisfy Band 1 requirements, as they lack the required control, structure and poignancy. An over-long **Part 1** is one that runs for beyond 5 minutes.
- Examiners are reminded not to award marks for content per se – it is the development of the content which is being assessed; in both **Parts 1** and **2** of the test. For example, ‘What work experience did for

me...' could achieve a Band 1, or indeed, a Band 5, depending on how the content has been planned, is introduced, is organised, and then presented and developed.

An important message relating to protocol:

- The test should be conducted only once. It is a formal examination and as such, candidates must not be given a second attempt. If a test has been conducted twice, the centre should inform Cambridge directly.

A message relating to preparation by the Teachers/Examiners:

- It would be a good idea for Examiners to obtain a list of the topics that candidates are planning to talk about in advance of the examination, perhaps the day before. This would allow the Examiner to 'think ahead' and consider areas which might be productive in **Part 2**. However, these must not be shared with the candidates prior to the examination. The aim in **Part 2** is for both parties to be involved in an organic discussion – if scripted or practised material is found to be present in this part of the examination, this is likely to result in maladministration of the test.

General Comments

The more interesting and successful individual tasks were from candidates who spoke from brief notes rather than scripts, and about a topic they felt passionately about and which they had researched thoroughly. Some successful tasks included some kind of visual presentation to the Examiner, such as sharing a Powerpoint slide or some photographs. Other interesting presentations were done in the form of a 'muse' or monologue – sometimes in the form of a conversation with an invisible character. The most successful standard presentations were given by candidates fired by a passion who also utilised a variety of devices to maintain their listener's interest. In all the best examples there was a real sense of engagement with the topic. Where candidates chose well, prepared thoroughly and were fully committed to the task the results were usually good.

Please note that this is a formal examination and as such an appropriate examination room is required. Candidates should not be examined in the presence of other candidates. A quiet, secure room is crucial for the success of the examination. Some centres are reminded that the test should be conducted by a single Examiner. While a second person may be present, the test itself must be conducted entirely by one Examiner – i.e. it is not permissible for two people to be asking questions or discussing matters with the candidate.

Materials required by the Moderator:

As a reminder to Centres, Cambridge requires three different items in the package sent to the Moderator: **1** the recorded sample on as few CDs/DVDs as possible (or preferably, on a single USB drive) and using separate re-named tracks for each candidate, **2** the Summary Forms for the entire entry, and **3** a copy of the Mark Sheet that has already been sent to Cambridge confirming the final marks. In addition, any letters relating to the work undertaken by the candidates or regarding issues experienced by the Centre should also be placed in the package for the attention of the external Moderator.

- 1** Please note that without the recordings, Cambridge is unable to moderate the work from a Centre and this will affect the results issued to candidates.
- 2** The Summary Form is the form that records the separate marks awarded to the two parts of the test, in addition to the total mark. The Examiner who conducts the examination is responsible for filling out the summary form. They should sign the form and date it – in effect; this is the form which is the working record of the examining undertaken, and is therefore of most use to the external Moderator. Please identify the candidates in the sample by using asterisks on the Summary Form. It would also be very useful if the candidate numbers can be recorded on the Summary Forms as they appear on the mark sheets.
- 3** The Moderator needs a copy of the mark sheet in order to verify the accuracy of the transcription of the marks from the Summary Forms.

Comments on Specific Questions

Part 1 – The Individual Task

Where the chosen topic relates directly to the candidate's personal situation or their country or location, there is usually scope for more engaging content. Personal experiences and interests are a common focus and these kinds of presentations vary in their degree of success, with less successful tasks simply describing likes, dislikes and experiences without further exploration, depth or insight.

Candidates sometimes attempt to use techniques such as addressing the listener and using rhetorical devices, but care needs to be taken so that these approaches are effective and not just a gesture.

Centres and candidates are of course free to focus on topics which lend themselves to standard presentations. If so, Moderators encourage topics with a specific focus; along with a greater range of presentational styles.

Some examples of productive **Part 1** tasks from this session:

- the importance of the guitar in music
- the books of John Green and their impact on society
- blogs – pros and cons
- the use of calculators beyond school
- is there too much collaboration in education?
- should we be suspicious of the clouds (in terms of computers and data)?
- the cultural heritage of modernism
- cricket isn't what it used to be
- cosmetic surgery and teenagers
- sport as a core subject at school.

Part 2 – Discussions

Moderators are happy that in many cases, Examiners were very much part of the discussions, entering into the spirit of the occasion, and that the conversations were generally productive extensions of the individual tasks. This is clearly a strength of this examination.

It was clear in many cases that candidates had planned for further discussion. The best way to do this is to imagine being the Examiner and to draw up a list of probable questions, or areas of interest that might be appropriate for further discussion given the scope of the topic.

However, where this had not occurred, Moderators felt the discussions were lacking. It is not the sole responsibility of the Examiner to work hard to sustain discussion – the candidate needs to plan for this and this element of **Part 2** has indeed been built into the assessment criteria for both listening and speaking. It is, however, the responsibility of the Examiner to move the discussion along and to ensure that a six to seven minute conversation occurs. Ideally, more challenging ideas and content would be introduced as the discussion develops.

The most effective Examiners clearly took notes as the candidates completed their presentations, and then based the discussions very closely on what the candidates had actually spoken about. This usually led to conversations which arose naturally from the individual task. More work is needed, however, for candidates to take a greater part in developing the discussions. In some cases, there seemed to be an understanding that the candidate would deliver his or her talk and then wait to be formally questioned by the Examiner. This clearly led to a more stilted and less effective discussion. In the stronger **Part 2** performances the candidates were encouraged to take control of the discussion and there was a genuine feeling that it was a two-way conversation based on an equal footing between the candidate and the Examiner.

Examiners should therefore avoid adopting a very formal 'interview' approach in **Part 2**. The aim is to be supportive of the candidate, to share an interest in his/her topic, and to share views, ideas and to work with the candidate to develop the conversation. It is important that the spontaneity of discussion is maintained.

In general, candidates and Examiners stayed on task, though there were a few instances of Examiners using the allotted time to involve candidates in discussions about broader issues – for example, their future plans – when this was not part of the candidate's talk. Such transgressions are not appropriate as the assessment criteria assume that content in **Part 2** relates directly to content in **Part 1**.

Some Examiners had a tendency to ask too many closed questions, which unsurprisingly elicited short and weaker responses which do not encourage development. Open questions are much more effective.

Concluding comments

Cambridge wishes to commend centres who have responded well to what might be a new examination for them. Cambridge does appreciate that a different culture is required for what is a new assessment methodology and that this takes time to establish itself. There were many cases where Moderators reported refreshing and lively work, where it was clear that the students had enjoyed taking control of their own learning and had responded well to being allowed to be active in the skills of research, oral presentation and subsequent discussion.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/06

Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

Key Messages

- Centres should decide whether to choose Component 5 or Component 6 at the beginning of the planning stage. Component 6 is flexible in that three separate tasks are required that can be assessed at any time during the course. This flexibility allows a broad range of topics and skills to be assessed but requires Centres to fully embrace the concept that the Speaking and Listening tasks are an integral part of the overall course.
- Centres are recommended to use both the current syllabus and *Speaking and Listening Handbook* to ensure the requirements for the administration of the component are met in full. All the relevant information is contained within these documents.
- Please be aware that four different items need to be included in the sample package sent to the Moderator. These are: a recorded sample on CD, DVD or USB drive; the Summary Forms for the whole cohort entered; a copy of the marks (the MS1) already sent to Cambridge and the Individual Candidate Record Cards for the candidates included in the sample. Centres are urged to ensure all four of these items are included in the package sent to Cambridge as the omission of any of them may cause a delay in the moderation process.
- The Individual Candidate Record Cards should include specific information about the choices made for each task and not just generic statements.
- Please check the quality of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge and ensure that the CD, DVD or USB is securely packaged to avoid damage in transit. A jiffy bag is recommended.
- We encourage the use of digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or USB drive in a recognised common audio file format that can be played by standard computer software.
- For the Paired Task it is essential that the Moderator is able to distinguish between the candidates in the activity so that successful moderation can take place. The simplest way of achieving this is for the candidates to introduce themselves and their roles in the activity at the beginning of the recording.
- Any candidate who is absent should be recorded as such on the relevant documentation and only those who attempted the activity but who failed to contribute should be given a mark of 0.
- Unlike Component 5, there is no specified time duration for Component 6 tasks but it is difficult to see how both candidates in the Paired Task can meet higher level criteria such as 'responds fully', 'develops prompts' or 'employs a wide range of language devices' in a performance lasting less than two minutes. Given that both speaking and listening are assessed, it is important that the activities last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. Planned, rehearsed and developed performances will normally justify higher marks in the same way written examination practise encourages more successful outcomes.

General Comments

- Through the syllabus, Cambridge provides specific forms for use with Component 6, namely the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form. Please note that the Component 5 Summary Form is different and it is not interchangeable with the Component 6 equivalent.
- For Component 6, Centres are encouraged to be creative in the choice of tasks as long as the assessment criteria are used as a guide to the skills being assessed.

Comments on Specific Tasks

Well planned and prepared responses to tasks are generally more successful but **Tasks 1** and **2** do not benefit from over-scripted and seemingly 'artificial' performances where spontaneity is missing. Candidates aspiring to the higher band criteria need to be able to react positively to changes in the direction of the discussion in **Task 2**.

In response to **Task 1**, it is very difficult to achieve band 1 if the performance is heavily scripted.

Task 1: The Individual Task

Responses generally took the form of an individual presentation. This component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when topics are chosen. This component allows the candidate and teacher to work together through rehearsal and development of the task to ensure the topic choice is suitable.

Some examples of productive **Task 1** activities include:

- my holiday in...
- a personal experience that is relevant, thought-provoking and developed beyond narrative
- teenagers and technology
- social media – good or bad?
- a review of a film, book, concert or sporting event where the candidate is thoroughly engaged and able to develop the presentation beyond a literal re-telling of the events.

Task 2: The Paired Task

There should be only two participants in **Task 2**. Where there is an extra candidate, a teacher or a pupil who has been assessed may make up the pair. In effect, any **Task 2** activity comprising of more than two candidates becomes a **Task 3** Group Activity. As three distinct tasks are expected in response to Component 6, this becomes non-compliance.

The Paired Task is more successful when two candidates of similar ability work as a pair. With regard to role-plays, it should be borne in mind that this is an assessment of language skills rather than drama skills so the language requirements should always drive the assessment criteria.

Responses to **Task 2** that are teacher-led, either with a teacher interviewing a candidate or with two candidates being led by a teacher, are less successful than a developed discussion between two candidates. It is recommended that this approach is only considered where it is deemed the candidates are too weak to initiate the discussion without external assistance.

A popular **Task 2** vehicle is the 'interview', where one candidate acts as the interviewer and the other is the interviewee. This can work well, but there is an inherent weakness in the activity if the interviewer does little more than ask a set of pre-prepared questions. This restricts the level of performance, particularly for the Listening element. One way to counteract this problem is for candidates to swap roles halfway through so each has the opportunity to demonstrate a wider range of relevant skills.

Some examples of productive **Task 2** activities include:

- does society put too much pressure on teenagers?
- are video games too violent?
- feminism/gender inequality
- planning a holiday
- role play situations that are developed beyond superficial arguments
- the benefits and pitfalls of social media?
- a moral dilemma such as what to do with a wallet that has been found
- are politics irrelevant to teenagers?

Task 3: The Group Task

Task 3 may take various forms but it is most important that each candidate in the group is allowed sufficient scope within the activity to demonstrate their strengths without being dominated by others. A group made up of candidates of similar ability levels is often more successful. The role of a group leader should be considered, as a more successful outcome usually results from having one of the candidates directing the focus of the discussion.

Some examples of productive **Task 3** activities include:

- characters from a literary text participating in a televised debate
- performing an extra scene from a play that has been written by the candidates
- any discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- what to include in a time capsule/school newspaper, etc.
- championing a character from a film or book where each candidate chooses their favourite.

General Conclusions

- It is gratifying to report that the general level of assessment by Centres is in line with the expected standard.
- All the documentation asked for in samples is used to check and cross-check as part of the rigour that underpins the moderation process. In the end this is of benefit to Centres and their candidates. It is important to remember that every Centre is moderated in every session and that this process is conducted rigorously to protect the reputation of the component and to maintain the standard so that Centres may have continued confidence in the product they have chosen.