

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/11
Reading Passages (Core)

Key messages

- Candidates should read all questions carefully to ensure that their answers focus on the questions.
- Where candidates are asked to answer in their own words for the sub-questions in **Question 1**, candidates should avoid lifting long phrases or whole sentences from the passage.
- Where a sub-question in **Question 1** requires candidates to select one detail from the passage, excess information will deny the mark. Candidates should be selective.
- Proof reading is essential. Marks were lost through avoidable mistakes which could have been corrected by candidates checking over their work.
- In **Question 1(g)**, candidates should remember that they cannot simply repeat the same answer to **(ii)** as they used in **(i)** but should elaborate on the single-word definition given in **(i)** and focus their response on describing the effect of the whole phrase.
- Candidates must remember to deal with all three bullet points in **Question 2**, and attempt to develop the ideas in the passage, both factual and inferential. The key message here is to develop the details offered in the text for the third bullet point, using the passage to develop a plausible response.
- Candidates need to ensure that they are writing in the correct voice for **Question 2**.
- Candidates should avoid copying from the passage in **Question 2**.
- In **Question 3(a)** candidates should only make one point on each line and avoid repeating similar points.

General comments

Overall, the reading passages proved to be accessible to nearly all candidates and they responded positively to both passages and questions. Most of the vocabulary appeared to be within the range of candidates at this level. Most candidates completed the paper in some detail and examiners reported seeing a reasonable number of high quality responses to **Question 2**. It is clear that the vast majority of candidates had been well prepared for these questions and were confident in their approach. Some candidates lost marks through missing key requirements of the question such as selecting one detail or offering one word.

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the passage had been clearly understood and many responded well to the more straightforward questions. In general, the questions enabled all candidates to produce some correct answers while at the same time challenging those who were more perceptive to gain higher marks. The majority of candidates were familiar with the requirements of **Questions 3(a)** and **3(b)**. There was very little evidence of candidates not working within the paper time limit and few examples of No Response answers.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) **Using your own words, explain why Grandpa calls the event described in paragraph 1, 'A genuine curiosity ...' (line 5), and how people reacted to this event.** [2 marks]

This was a reasonably straightforward question with many candidates gaining both marks. Most identified the 'curiosity' of snow on a sunny day to gain one mark. A large number of candidates were able to identify people's happiness or smiles for the second mark, but at times the reaction was wrongly lifted from the passage as 'admiring' which of course related to their shadows.

- (b) **Using your own words, explain the effects of the falling snow on the surrounding environment (paragraph 2, ‘Soon, though, the sky ...’).** [2 marks]

In order to gain marks on this question candidates were required to reshape material from the passage or to answer using their own words. Some candidates copied phrases from the passage, such as ‘mysterious white lumps’ which could not be credited. Many candidates were able to score at least one mark on this question, usually by demonstrating that the snow was covering everything. Fewer candidates were able to explain the effect of the snow on the litter in their own words.

- (c) **Give one detail from paragraph 3, ‘It snowed all ...’, that tells you the narrator was excited by the falling snow.** [1 mark]

The vast majority of candidates answered this question correctly by selecting one of the three details from the passage. Some candidates, however, provided more than one detail and therefore did not gain the mark. The question does not ask the candidate to respond in own words therefore offering up to one sentence from the passage was an acceptable approach to this question.

- (d) **Give one detail mentioned by the narrator in paragraph 4, ‘In the morning ...’, that tells you that the snow was very deep.** [1 mark]

Again, candidates were asked to select one detail, but there was no requirement to use their own words. Many candidates correctly identified that either or both of the fences being buried in snow indicated the depth of the snow. A number of candidates, however, lifted the sentence beginning ‘In the yard ...’ and did not get the mark because it did not offer a detail to show that the snow was very deep.

- (e) (i) **Which one word in paragraph 5, ‘The wind blew hard ...’, tells you that Grandpa was concerned about the possible effects of the snowfall?** [1 mark]

Most candidates were able to identify ‘grimacing’ as the correct answer but some chose to ignore the need for one word and sometimes provided a complete sentence both with and without the word ‘grimacing’. Some candidates wrongly thought the word showing grandpa’s concern was ‘electrocution’ or ‘trembling’, presumably because of the assumption that Grandpa was trembling as opposed to the electricity wires.

- (ii) **Using your own words, explain why Grandpa had cause for concern (paragraph 5, ‘The wind blew hard ...’)?** [2 marks]

There were a number of ways that candidates could gain two marks for this question. The most common correct answer to this question was the poles moving/swaying because of the strong wind. Some candidates were also able to explain the danger associated with this and cited that the poles could fall and hurt people. Fewer candidates thought that the wires making odd noises was a cause for concern. Those few who did usually just lifted ‘clacked and chattered’ from the passage and were denied the mark because they had not used their own words. A number of candidates got the second mark for indicating a fear of electrocution.

- (g) (i) **Re-read paragraph 3, ‘It snowed all ...’, and the final paragraph, ‘When the wind ...’. Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words underlined in each of the following quotations:**

- 1 *‘Flakes of white day fell through the night and brushed against the glass.’ (lines 14–15)*
- 2 *‘... the snow rose alive, spinning and swirling, and the world went white.’ (lines 32–33)*
- 3 *‘Dead black vines were hanging in tatters from the back fence.’ (lines 37–38).* [3 marks]

Not all candidates appeared to understand the precise requirements of this task. The question asked them to explain in their own words what the writer meant by the **words in italics**. Some candidates produced ‘catch all’ phrases which were more akin to a (g)(ii) type explanation of the whole phrase. Only the more successful responses showed real understanding of the underlined words and only a small number of candidates gained all three available marks for this question.

- 1 Most candidates successfully explained the 'gentle' nature of 'brushing' against the window by using a range of appropriate synonyms such as 'touched gently'.
- 2 With 'swirling' many candidates identified the circular nature of such movement but quite a few chose 'spinning' to explain the movement even though it was in the quotation and could therefore not be rewarded.
- 3 Most candidates explained the meaning of 'tatters' correctly in terms of being broken, torn, or pieces and so on but some candidates thought that the vines were 'tatty' and therefore messy.

- (ii) **Explain how the language in each of the quotations in Question (g)(i) helps to convey the effects of the snow on the surroundings. You should refer to the whole quotation in your answer, not just the word underlined.** [6 marks]

In response to this question some candidates merely repeated their answers to (g)(i) and therefore gained no further marks. Very few attempted to explain the whole phrase given or comment on the effects of the writing. Some candidates who had given explanations in (g)(i) for the whole quotation rather than the underlined word, then failed to give the same explanation to (g)(ii) where it would have gained at least one mark.

- 1 *Flakes of white day fell through the night and brushed against the glass.'* (lines 14–15)

This was very rarely understood in terms of language and effect and many candidates simply said that the snow fell throughout the night. A few candidates commented on the sensation of light provided by the snow.

- 2 *“... the snow rose alive, spinning and swirling, and the world went white.’* (lines 32–33)

Some candidates effectively explained the chaotic or wild nature of the snowfall, and its increasing heaviness. Other simply repeated the idea of the snow falling in a circular motion.

- 3 *Dead black vines were hanging in tatters from the back fence.’* (lines 37–38).

Some candidates were able to explain the destructive power of the snow and the darkness of the vines against it. Some confused the vines with the electricity wires.

Question 2

Imagine that you are Grandma, from Passage A. It is two weeks later and the snow has finally gone.

Write a letter to your sister who lives in another part of the country, telling her about all that has happened.

In your letter you should cover the following points:

- what happened during the first few days of the snowstorm
- how the people in your household and the neighbours reacted to the snow
- the problems caused by the snow and how you and your family coped with them.

Base your letter on what you have read in Passage A, but do not copy from it. Be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullet points.

Begin your letter, 'My dearest ...'

Write about 200 to 300 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing. [Total: 15 marks]

For this task the majority of candidates seemed to understand quite clearly the need to address each of the bullet points given in the question and to give a credible account of the snowstorm from the Grandmother's perspective. The most successful responses developed a credible voice for Grandma and explored her feelings about the storm, exploring the reactions of her family and neighbours, as well as using the information in the passage to predict her concerns and experiences of the problems caused by the snow. The vast majority of candidates were comfortable writing a letter to a family member, offering an appropriately warm register and tone. Some candidates mistakenly wrote the journal as the grandchild or

Grandpa, and a number merely narrated the events of the passage without focusing on the three prompts given in the question rubric. A small minority of candidates merely copied extracts from the passage with very few own words or produced general narratives which were very close to the original passage.

Many candidates attempted to cover the three bullet points offering a balanced response to the whole task. However, although some candidates produced promising letters, they only focused on the first two prompts in the question. These responses gave convincing descriptions of what happened when the snow began to fall and continued to get worse, as well as the reactions of the people in the town and her family but would have gained higher marks by developing the third bullet about the problems caused by the snow and how the family coped. Furthermore, some candidates chose to ignore the third bullet point completely while others only made a cursory reference to it at the end of the letter, usually simply stating that the snow had melted, and things had become normal again. Quite a number of candidates did remember to address the third bullet point and used the details of the passage to express concerns about food running out, the electricity causing problems, roads being inaccessible, the house being completely cut off, and worries about the neighbours coping with such deep snow for a prolonged period.

Some candidates' rather narrative approach to the task led them to cover the prompts partially by, for example, describing the initial sun and snow, people's reactions and the gradual worsening of the weather. At times they used the grandchild's excited reactions in the night as Grandma's feelings, which was unconvincing. The less successful responses tended to be those where candidates simply repeated the details from the passage. This meant that although, generally, there wasn't extensive lifting of material, there was often little sense of candidates putting themselves in the position of the character and giving life to her experiences. The weakest responses simply lifted large sections of the passage, often writing as the grandchild as a result.

To gain the higher marks of Bands 1 and 2 for Reading it is essential that candidates develop ideas based on the passage rather than add their own imagined content. A few responses wrote general narratives about being trapped in a snowstorm, or accidents caused by the snow. Of course, any developed response should rely to some extent on imagination and feasible extension, but all development should be firmly tethered to details given in the passage. A few letters were further removed than this with some bearing little relation to the passage and becoming works of fiction, which of course, is not within the remit of the Reading Objectives for this paper.

The best responses – and there were a number – managed to develop imaginatively all three bullet points using and developing the finer details in the passage. These responses firmly tethered any development to the clues given in the passage and were able to convincingly adopt the perspective of a concerned adult rather than an excited child.

Question 3

- (a) **What do you learn from Passage B about the Vikings' discovery of North America and what they found there?**

Write your answers using short notes.

You do not need to use your own words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer.
Information about the Vikings' discovery of North America and what they found there.

[10 marks]

This question gave candidates the chance to boost their total score by appropriate selection. It was generally answered well with many candidates making one point per line as instructed and focusing on the topic and the question. However, there were a small number of candidates who (largely by selective lifting) included several points on the same line thereby self-penalising. This was particularly apparent where candidates grouped 'lush meadows', 'rivers teeming with salmon' and 'grapes' without realising that they were separate findings. Sometimes candidates included more than 10 relevant points, but by putting them more than one point on each line gained fewer than 10 marks overall. There were also some points repeated several times, most notably focused on the timing of the expedition.

Candidates should also ensure that the points they offer are relevant. Many candidates just wrote unfocused points relating to different sagas without ensuring that they were answering the question. Occasionally candidates added numbered points at the end of the response; these extra points were not marked, as they

are expected to select 10 only. It is essential on this question that the candidate reads the question clearly enough to ensure that they are picking out the appropriate material and equally that some attempt is made to set out the relevant points one on each of the 10 lines. This also contributes to avoidance of repeating similar points. Only a small number of candidates gained over eight marks, although the majority of candidates achieved four or above.

(b) Summary

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about the Vikings' discovery of North America and what they found there.

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

Your summary should include all 10 of your points in Question 3(a) and must be 100 to 150 words.

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

[5 marks]

Although some candidates were able to achieve Band 1 for clear, concise and fluent summaries the majority of candidates' responses were Band 2 (points were 'mostly focused' and made 'clearly') or Band 3 ('some areas of conciseness'). Many candidates lifted phrases, making no effort to rephrase 'lush meadows' or 'rivers teeming with salmon', for example. The least successful responses, of which there were only a few, were marred by personal comments and unselective 'lifting'. The most successful responses showed careful planning and organisation of material with some synthesis of points. Middle range responses tended to be list-like with a series of loosely connected statements about the discovery of North America and what they found there.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/12
Reading Passages (Core)

Key messages

- Proof reading is essential. Marks were lost through avoidable mistakes which could have been corrected by candidates checking over their work.
- In **Question 1(g)**, candidates should remember that they cannot simply repeat the same word in their answer to **(ii)** as they used in **(i)** but should elaborate on the definition given in **(i)** and focus their response on describing the effect of the whole phrase.
- Candidates must remember to deal with all three bullet points in **Question 2**, and attempt to develop ideas, both factual and inferential. The key message here is to go beyond the text for the third bullet point.
- Candidates need to ensure that they are writing in the correct format and required voice for **Question 2** as well as following the bullet points to construct their response to the task. They also need to ensure that they pay attention to their spelling, punctuation and grammar to assist clarity.

General comments

Overall, the passages proved to be accessible to nearly all candidates and they responded positively to both passages and questions. The vocabulary appeared to be within the range of candidates at this level.

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the passage had been clearly understood and many responded well to the more straightforward questions. In general, the questions enabled all candidates to produce some correct answers while at the same time challenging those who were more perceptive to gain higher marks. There was very little evidence of candidates not working within the paper time limit and fewer examples of No Response answers compared with previous papers. Overall, the standard of performance of most candidates was of a satisfactory to very good level, with only a very small number performing at a less than satisfactory standard.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) **Using your own words, explain the effects of the snow on the man on the pathway (paragraph 2, 'It was in ...').**

Two marks were available for this question but relatively few candidates gained both. Many candidates were able to identify that the snow covered the man or blew around him. Such answers were often expressed in different ways but any responses which hinted at the enveloping snow were awarded a mark. The second effect of the snow appearing to make the man transparent was not easily identified although some candidates did explain that the mass of snow did cover him so much that it looked like parts of him had disappeared. Since the question required candidates to answer using their own words, verbatim lifts were not credited unless there had been some attempt to reshape the lines involved.

(b) What caused the man to notice the narrator (paragraph 3, 'I laughed some ...')?

Virtually all candidates gained one mark for this question by identifying that it was the narrator's laughter which drew the attention of the man who was struggling his way through the snow. It is worth noting here that the passage does not refer to the narrator's gender even though the questions assume it was a boy, so references to boy or girl in this question, and indeed, in any other, were perfectly acceptable.

(c) Using your own words, explain the contrast the narrator describes in the final sentence of paragraph 3 (lines 12–13).

Many candidates were able to identify and explain the key contrast of the coldness of the clothes and the warmth of the mother. This was frequently expressed in a variety of ways all of which were accepted and gained both marks. Examiners were instructed not to penalise candidates who failed to identify whether, for example, the mother's skin felt warm or smelt sweet, and to accept general references to the coldness experienced by the narrator without identifying the clothing. Responses which merely stated without explanation that there was a difference between the clothes and the mother's skin were awarded one mark. A few candidates only gained one mark by referring to just the cold or just the warmth thereby not actually identifying the contrast.

(d) What caused the narrator to think that everything around him had disappeared (lines 17–18)?

A significant number of candidates were unable to gain the mark for this question either because of merely **copying** lines 17 and 18 or not explaining that it was **both** the wind and the snow which caused the narrator to think that everything around him had disappeared. Examiners were instructed to reward partial lifts related to both the strong wind and the heavy snow. Although the question did not ask candidates to answer using their own words, because the question focus in the passage comprised only two lines, then a complete lift of those lines would not demonstrate understanding of the passage in this instance.

(e) Using your own words, explain why the narrator was relieved that the man had disappeared (lines 17–20).

Many candidates were able to gain at least one of the two marks for this question. The most common response was that the narrator thought his father would be safe because the man had seemed to have left. A few perceptive candidates also understood that the narrator thought the man might have been bring bad or sad news about the father, hence the relief about the man's apparent disappearance, thereby gaining two marks. Some candidates merely stated that the narrator was 'relieved' but did not explain why or about what or whom and because the word 'relieved' is in the question did not gain a mark. A few candidates mistakenly thought the man disappearing in the snow was a physical threat to the narrator and the mother, and one or two responses demonstrated misunderstanding of the passage by stating that the man was going to attack the father – Ernesto DeAngelo.

(f) In line 23 the man has difficulty with the father's name. Using your own words, explain as fully as you can:

- (i) how the mother responds to this**
- (ii) what this suggests about the mother's state of mind.**

Candidates found this question easier with many gaining at least two marks for the whole question. For **(f)(i)** many candidates explained how the mother responded to the man's difficulty with pronouncing her husband's name, by either helping him or correcting his faltering attempt. A few candidates also noted her repetition of her husband's name or stated that she gave both his actual and pet names. The latter was frequently explained by the use of the formal 'Ernesto' and informal 'Ernie' and such attempts were awarded a mark. For **(f)(ii)** a significant number of candidates identified her worried state of mind using a range of acceptable synonyms.

It is worth noting that quite a number of candidates believed that the mother was annoyed with the man and that her repeating her husband's name was evidence of this anger and irritation rather than a genuine nervous attempt to correct the man's pronunciation. Some candidates who took this view had often described the man in **1(e)** as a potential physical threat to the family, thus giving rise to her angry treatment of him. It is important that candidates look closely at the text in order to find evidence to support such theories. In this instance there is no evidence to support such an interpretation.

(g) (i) Re-read paragraphs 4 ('The street was ...') and 9 ("Sorry", she said ...').

Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words underlined in each of the following phrases:

1 'The hill was white all the way to where it disappeared. Black sticks stuck out, here and there: trees; a skeletal fence; telephone poles.' (lines 14–15)

- like a skeleton / gaunt / thin

2 'The tram tracks were black lines along the way, then they glazed over white, then vanished.' (lines 15–16)

- became covered with a shiny surface / polished

3 'The bell clanged, sounding very close in the woolly snow and the silence. The tram disappeared towards town, its wheels growling against the tracks.' (lines 34–36)

- snarling / rumbling / moaning / grinding

Not all candidates appeared to understand the precise requirements of this task. The question asked them to explain in their own words what the writer meant by the words underlined. Some candidates produced 'catch all' phrases which were more akin to a **(g)(ii)** type explanation of the whole phrase. Only the more successful responses showed real understanding of the underlined words and only a small number of candidates gained all three available marks for this question.

For 'skeletal' a number of candidates were able to identify that the fence appeared to be thin because of the heavy snow. Responses which stated the fence was 'like a skeleton' were also rewarded. Some candidates wrote that the fence was 'small' which lacks the precision of 'thinness'.

For 'glazed' a large number of candidates responded with 'covered' which was not given the mark because it did not convey the sense of the shiny or polished surface caused by the snow on the tram tracks. Candidates who likened the snow to icing on a cake were awarded a mark.

For 'growling' many candidates thought this was synonymous with loudness which although acceptable for **(g)(ii)** answers was not acceptable for **(g)(i)** because 'growling' can be quite soft or low. Candidates found it difficult to explain low grinding noise of the tram wheels grinding on the tracks.

(ii) Explain how the language in each of the following three quotations in Question 1(g)(i) helps to convey the effects of the snow on the surroundings.

You should refer to the whole phrase in your answer and not just the words underlined.

Many candidates achieved marks on this question by showing some understanding/offering a partial explanation of individual phrases (as a whole). With quotation 1, some commented successfully on the contrast between the background of the snow-covered hill and the dark objects such as trees and fences which were occasionally dotted around it because of the deep snow. Only a small number showed any real appreciation of how the vocabulary/imagery was used to contribute to the writer's description of the scene. Quotation 2, with its focus on the gradual disappearance of the black tram tracks owing to the increasing snow combined with the distance was sometimes paraphrased rather than explained and less successful responses made general comments about the heavy snow without demonstrating a clear understanding of the individual

quotation. Quotation 3 was explained more successfully by some candidates who were able to focus on the harsh noise of the tram wheels moving along the track, although as with Quotation 1, very few candidates were able to explain that the noise was increased because of the contrasting silence brought about by the thick snow.

As in previous sessions, the marks gained from this question often totalled fewer than for (g)(i). Sometimes this was because answers to (g)(ii) did no more than repeat those given for (g)(i) or because a misunderstanding was carried through from (g)(i). It is worth pointing out, as in previous reports, that the explanations of the phrases should be grounded in the context of the question as opposed to simple interpretations of the words used. The key focus of explanations here was 'helps to convey the effects of the snow on the surroundings' but many responses did not relate their explanations to the focus of the question.

Question 2

Imagine that you are the narrator's mother in Passage A. It is the day after the events described in the passage. Write an entry for your journal in which you describe what happened the day before.

In your journal entry you should cover the following points:

- the weather conditions and how they affected the surrounding environment
- the visit of the man, and the telegram
- your thoughts and feelings about the content of the telegram.

Base your journal entry on what you have read in Passage A, but do not copy from it. Be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullet points.

Begin your journal entry: 'I can remember so clearly ...'

Write about 200 to 300 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing.

The most successful responses to this question were written in a convincingly personal style by the narrator's mother with a clear focus on the backdrop of the weather and the visit of the man with the telegram. The third bullet with its focus on the mother's thoughts and feelings about the content of the telegram was an important factor in candidates achieving the higher band marks. Candidates must realise that the Reading marks depended on how well the journal entry was tethered to events in the passage in relation to the first two bullets, and how credible the content of the telegram was in relation to the mother's reaction. This question is based on Reading comprehension and appreciation and is not simply a piece of imaginative writing. Less successful journal entries often contained misunderstanding of the passage which perhaps could have been avoided by more careful reading. For example, some candidates believed that the man was delivering the telegram to the narrator's father; an error based, perhaps, on not picking up the 'Mrs' when the man reads out the father's name? Furthermore, some of these responses then identified the telegram as the father's call up papers because of the war.

A fairly substantial number of candidates wrote the journal entry as the narrator and not the narrator's mother. It is obviously imperative that candidates establish what they are being asked to do with **Question 2**. Although the journal voice might have comparatively little effect on the Writing mark for this question, it does detract from the quality of development of the bullet points, especially that relating to the mother's thoughts and feelings. A few of these accounts were able to develop the mother's feelings and reactions to a certain extent and were rewarded accordingly, but the majority focused on the imagined feelings of the narrator instead, thus placing the response in either Bands 3 or 4.

On the topic of the mother's thoughts and feelings about the possible content of the telegram some candidates appropriately developed the mother's fear that it brought news of her husband's death through fighting in the war. Some candidates stopped short of revealing this bad news by creating suspense through the mother's tears and hugging of her son after having read the telegram. Other candidates quite acceptably identified the telegram news as one of happiness with the father's imminent return home because of the end of the war or a non-life-threatening wound. There were very few references to the telegram contents which were not in some way grounded in the passage but once again candidates should realise that news such as winning the lottery is not really credible given the nature of the passage.

Some candidates wrote journal entries which simply recounted events in the passage without any development of the mother's feelings about the events or her reaction to the man with the telegram. Such responses often recounted almost word for word the man brushing the snow of the envelope and the subsequent problem with the pen and its solution without developing the likely reason for the mother turning it over in her hands. The least successful of these accounts for both Reading and Writing marks were those which were either very close to the passage or contained much lifting. The majority of candidates gained Band 3 and above Writing marks by establishing an appropriate register with some degree of clarity.

Question 3

- (a) **What do you learn from Passage B about Franklin's attempt to find the North-West Passage and what may have happened to him and his crew?**

Write your answers using short notes.

You do not need to use your own words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer.

Information about Franklin's attempt to find the North-West Passage and what may have happened to him and his crew

This question gave candidates the chance to boost their total score by appropriate selection. It was answered relatively well with many candidates making one point per line as instructed and focusing on the topic and the question. However, there were a significant number of candidates who (largely by selective lifting) included several points on the same line thereby self-penalising. The most frequent limitations included lack of differentiation for points 12, 13, and 14 relating to lead poisoning and a description of the effects of lead poisoning which was beyond the scope of the question with its focus on what was learned about Franklin's attempt to find the North-West Passage and what may have happened to him and his crew. A large number of responses lost marks in the 'what may have happened' section by not making clear the respective contexts of points 12, 13 and 14, and thereby effectively repeating point 12 about lead poisoning.

As always, the key to gaining higher marks on **Question 3(a)** was avoiding repetition and answering the question by selecting relevant points. Some candidates, for example, gave 'No one survived/returned' and 'all died in the attempt' as separate points. Others penalised themselves by not writing in sufficient detail to make the points clear such as 'extreme cold' or 'lead containers' or 'poisoning and in doing so lost valuable marks.

Only a small number of candidates gained full marks, although many achieved six or above.

- (b) **Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about Franklin's attempt to find the North-West Passage and what may have happened to him and his crew.**

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

Your summary should include all 10 of your points in Question 3(a) and must be 100 to 150 words.

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

Although some candidates were able to achieve Band 1 for clear, concise and fluent summaries the majority of candidates' responses were Band 2 (points were 'mostly focused' and made 'clearly') or Band 3 ('some areas of conciseness'). The least successful responses, of which there were only a few, were marred by personal comments and unselective 'lifting'. The most successful responses showed careful planning and organisation of material with some synthesis of points. Middle range responses tended to be list-like with a series of loosely connected statements about the expedition and what may have happened to Franklin and his crew.

Concluding Comments

Most candidates completed the paper in some detail and some of the responses to **Question 2** in particular were of a generally good standard. It is clear that the vast majority of candidates had been well prepared for these questions and were confident in their approach and, overall, this seemed to be an accessible and challenging paper. Those examiners who marked the paper were generally impressed with the seriousness and competence with which candidates of all levels approached the questions.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/13
Reading Passages (Core)

Key messages

- Proofreading is essential. Marks were lost through avoidable mistakes which could have been corrected by candidates checking over their work.
- In **1(g)** candidates should remember that they cannot simply repeat the same word in their answer to **(ii)** as they used in **(i)** but should elaborate on the definition given in **(i)** and focus their response on describing the effect of the whole phrase.
- Candidates must remember to deal with all three bullet points in **Question 2**, and attempt to develop ideas, both factual and inferential. The key message here is to look for clues within the passage and to develop those ideas, beyond the text, for the third bullet point.
- Candidates need to ensure that they are writing in the correct format for **Question 2** as well as following the bullet points to construct their response to the task. They also need to ensure that they pay attention to their spelling, punctuation and grammar to assist clarity.

General comments

Overall, the passages proved to be accessible to virtually all candidates and they responded positively to both passages and questions. The vocabulary appeared to be within the range of candidates at this level.

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the passage had been clearly understood and the majority of candidates responded well to the more straightforward questions. In general, the questions enabled all candidates to produce some correct answers while at the same time challenging those who were more perceptive to gain higher marks.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) **Using your own words, explain why the girl 'has no idea where she is' (paragraph 1, 'An eleven-year-old ...').** [2 marks]

Many candidates gained one mark by explaining that the girl was a long way from home or that she was in a wilderness (or remote place). Fewer candidates gained a second mark; this could be awarded to anyone who explained either that she was alone or that she was 11 years old. Overall, a reasonable number of candidates gained both marks.

- (b) **State one sound the girl hears before she stops and one sound she hears when she listens more closely (paragraph 2, ‘The crunch of bicycle ...’). [1 mark]**

The key to gaining the one mark for this question was to provide both details. The first detail (heard before she stops) was the sound of the wheels on gravel, the roar of the truck on the highway or the wind. The second detail (heard when she listens more closely) was the rustle of barley or the buzzing of a bee. The majority of candidates correctly gave two appropriate details. However, it may be noted that this is a question that demonstrates the importance of reading questions very carefully in order to ensure that sufficient information is provided in response.

- (c) **What details in paragraph 3 (‘The pale grass ...’) suggest that the schoolyard had been neglected for a long time? [2 marks]**

The possible details to identify were (i) the grass is long/up to her knees; (ii) the yard is overgrown with weeds or dandelions and (iii) there is a square of shrubs around it.

- (d) **Using your own words, explain why the girl does not walk up the steps to the school building (lines 17–19). [2 marks]**

Many candidates gained one mark on this question by explaining that the girl was afraid of finding something unpleasant inside the building. The other mark required the candidate identifying that she thought there might be animals inside and didn’t want to disturb them. Again, it demonstrates the importance of going into sufficient detail in the response to obtain both marks.

- (e) **Using your own words, explain what the change in the girl’s feelings after she picks up the rock (lines 25–27). [2 marks]**

Candidates gained one mark for this question by explaining that she was scared by the ants. The second mark was given for explaining that the girl admires the rock. There were some candidates who gave a similar response to this question as they gave to (d) above. Again, this demonstrates the importance of giving each question a careful reading and giving attention to the line references where they are given.

- (f) **Using your own words, explain what the girl felt about walking in the meadow (paragraph 5, ‘I was, at that time...’). [2 marks]**

There were several possible details that could be accepted: (i) she thought the land was private (or didn’t know it was common land) and/or that they shouldn’t be walking there; (ii) she was excited at doing something new; (iii) she was thrilled at the thought of trespassing and (iv) had no idea that she would not be going there with her mother again.

- (g) (i) **Re-read paragraph 2 (‘The crunch ...’) and paragraph 4 (‘She remembers ...’). Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words underlined in each of the following phrases:**

- (a) ‘When the girl stops and listens closely, the rustle of barley and the buzz of an occasional bee add detail to the texture of the afternoon.’ (lines 9–11)
- (b) ‘In the middle sits the old school. Still white from its initial coat of paint, it’s a standard one-room school building.’ (lines 13–14)
- (c) ‘... more of an outcrop of untouched prairie than the other man-made rock piles dotted randomly through the fields.’ (lines 21–22)

[3 marks]

The question asked candidates to explain in their own words what the writer meant by the words underlined. Candidates recognised the need to explain just the underlined word and a good number of candidates gained three marks for this part of the task. A few candidates produced ‘catch all’ phrases which were more akin to a (g)(ii) type explanation of the whole phrase.

- (a) For 'texture' candidates were able to explain that this meant the feeling or atmosphere of the afternoon.
- (b) 'Initial' was explained correctly as 'the first' or 'the original' coat.
- (c) 'Randomly' was successfully explained as something disorderly or without a plan.

(g)(ii) Explain how the writer conveys the quiet and emptiness of the surroundings through the use of language in each of the three underlined phrases in Question 1(g)(i).

You should refer to the whole phrase in your answer and not just the words underlined.

[6 marks]

Many candidates achieved marks on this question by showing some understanding, offering a partial explanation of individual phrases (as a whole). Most commented successfully on the way the language suggested that the place was remote, peaceful or had not been altered or inhabited for a long time.

Less successful responses made general comments about the girl's situation and about the how the atmosphere was peaceful (sometimes repeating details from their answers to (i)) without demonstrating a clear understanding of the individual phrases. Sometimes answers to (g)(ii) did, as noted, no more than repeat those given for (g)(i) or because a misunderstanding was carried through from (g)(i). Some responses attempted explanations of the phrases by simply re-iterating them or lifting the language from the phrase and simply produced a circular explanation. It is important to note that each phrase requires a different explanation, as some less successful responses gave very similar explanations for all three phrases. It is also worth pointing out that the explanations of the phrases should be grounded in the context of the question as opposed to simple interpretations of the words used. The key focus of explanations here was 'the writer's presentation of the story' but many responses did not relate their explanations to the focus of the question. More successful responses made the connection between the atmosphere and the sounds and commented on the simplicity of the school buildings.

Question 2

Imagine that you are the writer from Passage A and that you are now a senior student. Your school magazine has a regular feature called 'Childhood Memories'.

Write your article for the magazine, describing your earlier life and what happened after the events described in the passage.

In your article you should cover the following points:

- **your thoughts as a child about where you lived**
- **your memories of your life with your mother**
- **how your life changed and why you never walked to the meadow again.**

Base your interview on what you have read in Passage A, but do not copy from it.

Be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullets.

Write about 200 to 300 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content or your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing.

For this task the majority of candidates seemed to understand the need to address each of the bullets and to give a credible account of the events of the passage from the girl's point of view. The majority also understood the format and gave answers with an appropriate register and voice for the girl. The task provided a challenge as it required candidates to adopt a view looking back from a later age on events that were already presented as looking back.

Many candidates attempted to cover the three bullet points in a balanced approach. However, the less successful responses tended to be those where candidates (albeit in their own words) simply repeated the details from the passage. This meant that although, generally, there wasn't extensive lifting of material there was often little sense of candidates going beyond the details in the passage which obviously had a bearing

on the detail included for the third bullet point. Few candidates appeared to be muddled about the sequence of events.

More successful responses were able to give some explanation for the changes in the girl's life and the reasons for her and her mother not returning to the meadow. This included sensitive accounts of the mother's death and nostalgic explanations of the land being sold for development. A good proportion of candidates made some attempt to address this third bullet point. Overall, the responses showed a very good understanding of the passage, the atmosphere of the place and the girl's feelings about the going inside and about walking in the meadow.

Most candidates wrote correct, though relatively simple, sentences, with an adequate range of vocabulary and tried to use an appropriate register. The most successful responses – a significant minority – achieved Band 1 marks for both Content and Language.

Question 3

(a) Notes

What do you learn from Passage B about the life of Mary Kingsley and her achievements?

Write your answers using short notes.

You do not need to use your own words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer.

[10 marks]

This question gave candidates the chance to boost their total score by appropriate selection. It was answered very well with many candidates making one point per line and focusing on the topic and the question. However, there were a significant number of candidates who (largely by selective lifting) included several points on the same line thereby self-penalising – only one mark is awarded for each line regardless of the number of points it contains. Sometimes candidates included more than 10 marks worth of relevant points, but by putting more than one point on each line gained fewer than 10 marks. Similarly, only the first 10 lines are marked, so candidates who added further lines and points were still only credited for points included in the first 10 lines. It is essential on this question that the candidate reads the question clearly to ensure that they are picking out the appropriate material and equally that some attempt is made to set out the relevant points one on each of the 10 lines. This also contributes to avoidance of repeating points in the summary that follows. Only a small number of candidates gained full marks, although many achieved seven or above.

(b) Summary

Now use your notes to write a summary of what **Passage B** tells you about the life of Mary Kingsley and her achievements.

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

Your summary should include all 10 of your points in **Question 3(a)** and must be 100 to 150 words.

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

[5 marks]

On the whole, although some students were able to achieve Band 1 for clear, concise and fluent summaries the majority of candidates' responses were Band 2 (points were 'mostly focused' and made 'clearly') or Band 3 ('some areas of conciseness'). The least successful responses, of which there were only a few, were marred by personal comments and unselective 'lifting'. The most successful responses showed careful planning and organisation of material with some synthesis of points. Middle range responses tended to be list-like with a series of loosely connected statements about the unicorn's behaviour and appearance.

Concluding comments

Most candidates completed the paper in some detail and the responses to **Question 2** in particular were of a generally good standard. It is clear that the vast majority of candidates had been well prepared for these questions and were confident in their approach and, overall, this was an accessible and engaging paper.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/21
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- used examination time efficiently to address all parts of the three questions equally carefully
- read the instructions for each task closely, paying attention to key words and guidance
- considered the evidence of the skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate in each response
- planned and organised their ideas before beginning their answer
- selected only the material appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition
- used a range of their own words carefully, appropriately and precisely
- edited their response to amend any careless slips, incomplete or unclear ideas
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of form, audience and purpose
- revisited passages to clarify details, refine understanding and identify implicit meanings

General comments

Candidates' responses largely demonstrated familiarity with the general demands of each task and indicated at least some understanding of the need to adapt and use relevant material from the passage in order to answer the question. Most had taken on board guidance regarding word limits and were able to attempt all parts of all three questions. Where responses to individual tasks appeared rushed or unfinished, candidates had sometimes spent valuable time unwisely by counting the number of words on each line of their response and/or appeared to have answered questions out of order. The most successful answers often showed evidence of having been planned beforehand to target the specific demands of the question, as well as having been carefully checked and edited. Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible, with stronger responses avoiding the copying and/or recycling of the language of the text that featured at times in some less successful answers.

In **Question 1**, successful responses included a good range of relevant ideas over all three bullets, supported by appropriate detail with development well-related to the text. They were able to consider and reflect on the evidence in the passage offered through the eyes of the narrator and reinterpret the information and ideas in a new form for a given audience and purpose. The strongest responses were able to adopt and maintain the perspective of Andrew's father in his professional capacity to offer a convincing and detailed report reflecting on his son's experience. Some mid-range answers missed opportunities to develop and interpret the material – the task invited them to 'comment on', not simply replay events as described in the text. The least successful answers demonstrated limited understanding of the text and/or task.

For **Question 2**, responses need to offer detailed comments in relation to appropriate choices selected from both paragraphs. Candidates should explore and explain the precise meaning, effects, connotations and associations of their identified choices, demonstrating an understanding of the writer's purpose. In most responses, there were a sufficient number of appropriate choices selected from the relevant paragraphs to allow for a range of comment and many contained accurate explanations of meanings in context and/or weak effect. In order to target higher marks, many responses needed to go further in considering and explaining the specifics of the examples they had chosen – developing their explanations to go beyond general or basic comment. Weaker responses offered little comment and/or tried to explain the selected choice in the same language as the language choice. Others repeated very similar explanations for very different choices and

limited evidence of their understanding as a result. Candidates are reminded that the guidance for the task suggests they focus on **four** choices in **each** paragraph (a total of **eight** choices in all). Where answers elected to discuss fewer than eight choices, or offered explanations of choices taken from one paragraph only, evidence of understanding was necessarily limited.

In **Question 3**, many candidates were able to demonstrate the skills and understanding required in a selective summary task and did more than offer a simple paraphrase or précis of the original text. In part **(a)** short notes identifying each separate idea precisely are required, rather than the whole sentences and/or imprecise selections from the passage apparent on occasion in less focused responses. Many candidates managed to achieve a good range of the marks available through identifying a good number of points, then reorganising and expressing these clearly, concisely and fluently in their own words. Whilst candidates do not need to use their own words to be credited in part **(a)**, those who chose to do so were often better able to avoid the repetition and/or incomplete ideas which limited other less secure answers in both parts of the question. In part **(b)** own words must be used where practical and ideas need to be re-organised to address the focus of the question. A number of responses missed opportunities to target higher bands by relying on lifted phrases from the passage and/or including comment or significant repetition. Candidates should use their own words as far as possible in this summary task, and remember the need for overview of a good range of ideas as well as the need for concision.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, 20 per cent 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, employing a range of precise vocabulary, appropriately used, and planning/checking their responses efficiently to avoid unforced errors which affect the communication of their ideas or result in awkwardness of expression. Candidates should be aware that undeveloped language or inconsistency of style will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Candidates are advised to leave sufficient time to check and edit their responses. The best responses were able to adapt their style of writing to suit the task in hand, taking account of audience, purpose and form.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Imagine you are Dad from Passage A. The owner of the company wants to introduce holiday work experience for more young people. You have been asked to present a report to the owner of the company following your son's experience.

Write the report.

In your report you should comment on:

- **the challenges faced by Andrew and what you hoped he would gain from his six weeks at the factory**
- **how different staff members treated Andrew**
- **what you have learned about the thoughts and feelings of the people who work at the company.**

Base your report on what you have read in Passage A, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullet points.

Begin your report, 'Summer work experience for young people ...'

Write about 250 to 350 words.

Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing.

The task invited candidates to demonstrate their skills and understanding through using and modifying ideas from Andrew's narrative account; to present them within a convincing and appropriate report from his father to the owner of the company where he worked. The question encouraged candidates to show that they could do more than just repeat or retell events from the text, thinking their way into the role of Andrew's father to demonstrate understanding of both explicit and implicit ideas and evaluate the experience for both sides. A few had failed to recognise key details in the text – for example that Dad worked at the company and/or that Andrew was in a privileged position – and offered more limited responses as a result. Some lost sight of the

task as primarily an assessment of their reading skills and drifted away from the text to offer their personal views and recollections of work experience, or speculate at length on what might have happened outside of events covered in the passage.

A number of candidates wrote overlong introductory paragraphs (occasionally pages) about the virtues of work experience in general, which may have helped them establish the voice of the father, but rarely tapped into the specifics of the passage. Where responses were over reliant on the language of the original and/or had not considered the audience and purpose for their report, evidence of understanding was also less convincing. Good responses were able to reflect on events, offering considered judgement and balanced comment, taking into account that this report was intended for the owner of the company who had initially only agreed to the work placement as a favour to Andrew's father and was now considering introducing it for more young people. Detailed reasoning with supporting evidence drawn from the text were features of successful answers.

A few of the weaker answers wrote responses in forms other than that specified in the question – for example as a letter to the owner of the company, or a teacher's work experience report on Andrew, Andrew's diary or an article for teenagers interested in completing work experience. Whilst it was still possible to indicate some general grasp of the text via such responses, opportunities to demonstrate secure understanding of both explicit and implicit ideas were likely to be more limited. Responses which made little use of the passage or offered only very general comments in relation to work experience and/or teenagers demonstrated little understanding of the text or task. For example, circular explanations such as 'I hoped that work experience would offer Andrew experience of work' were redundant unless the candidate went on to consider the nature of details of that experience in the light of the passage.

Where responses – sometimes written as letters – adopted an outraged tone and blamed the owner for poor Andrew's 'suffering' at the hands of unreasonably strict management and/or ranted that the owner was 'responsible for [his] unwelcoming staff and needed to make them behave better' evidence of understanding of both task and text was diluted. More successful responses often recognised that his father held a position of some authority – picking up on clues in the text such as Andrew's preferential treatment and/or Dad not needing to clock in or wear overalls. They mitigated any implied criticism, suggesting potential concerns as 'areas we might need to think about ...' and shared some responsibility in any negative observation – suggesting for example how the system for lateness penalties for factory floor workers might be usefully reviewed and/or be presented more positively. Some judged that Andrew might not have wished to lose his advantage or alienate himself further by reporting details of the lateness penalty avoidance scheme to his father at the time, explaining that this had only come to light later once he had finished.

The question offered candidates an invitation to show how well they could read between the lines to pick up on implications as well as respond to the more obvious, explicit ideas. Many candidates took full advantage of this and produced sophisticated, convincing responses showing that they had made careful decisions based on the evidence in the text. In relation to bullet point one, most were able to refer to issues connected to punctuality or having to wake up early in the holidays. Mid-range answers often included reference to the need to be sufficiently organised – citing the example of the forgotten lunch – and the vast majority referred to the task of fetching coffee allocated to Andrew during his time in the coil winding department. Better answers commented on those explicit points, integrating details of them into the overall explanation of the challenges faced. They developed points further from the father's perspective, for example by suggesting the value of an active work experience for Andrew relative to spending his holiday watching sport on television and recognising the value of Andrew needing to start from the bottom with menial tasks such as coffee fetching and work his way up. A number of responses might have benefitted from revisiting the passage to identify the more subtle details and hints in Andrew's account of his experiences with a view to expanding the range of ideas they could include. For example, strong responses had often recognised the clue in 'fetching' that Andrew was less than impressed with the lightest blue overalls he had to wear, with the best responses often making the connection that the shade of blue for overalls indicated very visibly his inexperience. Most answers noted that Andrew would be working with different people and/or different departments and many were able to judge that it could be difficult to fit in. Some noted but did not always fully exploit Andrew's favoured position with relatively few suggesting that it could be a challenge for him, for example by having to learn to consider the impression he and/or his presence there might be creating.

The second bullet was addressed well by those candidates who teased out the different treatment received from identifiable groups and individual staff members. In the weakest answers, ideas for this bullet were sometimes limited to the very general idea that 'different staff members treated Andrew differently'. Some mid-range answers only hinted at different groups' reactions through the detail they touched on from the text. Responses at most levels recognised the dismissive attitude of the apprentices and usually noted the relative similarity in their age to Andrew's with many taking the opportunity to suggest that their attitude might in part be due to the perceived threat from Andrew's presence. Most mentioned the canteen staff's reaction suggesting that it showed they were amused in any one of a number of possible ways by Andrew's comment (including amusement at his father's embarrassment). A number suggested it indicated that the staff had not understood his attempts at 'wit' and were mocking his naivety. Responses citing Andrew as having made a genuine request for salad which had been unfairly denied were not evidencing close reading. The 'brown foodstuffs' described as on offer would not suggest that such healthy options as salad existed and 'Wittily, I requested salad' shows Andrew is well aware of that.

Typically, opportunities to offer a full range of ideas in relation to bullet two were missed where answers offered more general remarks about the staff as a whole rather than picking up on the instruction to comment on how different staff members treated Andrew. Most did distinguish successfully between the reactions of the apprentices, the clerk who dealt with pay packets and canteen staff, though missed opportunities to broaden the range of ideas by passing over other characters. The passage also included reference to interaction with a junior clerk, a supervisor and an older worker, offering opportunity to comment for example on the surly nature of the supervisor (surprising to one convincing version of Dad who had not seen this side before as his own interactions with staff on the factory floor had been far more positive).

Better answers were careful to revisit the passage to check their understanding of details and ideas they planned to use. Candidates who had read closely to the end of the passage understood that shifting baked beans was a task allocated by Andrew's father, not a task invented for him by the junior clerk, and were then able to offer more convincing interpretations of Dad's character and attitudes in the light of this information. Those who confused the junior clerk and clerk in charge of pay missed opportunities to recognise both the hierarchy in the company – real and assumed – and the divide between factory workers and office staff – ideas leading usefully to bullet three points. Answers suggesting that the apprentices were unhappy because their children had been denied work experience or that the clerk with 'absolute power' was the owner of the factory who had unfairly berated Andrew for losing his card indicated that key details had been misread and offered less convincing evidence of skills and understanding as a result.

Where responses kept in mind the purpose for the task and imagined themselves into the situation of presenting a report to the owner of the company, they were best able to produce relevant and detailed ideas in relation to bullet three, often relating them convincingly to the relative probability of success of the introduction of an extended work experience programme. Some well-planned and carefully constructed responses were able to begin their answer with this third bullet, offering an initial overview of what had been learned through Andrew's experience and an assessment of how the company might profit from such insights in future. Most answers were able to include reference to discontent in the workforce, supporting the point through the detail of planned strike action, though fewer went on to develop the idea by considering the root of the discontent. Better answers made full use of their understanding of the unpleasant conditions in the canteen to note that this was not likely to be helping workers' morale and picked up on details suggesting the narrow and unappealing range of food on offer as well as the cramped conditions as needing to be improved. The unappealing coffee and/or tedious job of fetching it from the machine was mentioned by some candidates as an example of the poor provision for workers and hierarchical nature of factory. Along with the attitude of the pay clerk this was often considered as indicative of issues needing attention within the wider context of the business. Recognising that Dad was skilled in navigating canteen, office corridors and the factory floor, sensitive to workers' views as well as in favour with the owner, some responses carefully developed his report to include his own observations (rooted in the text) suggesting that the ethos of the place needed to improve to indicate to workers they were valued. Most common were suggestions to extend the canteen and improve the range of foods on offer – Dad had clearly been in the canteen previously and chose to bring sandwiches each day instead. Others included allowing flexibility to start times to take account of workers' family commitments – Dad had 'muttered almost inaudibly' that he did not need a clocking in card, knowing that this would not go down well and was aware that others had children too.

Most candidates understood the need to write using a formal register and many were successful in employing this tone throughout. Stronger responses recognised the need to retune Andrew's voice when writing from his father's perspective for a formal purpose, with the best maintaining a measured tone for their report. They understood that Dad would be unlikely to use terms like 'grunts' or 'The One with Absolute Power' without making it a feature of the report itself, for example by identifying the attitudes behind that use of language and what it revealed about the hierarchical nature of the company. A number of candidates chose to include subheadings within their report and where these were used carefully to highlight key points they often worked well. A few assumed that the report would be presented orally and offered the words of a speech to do that – where the focus on audience and purpose was clear, this approach was often appropriate.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- remember that the task is an invitation to show how well you have read and understood the ideas in the passage
- read the passage carefully, more than once, thinking about how you are going to use key ideas to answer the question before you begin writing your answer
- look for details, hints and clues in the text to help you to work out any implied meanings or suggestions
- give equal attention to each of the three bullet points in the question
- plan a route through your answer to ensure that ideas are sequenced logically
- make sure that the ideas you include can be traced back to details and suggestions in the passage
- answer using your own words – do not copy phrases or sentences from the passage
- take account of the form and perspective required for your response
- consider the audience and purpose for your response
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct any errors in your writing which might affect meaning.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a) **Andrew's first experience of the canteen in paragraph 5, beginning 'At the canteen ...'**
- (b) **the visit to the Accounts Department in paragraph 7, beginning 'After only 20 minutes ...'**

Select four powerful words or phrases from each paragraph. Your choices should include imagery. Explain how each word or phrase is used effectively in the context.

Write about 200 to 300 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer.

Responses to **Question 2** should take the form of continuous prose, offering opportunity for candidates to explore their choices fully in the context of the passage. Having selected relevant examples to discuss, the focus needs to be on the quality of the analysis. Some of the weaker responses offered only slight comment in both halves, whilst others offered meaning and/or basic effect in one part and very thin, or no, comment in the other. Some made very general remarks such as suggesting that choices 'were from the same lexical field' without examining them further. Many responses would have benefitted from more careful consideration of how the language was working to move beyond explicit meaning and/or general comments on effect.

Where answers considered both the implications and associations of individual words, they were often able to explore and explain the image in hand. For example those who did more than simply note that navigating was 'another word connected to the sea' were able to demonstrate understanding of how the language was working by recognising that it implied Dad's knowledge, experience and expertise, as well as demonstrating his ability to find them a safe and quick route through the crowd in the canteen to the serving area. The best answers also considered how it separated Dad from the 'sea' of workers, indicating he held a more senior position, reminiscent of the captain of a ship. In less successful responses, there was a tendency to run some choices together: 'Nodding dumbly, I trailed blindly after him through a maze of corridors' which led to general/vague explanations. Additionally, in some of the weaker scripts the occasional word was highlighted, for example 'maze' or 'sardines', without analysing the image as a whole.

In stronger answers images were explored at some length – for example, extending explanations of the popular selection of ‘an overall sea of blue’ to take account of the motion and potential force of the crowd of workers as well as consider the wordplay of ‘overall’. The image of the workers ‘packed in like sardines’ was a similarly popular choice, with a number of candidates suggesting a connection between the industrial process of canning and the nature of the work/treatment of workers in the factory. Others considered the image as relating to a shoal of the small fish and were equally able to suggest that these workers were presented as expendable and insignificant. Most candidates recognised that the food on offer in the canteen was not being presented as either appealing or healthy, commenting on the use of the word ‘brown’, with better answers often responding to the indeterminate nature of both ‘foodstuffs’ and/or ‘something’. Stronger responses in part (a) went on to unpick the connotations of ‘slopped’, going further than the suggestion that it showed a lack of care or interest, for example by highlighting unpleasant connotations and associations linked to waste liquids, prisoners and animals. A number of answers missed opportunities to capitalise on their general understanding of the effect of the image though misreading/careless copying of the word ‘duly’ as ‘dully’.

In part (b) some mid-range answers offered less convincing evidence of understanding by repeating very similar explanations for more than one choice. The suggestion that the clerk considered herself / was considered as some kind of deity was potentially a useful explanation and better answers teased out the humour and differences in the examples of ‘religious’ language they noted, for example the potentially sinister threat of the title ‘The One with Absolute Power’ noting the use of capitals as significant in emphasising this and the connotations of royalty in ‘granted an audience’. Many offered explanations of Andrew’s attitude as mocking or sarcastic and were able to interpret the ‘maze of corridors’ as a deliberately confusing device to disorientate anyone trying to visit, with a good number of responses referencing nasty surprises such as a minotaur at the centre. Suggestions that the maze indicated anxiety on Andrew’s part as he did not know how his work experience was going to go and/or a fear of being lost in a large factory had failed to consider the description in the context of the passage – the corridors were restricted to the area around the clerk’s office and Andrew was being led by his father. There was no suggestion that he was in any genuine danger of becoming lost or that he was taking this visit seriously.

Choices in part (b) that were most commonly well explained included the ‘warning of perilous doom awaiting mortals who failed’, with most candidates splitting the longer quotation into smaller sections and others dealing with the image as a whole. Many also dealt convincingly with ‘trailed blindly’ and ‘chiding me’, though others had clearly selected ‘chiding’ without having a secure understanding of its meaning and or intended effect.

The most successful responses to **Question 2** showed specific focus at word level and were engaged and assured in their handling of their appropriate choices. They tackled images with imagination and answered both parts of the question equally well. The best responses considered precise meaning and effects throughout the response, without repeating generalised effects. Weak responses offered generic comments such as suggesting that ‘blue symbolises sadness’ in the workers and/or empty assertions such as ‘this gives us a better picture of the workers in the canteen’. The weakest responses often struggled to find suitable vocabulary to communicate subtleties of meaning and relied on repeating words of the original in their explanations, limiting evidence of understanding as a result.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- re-read the whole paragraph before making selections; ensure that the choices you select for comment are relevant to the question and you have some ideas about the ways in which they are being used
- do not write out whole sentences or offer only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase
- remember to put quotation marks around your choices – it makes it easier for you to focus on the exact wording
- avoid presenting your choices as a list or group of choices; treat each choice separately to avoid generalised comments
- avoid general comments such as ‘it helps you to imagine his experience’, or ‘this creates a picture in the reader’s mind’ which will not gain any marks
- avoid repeating the wording of the text in your explanation
- aim to give a meaning, in context, for each of your choices, even if you are unsure of effects
- try to include and explain images from each paragraph
- check back through your explanations asking yourself ‘How?’ and ‘In what way...?’ to make sure that you have explained your ideas fully.

Question 3

What did the miners find frightening or distressing about conditions working in the mine?

To answer the summary task successfully, candidates must first identify fifteen points from Passage B which are relevant to the specific focus of the question and list them, one per numbered line, in note form on the grid in part **(a)**. Those ideas then need to be reorganised and adapted to provide a clear, concise response to the question in the candidate's own words in part **(b)**. Candidates are reminded that they are only credited with a maximum of one point per line in part **(a)** and that any points added after line fifteen are not credited unless replacing an answer crossed out earlier on. On the whole, candidates showed awareness that in a question testing their ability to 'select for specific purposes' they should not include long sections of copied text and/or groups of potential ideas on each line of the grid, but rather look to identify and select individual distinct points.

In the best answers, candidates had evidently planned to avoid repetition and organised their ideas sensibly. Most understood that own words needed to be used where it was practical and appropriate to do so – recasting, reorganising and representing ideas helpfully for the benefit of the reader. It is not necessary to change every word – the idea needs to be clear to the reader and there may not be a suitable replacement for the word in the text.

On occasion, spelling errors clouded meaning. Candidates are advised to check back carefully to ensure that their understanding has been communicated clearly, for example to avoid such errors as suggesting that one fear faced was of 'Great builders above held by nothing'. There are no marks to be scored for writing in **3(a)**, however, checking responses for accuracy in spelling and grammar is essential if candidates are to avoid the potential danger of negating points through careless error.

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. Successful answers organised their ideas in a number of ways, for example by first dealing with the cage then the pit, or by assigning points to physical and then mental issues. Good answers recognised that there were several examples of technical problems connected to machinery and combined these into one umbrella point, avoiding the repetition of less focused responses that tracked through the passage and offered several repeated points as a result. Some missed the detail that the physical discomforts such as carelessly buckled kneepads were more of a helpful distraction than a cause of distress or fear and others added details from their own knowledge or commented on conditions in mines. The most successful summaries avoided long introductory statements, redundant material and unnecessarily lengthy explanation. They demonstrated focus on both text and task by clearly communicating understanding of a wide range of relevant points. Candidates who had edited and refined points in **3(a)** with their audience in mind were best able to offer efficient and well-focused summary responses in **3(b)**.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify potential content points
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to establish and select 15 complete and distinct points
- list your points – one complete idea per numbered line in **3(a)**
- do not include illustrative examples of the same point or add detail
- plan your response in **3(b)** to organise content helpfully for your reader
- write informatively and accurately, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- you can choose to use your own words in **3(a)** and must use your own words in **3(b)**
- avoid repetition of points
- check that you understand the point you are trying to communicate
- when checking and editing your answers to **Question 3**, consider whether each point you are making could be easily and precisely understood by someone who has not read the passage
- do not add further numbered points in **3(a)** in addition to the 15 required
- leave sufficient time to check back through your **3(b)** answer – for example, to correct errors which affect meaning

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/22
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- used examination time efficiently to address all parts of the three questions equally carefully
- read the instructions for each task closely, paying attention to key words and guidance
- considered the evidence of the skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate in each response
- planned and organised their ideas before beginning their answer
- selected only the material appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition of the same idea
- used a range of their own words carefully, appropriately and precisely
- edited their response to amend any careless slips, incomplete or unclear ideas
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of form, audience and purpose
- revisited passages to clarify details, refine understanding and identify implicit meanings.

General comments

Candidates' responses to this paper generally indicated a familiarity with the demands of each task and the need to select and use relevant material from the reading passages to answer each question. Most candidates attempted all parts of the three questions and most answers were an appropriate length.

In **Question 1** there were some engaging newspaper articles written in a convincing style. The best answers were evenly focused on all of the three bullet points and contained a range of relevant ideas, modified and developed effectively. Less effective responses did not extend ideas or modify the material. They were written in the narrative style of Passage A and relied heavily on the original wording.

For **Question 2** most candidates selected a sufficient number of relevant examples for both parts of the question to allow for extended discussion though did not always capitalise on their selection by developing their ideas in detail. Not all answers contained precise choices and some explanations were general and not focused on key words. Good responses contained an analysis of key words and explained meanings, effects and images with precision and clarity.

For **Question 3(a)** most responses were able to secure marks in the mid-range or better. Stronger responses were focused on the question and selected relevant points regarding the attractions of fly fishing. For part **(b)** less effective responses relied on the wording Passage B and did not modify the material. Better responses were focused, persuasive and informative.

Though **Paper 2** is primarily a test of Reading, 20% of the available marks are awarded for Writing, shared equally between **Questions 1** and **3b**. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing and plan and edit their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, imprecise meanings and awkward expression. Whilst writing is not specifically assessed for accuracy in this paper, unclear or limited style will limit achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passage. Candidates are advised to leave sufficient time to check and edit their responses.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

You are a national news reporter. You have investigated events leading up to the rescue of the two men and have interviewed them to discover their views on what happened.

Write your newspaper report of the incident.

In your newspaper report you should comment on:

- **details of the trip, where the men were going, what they were hoping to do and why**
- **how well-informed, prepared and equipped they were to undertake the trip**
- **the difficulties they faced, the circumstances of their rescue and their state of body and mind.**

Base your newspaper report on what you have read in Passage A, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullet points.

Begin the newspaper report: 'Earlier today, two men had to be airlifted to safety ... '

Write about 250 to 350 words.

Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing.

Candidates were required to modify the narrator's account of the fishing trip and write a newspaper article detailing the events of their journey and subsequent rescue. The majority of responses were written in an appropriate voice and offered ideas relevant to each of the three bullet points. There were some engaging and interesting articles written in an effective journalistic style and containing some convincing quotation from 'interviews' with various characters.

Much of the information required for the first part of the task could be found in the introductory paragraph of the passage. In less successful responses the details were either copied or paraphrased without any comment or development. Better responses extended the ideas to convey some sense of anticipation and excitement felt by the friends before embarking on their trip. Some commented that the trip would be a reunion for them, a chance to catch up and discuss their past, but fewer considered that it might also be an opportunity to escape their family responsibilities and work. There were opportunities to suggest that the men wanted an outdoor adventure, to feel young again and/or to create new memories. The fact that they had not been to the White Cap River area before, or fished for a long time, suggested that the adventure would not end well. Better responses considered the men's naivety and their unrealistic expectations of adventure and recapturing their youth.

The second part of the task was often the most detailed but the least developed. Most candidates understood that the men were poorly prepared and under-equipped but some thought the opposite; that they had packed 'strategically', had 'state-of-the-art equipment' and 'ample space' in the boot of the car for all the necessary gear. This misunderstanding led to some contradictory statements later in the report. Most responses included reference to the car and the faded atlas though not all commented that a sports car was not suitable for the journey or that the atlas was probably outdated and not sufficiently detailed. It was not always made clear that the men were ill informed about the terrain of the area or the usual weather for the time of year. The conversation with the clerk in the fishing tackle shop was an opportunity to comment on the friends' lack of knowledge. Less good responses used this exchange in a mechanical way, stating times and distances. Better responses often reported the clerk's views in an interview, with comments about his surprise at seeing visitors at that time of year, their confusion about the length of the route and his concern that they did not have a four wheel drive vehicle. Some reported that he was so concerned about their safety that he later raised the alarm when the men did not return later that day, developing the suggestion in the text of his doubts connected to whether they would 'make it'. Most reports included Royer's behaviour while driving and his phobia of heights. Less effective responses contained copied phrases and referred to his fidgeting and yipping without commenting on his lack of fitness or experience of driving in such dangerous conditions.

The final part of the news article often contained a good amount of information about the canyon and the roads leading to it. Weaker responses relied on the original wording and contained copied phrases, for example, 'clinging to the sides of the mountain' and 'ribbon of cement-hard dirt'. There was also some

confusion about when the men were travelling upwards or downwards and in more mechanical responses there was some repetition about the steepness of the roads and Royer's discomfort and behaviour. Most responses commented on the men's physical and mental state when they were rescued and credible suppositions were made about their suffering from hypothermia, fatigue and shock.

Some newspaper articles ended with the men's rescue the following morning without taking the opportunity to comment on the full circumstances that could have led to it. The final paragraph of the passage suggests that the men were not going to give up and accept their failure. There were opportunities to make inferences, using information from the passage, about the events after they inflated their second hand dinghy. The foaming river, greying clouds and absence of other anglers suggest that conditions were not ideal for fishing, especially for people with no recent experience. Some accounts of possible events were not well rooted in the passage and strayed into creative writing. The possibility that the dinghy was punctured or capsized and that the men were found clinging to rocks and at risk of drowning were credible outcomes and were rewarded. It was also likely given the route down to the river that they were winched up by helicopter, made more difficult by Royer's fear of heights, and that their families had alerted the authorities when the men did not return home after what was intended to be a day trip. The best responses selected relevant ideas and details from the passage and developed them effectively.

Some responses were in narrative form, with a re-telling of events that was very close to the wording of the passage, and the bullet points were addressed in the order of the question. Stronger accounts included some details of the rescue at the beginning of the article which resulted in a more appropriate style of reporting and a more dramatic piece of writing. They also included well-crafted interviews with the men, eye witnesses, the clerk, and statements from the rescue services. They displayed a strong sense of audience and purpose. The best responses were written in a convincing journalistic style using a range of appropriate vocabulary. Less successful responses relied heavily on the wording and structure of the passage.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- remember that the task is an invitation to show how well you have read and understood the ideas in the passage
- read the passage carefully, more than once, thinking about how you are going to use key ideas to answer the question before you begin writing your answer
- look for details, hints and clues in the text to help you to work out any implied meanings or suggestions
- give equal attention to each of the three bullet points in the question
- make sure that the ideas you include can be traced back to details and suggestions in the passage
- answer using your own words – do not copy phrases or sentences from the passage
- adapt your writing style to suit the form and perspective required for your response
- plan the route through your answer before you write it – do not simply follow the order of the passage
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct any errors in your writing which might affect meaning.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a) preparing for fishing trips in paragraph 1, beginning 'People spend hours ... '
- (b) the canyon road in paragraph 12, beginning 'The road had ... '

Select four powerful words or phrases from each paragraph. Your choices should include imagery. Explain how each word or phrase selected is used effectively in the context.

Write about 200 to 300 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer.

Candidates were advised to select four appropriate examples for explanation for each part of the question and most responses contained a sufficient number of choices to allow for a range of comment. Less good responses only included one or two relevant examples in each part which did not allow candidates to display a full understanding of the writer's use of language. Good responses contained precise and relevant examples with explanations focused on key words and phrases.

In part (a) most candidates included the term 'military manoeuvre' and discussed its use in relation to the careful planning undertaken by soldiers in the army when preparing for war. It was sometimes effectively linked to the phrases, 'gear piled strategically', 'eve of our campaign' and the word 'comrade'. Some responses displayed an understanding that these were military terms that had been used to reinforce the image of disciplined soldiers preparing for battle. In less effective responses the explanations were repeated, often lacked precision and the word 'military' was over-used. An overview, or general effect, can demonstrate an understanding of language use and can be credited where relevant but needs to be accompanied by an analysis of individual words and images for the answer to target higher bands. Good responses were more focused on all of the key words and included precise explanations, of 'piled', 'strategically' and 'campaign'. Few responses commented on the irony and humour of these descriptions or suggested that the writer was gently ridiculing people who take preparations for fishing trips too seriously, though some had noted the contrast between how others prepared carefully and how the narrator and his companion did not. There were some clear explanations of the phrase 'flashy state-of-the-art equipment', and some commented on the contrast to the term 'bottom of the range'. The meanings of 'unearthed a faded atlas' were often explained with clarity. Some contained the phrases, 'a little rounder' and 'innocently imagining' which do not refer to the preparations and were not credited as appropriate choices.

In many cases part (b) was stronger and often contained more appropriate choices and clearer explanations of the descriptions of the terrain, with some commenting on the contrast between the dangers of the road and the impressive views. The meanings of 'wormed' and 'slithering' were often explained in similar terms, with comments about the bending and winding nature of the road. Better answers referred to the movements of a snake and the association with danger. Few responses contained clear explanations of 'cement-hard dirt', often repeating the original words, and the explanations for 'ruttled and rough', often repeated the words 'rough on the tyres' from the passage. The phrase 'confronted by the magnificent pit' was often only partially explained in less effective responses, whilst good answers considered the suggestions of the word 'confronted', as involving a challenge or something that had to be faced, as well as the meanings of 'magnificent' and 'pit'. They then explained the effect as something so impressive in its depth and size that it represented a threat as the men might fall into it and be trapped. Similarly, when referring to the description of the river, some responses only focused on the meaning of 'glittering' without discussing the image created. Good responses suggested that only 'tiniest traces' could be seen because the river was so far down that it looked small, and 'quicksilver' suggests a fluid moving quickly or something very precious. Candidates are advised that after offering meanings of words they should then consider the intended effects and the images created. The best responses selected precise examples of relevant and interesting phrases and attempted to explain all of the chosen words. They also gave equal focus to both parts of the question.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- re-read the whole paragraph before making selections; ensure that the choices you select for comment are relevant to the question and you have some ideas about how and why they are being used
- do not write out whole sentences or offer only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase
- remember to put quotation marks around your choices – it makes it easier for you to focus on the exact wording
- avoid general comments such as 'it helps you to imagine the view', or 'this creates a picture in the reader's mind' which will not gain any marks
- avoid repeating the wording of the text in your explanation
- aim to give a meaning, in context, for each of your choices, even if you are unsure of effects
- try to find something different to add to what you say about each choice you select rather than repeating similar explanations
- check back through your explanations asking yourself 'How?' and 'In what way...?' to make sure that you have explained your ideas fully.

Question 3

According to **Passage B**, why do people participate in fly fishing?

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.

To answer part **(a)** successfully, candidates needed to identify fifteen points from Passage B that were relevant to the question, and to list them, one numbered point per line. Candidates can only be credited with a maximum of one point each line and any points added after line 15 cannot be considered unless they replace an answer crossed out earlier. Most responses were focused and did not go beyond 15 lines, although some included more than one point on the same line and there was some repetition of information. Most candidates identified a range of relevant points though fewer scored more than 12 marks – often the result of repetition of ideas and/or insecure selection.

In part **(b)** some answers relied on copied phrases from the passage that were not always appropriate to the question and diluted evidence of understanding. Good responses were focused on why people participate in fly fishing and contained relevant and precise information about its attractions and rewards. In most cases the personal experiences of the writer were modified and presented as reasons why others might participate in the sport. Less successful responses contained comments from the passage, for example, references to the chairman of the board, which would not necessarily be relevant or persuasive to other people. There were also quite general comments about the relaxing, exciting and enjoyable nature of the sport that were not supported by specific aspects of fly fishing such as the remote locations, waiting for the fish to start feeding, and/or finally catching a fish. There was some reliance on lifted phrases that were also too general to be rewarded, for example, 'gratifications are subtle'. Some ideas that were similar in meaning were listed separately though only one could be credited, for example, 'gut hooked' and 'occupies one's life'. Also, 'takes a lifetime to master' and 'love of learning to do it better' were too similar to be rewarded with two separate marks.

Most candidates were aware of the appropriate style and form for a summary and many part **(b)** responses were both informative and persuasive. Most were an appropriate length although some contained overlong introductions, personal views and commentary which resulted in less focused and concise summaries. Less effective responses lapsed into a personal account of fly fishing which was often the result of using phrases copied from the passage, for example, 'I could see a heavy wake' and 'Suddenly I spotted golden flecks on the surface'. The use of lifted phrases demonstrated an insecure understanding of the ideas in the passage and a lack of focus. In some answers there were discrepancies between the points listed in part **(a)** and the ideas presented in part **(b)**, for example some summaries omitted points in part **(b)** that had been noted in part **(a)** and/ or did not present them in part **(b)** with sufficient clarity for them to be understood. Selecting and listing points in part **(a)** gives candidates the opportunity to consider their list, then reorganise points and write them in their own words for the summary. Good responses grouped similar ideas together, which resulted in more fluent and succinct writing, and were largely written using the candidates' own words where appropriate.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify potential content points
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to establish and select 15 complete and distinct points
- list your points – one complete idea per numbered line in part a
- do not include illustrative examples of the same point or add detail
- plan your response in **3(b)** to organise content helpfully for your reader
- write informatively and accurately, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- you can choose to use your own words in **3(a)** and must use your own words in **3(b)**
- avoid repetition of points
- check that you understand the point you are trying to communicate
- when checking and editing your answers to **Question 3**, consider whether each point you are making could be easily and precisely understood by someone who has not read the passage
- do not add further numbered points in **3(a)** in addition to the 15 required as they will not be marked
- leave sufficient time to check back through your **3(b)** answer – for example, to correct errors which affect meaning

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/23
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- used examination time efficiently to address all parts of the three questions equally carefully
- read the instructions for each task closely, paying attention to key words and guidance
- considered the evidence of the skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate in each response
- planned and organised their ideas before beginning their answer
- selected only the material appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition of the same idea
- used a range of their own words carefully, appropriately and precisely
- edited their response to amend any careless slips, incomplete or unclear ideas
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of form, audience and purpose
- revisited passages to clarify details, refine understanding and identify implicit meanings.

General comments

Candidates' responses to this paper indicated some familiarity with the general demands of each task and the need to adapt and use relevant material from the passages to answer the questions. Most candidates attempted all parts of the three questions and most responses were an appropriate length, however on occasions answers were not sufficiently well focused on the detail of the task to gain higher marks. Candidates found both passages equally accessible and most were able to finish the paper within the time allowed.

Most **Question 1** responses were generally focused on the question, though some did not attempt all parts of the task. Good responses displayed a sound understanding of the ideas in Passage A by including a range of relevant ideas that were often developed and supported by appropriate detail to describe Harris's visit and its effect on Safeena's life and relationships, and how the situation might be resolved. Less effective responses tended to describe the reasons why Harris came to be staying with the family, but not use the information to develop points. Some of the least successful responses displayed little modification of the material and/or lost sight of the task in hand. Candidates are reminded that lifting or copying from the text, even of relatively short phrases, should be avoided.

Responses written from the wrong perspective were relatively rare, though a small number of candidates paid insufficient attention to task instructions – for example writing the journal entry as Nawaz. Some mid-range answers missed opportunities to develop and interpret the material, and often produced uneven responses which included the addition of extraneous material, for example, involving an extended hospital stay for Harris.

For **Question 2** candidates needed to make specific, detailed comments about their choices from the two paragraphs. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to demonstrate understanding of the writer's purpose and consider the effects, connotations and associations of the language used. Most responses included a sufficient number of appropriate examples from the relevant paragraphs. Fewer answers included the clear explanations of effects and images that are required for marks in the higher bands. Many contained some accurate explanations of meanings and the identification of some linguistic devices, but effects were only partially explained. Less successful responses tried to explain the selected language in the same words as the language choice – for example, suggesting that 'dangling and dancing' means that he dangled and

danced with the baby, or that ‘booby-trapped’ means that there were traps. Some candidates missed opportunities to consider individual words within longer choices and demonstrate understanding at higher levels, giving instead rather broad and vague comments such as ‘this shows that he wants to remain staying with the family’ and/or simply labelling devices without exploration of how the example was working within the context of the passage.

In **Question 3** many candidates managed to achieve over half the marks available by finding a reasonable number of points. Candidates do not need to use their own words in **Question 3(a)**, though some did to good effect. In **Question 3(a)** short notes, identifying each separate idea precisely, are required, rather than whole sentences or imprecise selections from the passage. In **Question 3(b)** own words need to be used and some responses missed opportunities to target higher bands by simply paraphrasing the original text. Candidates should use their own words as far as possible in this summary task, otherwise it suggests that they do not understand the wording of the original and limits the evidence of their own writing skills. It is not a requirement that every word is altered – more technical terms or names for example are unlikely to have suitably precise synonyms, and words such as ‘contagious’ and ‘genetics’ did not need to be replaced or explained. Some candidates included unnecessary comment and additional information, which prejudiced their ability to summarise the key aspects of the passage effectively.

Although Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, 20 per cent 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. Whilst writing is not specifically assessed for accuracy in this paper, candidates should be aware that unclear or limited style will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Candidates are advised to leave sufficient time to check and edit their responses.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Imagine you are Safeena.

Write your journal entry for the day after the argument with Nawaz.

In your journal entry you should comment on:

- **how and why Harris came to be staying with you and how you felt about it initially**
- **the effects Harris’s stay has had on your life and relationships**
- **the different ways in which the situation might now be resolved for the benefit of everybody.**

Base your journal entry on what you have read in Passage A, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullet points.

Begin your journal entry, ‘Things surely cannot get much worse...’.

Write about 250 to 350 words.

Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing.

The majority of candidates read the question carefully and engaged with the task of writing Safeena’s journal entry based on the events surrounding Harris’s stay and its impact on her family, adopting a relevant register and revealing her emotions and frustrations. In many, the voice of Safeena was quite convincing, though some overstated her reaction to Harris from the outset, asserting that she was opposed to him staying in their apartment. Responses written in the wrong voice were relatively rare, though some misread the question and wrote from Nawaz’s perspective. A few candidates confused the characters of Harris and Nawaz, and a small number misread the text and believed that Safeena was delighted with Harris’s actions. A few misinterpreted the relationships between the characters, for example believing that Nawaz was jealous of Harris. In relation to the third bullet of the question, some overlooked the possibility of letting Harris stay but establishing rules, therefore missing opportunities to incorporate details from the passage as evidence of their reading skills. A number of candidates also misread the ending of the passage, and accepted Harris’s view that the overheard comments were about Nawaz, rather than himself. This resulted in inappropriate

solutions being offered to the problems being faced such as putting Nawaz on a diet and encouraging Nawaz to eat less in order to save money.

The best responses showed evidence of close reading, moving beyond surface meaning, with many taking opportunities to work in detail from the text in an evaluative response. They adopted an apt tone for Safeena and skated over irrelevant detail, homing in on specific effects that Harris's stay had had on her life and relationships and how these could be remedied. Where responses were less successful in targeting higher bands, there was often the sense that candidates had not returned to the text to identify and plan content for their answers in advance of writing. Some had attempted to write a more general journal entry, with limited focus on the details of the passage. Others had undertaken to work back through the passage repeating and replaying events using a narrative style and limiting their focus on the task.

In relation to the first bullet of the question, most candidates were able to identify how and why Harris came to stay with Nawaz and Safeena, and selected details such as 'Harris was lonely', 'his daughter refused to visit him' and 'Nawaz invited him'. Some missed out that he had 'stayed indoors for days after the incident'. Candidates were mostly successful in being able to identify that Harris was ill, thought he was dying, and that his attacks were caused by anxiety or depression, whereas others reading less carefully believed that Harris had suffered a heart attack that required hospitalisation. Less secure responses often identified the events, but were unable to use detailed information to develop points, or sustain them into other areas.

The second bullet provided many candidates with an opportunity to explain the effects of Harris's stay with regard to the increase in household duties; the increase in expenses and spoiling the children. Few candidates developed ideas about Safeena's friends wanting to get away and Harris undermining her authority. The strain on Safeena's relationship with Nawaz was also frequently identified, though Harris's influence on their neighbours was less well noted. A few less effective responses repeated the same ideas, such as Harris's spoiling of the children or the expense incurred. Some mid-range answers missed opportunities to develop and interpret the material, replaying the passage, albeit in their own words, and often producing uneven responses. A mechanical use of the text demonstrates at best a reasonable level of understanding – those displaying a competent or thorough reading of the passage were able to go further, adapting and modifying the material in the passage.

In relation to bullet three of the question, most candidates were able to offer one or two recommendations. Stronger responses were able to respond thoughtfully to problems outlined previously to suggest plausible and relevant resolutions to the situation. Less successful responses resorted to creative writing, with ideas that were inappropriate in the context of the passage, such as recommending that Harris found himself a wife, a job or adopted a pet. There were misconceptions in the degrees of affection being expressed for Harris by Safeena which diluted evidence of close reading. These ranged from mild dissatisfaction to tolerance and even to believing he was a superb addition to the household. Occasionally, at odds with the text, Safeena was perceived as enjoying the company of Harris so much that she ended up preferring him to her husband - with the suggestion of a possible love affair. Many candidates missed opportunities to consider any positive feelings Safeena might have towards Harris in relation to the possibility of him changing his attitude. Others suggested that Harris should simply be asked to leave, without considering the role of Alia or reassessing the role of Harris within the family.

Good responses focused on all three bullet points and displayed the ability to select material relevant to each part of the task. They contained a range of ideas that were developed and closely related to the passage, and a good range of integrated detail. Less successful responses often focused on more generic points, such as the increased workload associated with Harris's visit, which limited their focus on the task. The least successful answers were often thin, simple or short. They offered a very general view of the situation but few ideas and details in response to the bullet points, and often did not move beyond the first bullet.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity, fluency and coherence of the response. The majority of candidates were able to respond in the required form of a journal entry, structuring their response helpfully, producing clear and often fluent responses. Better responses adopted a convincing and consistently appropriate style and were clearly well-planned to avoid repetition and build their argument from the start. In some less successful responses, weaknesses in expression arising from a restricted range of secure vocabulary and/or unforced errors affected meaning. Occasionally, awkward expression and/or weaknesses in structure detracted from the overall effect.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- read the whole passage carefully
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- give equal attention to ideas relevant to each of the three bullet points
- maintain attention to the purpose, audience and form of the response throughout your answer
- use relevant details from the passage to demonstrate close reading
- develop and extend your ideas by considering the perspective of the given persona
- re-read the passage to ensure that you have selected enough relevant detail for each of the bullet points
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a) **Harris's behaviour and the reaction to it in paragraph 13, beginning 'Within days Harris...'**
- (b) **Safeena's attitude and Harris's reaction to it in paragraph 14, beginning 'He was forbidden by Safeena...'**

Select four powerful words or phrases from each paragraph. Your choices should include imagery.

Explain how each word or phrase is used effectively in the context.

Write about 200 to 300 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer.

In response to **Question 2**, candidates are advised to select four appropriate examples for each part of the question. Some answers offered very long quotations which encompassed several separate choices, for example, 'a hazardous run, booby-trapped with the boys' electric toys and sharp outcrops of plastic play-bricks'. This often meant that candidates missed opportunities for more detailed analysis at word level. Some candidates chose less than striking phrases, such as 'lounge furniture' or 'on the mend', which resulted in inappropriate comments.

The most successful responses to **Question 2** carefully selected appropriate choices, including images, explained them in context and answered both parts of the question equally well. A few candidates picked up on the general effect of Harris as an over-bearing intruder, oblivious to the negative impact he is having on the family in part a, and the general effect of Safeena's fierce defence with military precision the attempts of Harris to further encroach upon her territory and the humour in Harris's lack of understanding of her motives in part b. The best responses considered meaning and effects throughout the response, without repeating generalised effects. Subtle nuances were not identified in some responses, which showed a lack of understanding of the overall tone of the selected paragraphs. The weakest responses had very few language choices, or offered few explanations beyond the very general, such as referring to Safeena attempting to prevent Harris from undertaking any chores. A number of candidates incorrectly surmised that Safeena 'forbid' Harris because she genuinely wanted to take care of him rather than stop him from interfering. Often the words of the original were repeated, for example 'it was hazardous' or 'there was a constant stream of food', which would not gain any marks.

Less successful responses sometimes adopted a 'technique spotting' approach by identifying literary techniques. This approach often led to rather generic comments about the techniques rather than the words themselves which limited the response. Some candidates offered single word choices only, not always selecting the most appropriate words, for example, offering 'plastic play-bricks' instead of 'sharp outcrops of plastic play-bricks'. Generally, vocabulary in these passages was understood by candidates, though there were some frequent misinterpretations, particularly with 'swivelled' and 'riveted', which was sometimes taken literally rather than developing meanings that were rooted in the text.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- select choices for comment that are relevant to the question and not those which happen to come first
- insert quotations around your choices to help you focus on the exact wording
- 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
- do not write out whole sentences containing two or more choices
- avoid general comments such as ‘the writer makes you feel like you are there’, or ‘this is an outstanding image’, which will not gain any marks
- avoid repeating the wording of the question as an explanation of effect, for example, ‘this shows that it was hazardous’
- do not label literary devices without considering how each example is working in context
- if you are unsure about effects, begin by offering a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- to explain effects, think of all that word might suggest to a reader - the feelings, connotations and associations of the language – and then reflect on how any of those might be relevant to the word in context

Question 3

What are the causes of loneliness, 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.

To answer **Question 3(a)** successfully, candidates needed to first identify fifteen points from Passage B that were relevant to the question and to list them clearly, one per numbered line, in note form on the grid in part **(a)**. Candidates are reminded that they should attempt to offer the full 15 points, though they are only credited with a maximum of one point per line. Any points added after line 15 are not credited unless replacing an answer crossed out earlier on. Mostly, candidates understood that in a question testing their ability to ‘select for specific purposes’ they should not include groups of ideas on each line. The majority of candidates were able to score more than half marks. As an opinion piece, the passage required students to read critically to determine the causes of loneliness described in the text. Less-focused responses often included the incorrect suggestion that living alone or moving to a new country caused loneliness. Better responses were careful to be clear and unambiguous in the ideas they presented – for example avoiding the generalised suggestion that feeling lonely causes loneliness.

Where candidates had not engaged fully with the task and/or attempted a more mechanical approach paraphrasing the material, repetitions were common, such as ‘introspection’ and ‘trying to work out what you want to do’, or offering ‘finance’, ‘money’ and ‘economic standard of living’ as separate points. There was a lack of careful reading in some responses, for example with candidates lifting the partial phrase ‘one’s economic standard of living increases’ as a cause of loneliness, whereas the reverse is the case. Where candidates had not focused precisely on the text, they often presented incomplete or inexact ideas – for example, social interactions needed to include a sense of being less positive, or negative. Where points were imprecise and/or unclear in part **(a)** they could not be credited. One word answers such as ‘misunderstanding’ were insufficient to communicate an understanding of what loneliness is and were too vague to relate to misunderstood adolescence.

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 slips that might change meaning; for example, some candidates wrote ‘emotional support’ instead of ‘lacking emotional support’ or ‘no emotional support’.

There were very few cases of wholesale copying. In using own words, it is not necessary to change every word – the idea needs to be clear to the reader and there may not be a suitable replacement for the word in the text. There was no need for example to replace the words ‘social media’ or ‘stereotypes’ and attempts to do so were often awkward and unclear.

A large proportion of candidates went beyond the task to philosophise at some length about loneliness arising as a result of broader social pressures, and cited examples from their personal experience. They also sometimes offered uplifting but irrelevant advice (in the context of the task) to people who might be feeling lonely. A substantial number of candidates also confused factors causing loneliness with symptoms of loneliness, most particularly illness and some cited smoking and obesity as causes of loneliness.

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)**.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- read the question carefully and underline the key words
- re-read the passage after reading the question, to identify precisely relevant content points
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to establish and select 15 clear points, one per line
- read through your list of points in **3(a)** checking each is distinct and accurate and that there are no repetitions or very similar points
- do not add further numbered points in **3(a)** in addition to the 15 required
- plan the structure of your response in **3(b)**, for example organising and sequencing content logically
- do not add details or examples to the content of the passage
- you can choose to use your own words in **3(a)** and must use your own written expression in **3(b)**, although you do not need to change technical terminology
- pay attention to the guidance for length in **3(b)**

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/31
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 style in both questions
- structure ideas and organise their writing effectively to engage the reader
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct sentences accurately and vary sentence types to create specific effects
- select appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary and use language with precision.

General comments

Examiners found that in most cases a secure understanding was shown of what was expected in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. Most responses, regardless of achievement, were sustained and there were few very brief scripts. A very large majority of candidates understood the instructions for the examination and completed **Question 1** and either a descriptive or narrative writing task.

Most responses showed a committed engagement with the topic of teenage 'phase delay' and its implications for students, families and schools in **Question 1**, often with a sound grasp of the ideas addressed in the passage and usually some attention paid to the style and format of a letter. The majority of candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the passage. Better answers here also tended to structure responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the passage to support a cohesive argument of their own. Examiners noted that in many responses across the ability range, the appropriate valediction at the end of the letter was not given. Weaker candidates tended to repeat the ideas in the passage, often in the same sequence rather than selecting points and commenting on them. In some weaker responses, the second bullet point, steering candidates towards evaluation of ideas, was not addressed.

Most made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response. The nature of the task was better understood in more focused responses. Sometimes, insufficient use was made of the reading material and there was less understanding of the persuasive nature of the task. The required formality of style and register for a letter to a headteacher was well understood by the majority of candidates, even where technical weaknesses were apparent. In weaker responses, there was often some general commentary on teenagers and the proposal to start school later, with one or two points from the passage addressed, but opportunities to discuss, weigh up and evaluate the ideas in the passage were missed. There was often some confusion at this level about whether the proposal was to start school later or earlier and the reasons given in the passage.

Better responses paid specific attention to the audience and style required for a letter to an authority figure and an educated person. These were persuasive in purpose, using ideas from the passage to create and structure arguments and often employing rhetorical devices and showing a strong sense of audience. Some in the middle range of marks wrote in a more general style and there was less focus on arriving at a clear opinion based on the passage. Valedictions were frequently forgotten, a feature sometimes symptomatic of an insecure grasp of audience and purpose, and at this level the points made followed the sequence of the passage with less selection and regrouping of ideas to create an independent argument.

In the compositions, the descriptive and narrative genres were attempted in fairly equal numbers. Better responses to the composition questions were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected and the particular ways in which the reader's interest could be engaged.

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and most responses gave a range of descriptive detail without resorting to narrative. Many responses to the first descriptive question about the breakdown of a bus in an unfamiliar region were very effective and sustained. As is usually the case, these were better when there was specific detail and where the description created an atmosphere specific to the kind of scene described. There were some rather clichéd images in weaker responses to both descriptive writing questions, and some candidates were hindered by selecting buildings for the second question which were not specifically familiar to them.

The best narrative writing engaged the reader with well-drawn and interesting characters and scenarios which were credible. Stories starting with a phone call were very varied and often, at the highest level, moving and effective. The second narrative question also elicited a wide range of responses with varying content and Examiners awarded marks across the range here.

Weaker narratives paid less attention to the needs of the reader and sometimes the content was less credible and the characters less well drawn.

Composition responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in specific genres. The best descriptive writing was specific, used some original and thought-provoking imagery and effectively evoked the atmosphere of the time and place described. The conscious shaping of narratives to interest and intrigue the reader and the creation of characters to stimulate the reader's sympathy were features understood by the most effective writers who selected narrative writing options.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 – Directed Writing

Question 1

Imagine that you are a parent of a teenager who attends a school which is considering starting the school day two hours later. Write a letter to the headteacher giving your views.

In your letter, you should:

- **consider the advantages and disadvantages of starting school later for children, parents and the wider community**
- **explain the reasons why you agree or disagree with a later start for the school day.**

Base your letter on what you have read in the passage, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the bullet points.

Begin your letter: 'Dear Headteacher ...'

Write about 250 to 350 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 15 marks for the quality of your writing.

High marks were awarded where there was some challenge and discussion of the points made in the passage, rather than a straightforward listing and reproduction of the points in it. Where the letter was also both accurate and ambitious in vocabulary and style, often with a consistent sense of audience, Examiners could award very high marks indeed. Better responses here focused carefully on the arguments in the passage, with the highest marks awarded for those which handled the conflicting views with confidence and perceptive evaluation. The ways in which the 'wider community' would be affected were sometimes explored more thoughtfully at the highest level.

Responses given marks in the middle range tended to be more straightforward, with some listing of the medical opinions, evidence from schools which had already adopted the later start and the added complications it would bring for families. These details were an accurate reflection of the ideas in the passage although opportunities to scrutinise them or offer a critique on them were not always taken. Some responses at this level could have been improved by a clear point of view being expressed on whether the later start was beneficial or not.

Weaker responses showed some understanding of the ideas in the passage but less use was made of the range of ideas in the passage or only one side of the argument was represented. There was sometimes some misunderstanding of the details in the passage or of the task. Weaknesses in organising ideas coherently were characteristic at this level.

Marks for reading

The best responses, as always in this task, adopted a consistently evaluative stance and read effectively between the lines of the passage, drawing inferences and making judgements about whether teenagers' physical well-being should be considered more important than other factors in determining the starting time of schools. In most responses, the medical evidence was accepted and the potential disruption to families and communities was considered. In higher Band responses the question's requirement that the issues should be discussed from the point of view of a parent gave candidates a clear perspective. Perceptive responses often went to the heart of the debate in the passage: whether teenagers should have to adapt to the world around them as preparation for adulthood, or whether their lives are affected detrimentally for reasons which they cannot control. Many at this level argued convincingly that teenagers' 'phase delay' should be accounted for because there is medical evidence to support the view that their health and education suffer because of it. There was some thoughtful probing of the idea that parents and teenagers also had a responsibility to address behaviour that made sleep deprivation worse, such as mobile phone use late at night. In some responses, the idea was challenged in that 'phase delay', as a medically proven condition, would exist whether mobile phones were used or not. In arguing against the later start times, some candidates suggested that it was not the school's responsibility to police when children went to bed or used their mobile phones. The effects of changing the school start times on other people were considered thoughtfully in these higher scoring responses. The reduction of levels of teenage aggression was often considered beneficial to the whole community, for example. Some argued that while teachers may have to work longer hours and parents would have to change their morning routines, all adults who had to manage or mitigate teenagers' behaviour would benefit from calmer and more respectful environments at home and at work.

The potential benefits and limitations of the proposal to change the school start which were outlined in the passage were also probed thoughtfully at this level. The identification of 'phase delay' as a temporary problem formed part of a convincing argument both in favour and against the proposed changes. In some responses the upheaval to other people's lives was considered an inappropriate solution to a temporary situation while in equally evaluative responses the point was made that teenagers' lives were stressful enough with examinations, relationships and identity issues, without adding sleep-deprivation when a clear solution was available.

Band 2 marks could be given where Examiners found some evaluative comments but the response as a whole did not have the consistently critical approach needed for Band 1. Fairly straightforward judgements were made at this level, such as the comment that the mental and physical health of young people should always outweigh concerns about inconvenience to families and schools which the change would bring. Other responses made the point that teenagers have always found it difficult to get up in the morning and that aggression and violence in school should not be excused or accepted. Examiners could also credit as evaluation the view that extra-curricular activities were equally as important for teenagers' health and well-being as sleep or, as was often stated at this level, that education was crucial at this age and should take precedence over leisure activities.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 3 for Reading where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the passage but without the more implicit meanings mentioned above or with less scrutiny of the points made in the passage. There was often less argument and focus on the implications of changing the school start time, with responses reflecting the ideas in the passage but not always evaluating them. For example, there was sometimes a straightforward denial that the writer's own child was difficult to wake in the mornings rather than discussion of why this was not the case generally. In some responses given six marks for Reading the arguments on both sides were regroupped from the passage but their validity or relative importance was not considered. A compromise proposal of moving the start time by an hour rather than two hours was sometimes suggested but without the reasoning and argument required to credit the idea as evaluation.

Weaker responses showed some misunderstanding, drifted away from the passage or addressed the material thinly. Some tracked through the passage simply but showed limited reorganisation of the ideas or gave a straightforward paraphrase. The counter-arguments against the proposed changes were not included in responses at this level, showing some selection to arrive at a decision but without reference to areas of the passage which did not fit the premise. Opinions about the change to the school day in responses at this level were not always rooted in the passage: some reflected on the impact of less traffic on the roads or the cost of public transport, for example, which, although generally relevant, were not mentioned in the passage. In some responses, the reason for starting school later was not properly understood so that suggestions were made that teenagers could get up early to complete their homework or that extra-curricular activities could be moved to the mornings before lessons.

Where a mark of four was awarded, some firmer links with the passage were needed, whereas 3 was generally given for very thin or brief responses in which there was some misreading of the ideas in the passage.

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 of this kind and most responses were written in an appropriate register, even where the writing was technically weak. Some high scoring responses used a more rhetorical, stylistically persuasive style and presented their arguments politely but with some impact and effectiveness. In adopting the voice of a parent, there was, at the highest level, some skilful exploitation of a shared understanding of what life with teenagers was like for parents and teachers. This carefully constructed tone of friendly sympathy, combined with well-constructed arguments, created some authoritative and highly convincing responses.

In the middle range, the style was usually appropriately formal for a letter to a headteacher although there were lapses in awareness of that audience so that the style became more of an objective report of differing views rather than a persuasive letter. Most often at this level there was limited argument to give the response shape and purpose, even where the passage was adequately reflected. Valedictions were sometimes omitted at this level and the persuasive style and purpose of the letter was not properly sustained.

Weaker responses sometimes had limited overall cohesion because the conflicting opinions in the passage were simply reproduced as they appeared in the original. Valedictions were often missed at this level, sometimes highlighting a limited understanding of the conventions of letter-writing.

Structure

Responses awarded high marks for writing handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a persuasive overall argument which was clearly derived from the ideas in the passage but was not dependent on its structure and sequence. At the highest level, the point of view of the writer gave shape and structure to the response as a whole and the ideas in the passage were assimilated and assumed rather than specifically referenced.

Responses given Band 2 for writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the passage but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed to air the opposing arguments in a coherent way. Responses opened with a considered introduction and ended with a concluding paragraph which showed a clear sense of the purpose of the letter. Weaker responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more tied to the sequencing of the passage whereas Band 3 responses usually organised and re-sequenced ideas more selectively. Straightforward Band 3 responses were paragraphed and balanced and followed the conventional structure of formal letters.

Some weaker responses given marks below Band 3 were limited in structure and more dependent on the sequence of ideas in the passage. This approach led to some weakness in cohesion and made difficulties for the reader: for example, the medical evidence was often given in the same section of the letter as the point about mobile phone use or the positive observations from schools which had changed their start time was grouped with the point that parents and teachers resisted the change.

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.

Responses given marks in Band 1 were authoritative and subtly argued with a range of precisely selected and complex vocabulary and very few technical errors. Sentence structures varied and were consciously used to create specific effects. Rhetorical flourishes, such as the use of contentious, challenging questions, were often used at this level. Some complex sentences structures were chosen which helped to balance and weigh up contending views and complex clauses were controlled by careful punctuation.

Band 2 responses 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 plain, the language used was apt. A range of quite basic errors was made which limited the effectiveness of the writing. Commonly used words were also wrongly spelled in responses at this level, particularly key words for the task: 'aggression', 'opportunities' and 'activities' were frequent errors, for example, although sentence separation and grammatical agreement were usually secure.

While some of these minor errors could be compensated for by a secure sense of audience or a varied vocabulary, faulty sentence structures 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 punctuation and grammar errors which meant that Examiners could not award marks in Band 3 where mostly correctly structured sentences are required. Persistent use of commas where full stops were needed was common reason Examiners were unable to award marks in Band 3 for otherwise clear, coherent responses. Sometimes whole paragraphs were actually strings of simple sentences with commas rather than full stops to separate them. This weakness was noted by Examiners as prevalent in many thoughtful responses where the mark for Reading was significantly higher than that for Writing. The omission of definite or indefinite articles was also fairly common, as was mis-agreement between pronouns and verb forms. In rare cases, material from the passage was copied and responses where this occurred more substantially could not be given marks in Band 4 for Writing or for Reading because neither the content nor the style of the response was the candidate's own.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- be prepared to explore, challenge and discuss the ideas in the passage
- make sure the ideas you use are derived from the passage
- look for, and use in your response, inferences made indirectly by the writer
- aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them
- be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly: think carefully about the kind of style the recipient of your letter would expect, as well as how letters should begin and end
- check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing full stops, weaknesses in grammar or misspellings of key words.

Section 2 – Composition

Write about 350 to 450 words on one of the following questions.

Up to 13 marks are available for the content and structure of your answer, and up to 12 marks for the style and accuracy of your writing.

Descriptive Writing

Question 2

On a long journey through an unfamiliar region, the bus on which you are travelling breaks down for a short time. Describe what you see and hear around you, and your thoughts and feelings as you wait. (25 marks)

OR

Question 3

Describe an interesting building you know well. Include your thoughts and feelings about it in your description. (25 marks)

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range although the first question was more often chosen. In the first task, there were some strongly evocative descriptions of a wide range of landscapes from arid deserts to grimy urban underworlds.

In the second question, a wide variety of details and images was used to describe a familiar building, often to good effect, and responses at the highest level to both questions showed that there was a clear understanding of how evocative descriptions are created.

Some successful responses to the first question focused on a range of different aspects of the scene; the inside of the bus, the other passengers, the landscape outside the bus and the writer's own fears and anxieties. There were striking images of the bus, often a dilapidated, rusty old vehicle which was sometimes personified as a wheezy old man or a smoking, growling monster. The driver of the bus was also a common focus for skillful description. One entertaining response noted that 'his vest strained over his expansive belly as he gabbled into his phone, gesticulating wildly as if to convince the passengers of his diligence in finding help.' The stifling heat inside the bus, or sometimes the bitter cold, was used to evoke the mounting panic felt by the writer. The other passengers gave opportunities for description: there were many screaming babies, sweaty, overweight men or women, irritating or anxious people and there were sometimes chickens or goats. Once outside the bus, landscapes were described in the best responses with a range of images and details which brought the scene alive in the reader's mind. The feelings of the narrator were often used as devices to create cohesive and well-constructed descriptions. The sense of fear and anxiety at the beginning often gave way to a serenity or sense of awe as the natural landscape revealed itself and in many high-level responses the idea of an interlude of great peace and calmness during a frightening journey was used to good effect. While most responses chose the natural world as their focus, some created a frightening, dystopian vision of a usually unnoticed part of a city. Sensory images were also skillfully employed at the highest level; the smell of the smoke from the bus's engine, or the sound of it jolting to a stop, were common ideas although addressed in many different ways.

Band 3 responses were characterised by rather more obvious images and ideas and the sensory impressions given were more mechanically listed and organised in different paragraphs. Sometimes, these rather clichéd details dulled the effect of the description as a whole, although few responses at this level lapsed into narrative or lost the main features of descriptive writing. In some, the thoughts and feelings of the narrator were less developed and the description sometimes became a more straightforward list of what was seen and heard. The landscapes described tended to be less specific and detailed and more stereotypical of deserts or lakes and mountains.

Weaker responses were characterised by a tendency to list details rather than effectively develop them and there was increasingly a tendency to narrate overlong preambles or to include over-dramatic and more narratively focused details. Sometimes, for example, a description of the passengers became a narrative of unlikely events such as murders or fights. Details of the journey and the reasons for it, or the circumstances which made it necessary, tended to overwhelm the descriptive elements in some responses at this level.

The second question was also popular and there were some effective descriptions here which focused on familiar buildings which were often significant or important to the narrator. School buildings featured in several of these responses, with some well observed details building an evocative picture of a once loved, and sometimes hated, setting.

Some successful responses evoked a strong sense of the candidate taking a nostalgic, appreciative view of a significant place. Houses of various types were depicted, such as a grandparent's previous home or a childhood home. In one response, a grandmother's home, a traditional Japanese house, was described in detail through the eyes of a narrator who did not live in Japan and the way the house was both familiar and yet still strange made for an engaging description. Some buildings had become derelict or abandoned, adding to the atmosphere and helping candidates to provide contrasting images and ideas to interest and engage the reader. The fluctuating thoughts and feelings of the narrator as the different rooms, gardens or surroundings were described provided a cohesive thread for some effective descriptions, as well as some of the memories triggered by particular details.

Examiners gave marks below Band 3 where the writing was more typically narrative than descriptive in focus, and where there was limited organisation of the details described or where strings of details were

listed with limited overall cohesion. At this level, responses became simple, unengaging accounts of a building which was not always well remembered or which was not very significant to the writer. Some buildings lacked the sense of familiarity implied in the task. There were some basic descriptions of famous landmarks, unspecific settings such as shopping malls or buildings which were too vast in scope to focus on details. Sometimes memories became narratives so that the building itself was lost in the account of what happened in it.

Marks for Style and Accuracy were, in the best responses, reflective of the precise and varied vocabulary used as well as the consistent technical accuracy of the writing. In the middle range, vocabulary was less rich and varied but there was still a fair degree of accuracy in spelling and sentence construction. In weaker responses, as is often the case in descriptive writing, tenses switched between past and present, sometimes within sentences, and incomplete or verbless sentences were common, even in scripts where responses to **Question 1** showed a secure grasp of sentence structure. A very common weakness here also was the demarcation of sentences with commas rather than full stops. This often meant that Examiners could not award marks in Band 3 where the style was otherwise quite accurate and secure.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved:

- try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content
- remember the key features of descriptive writing and keep your focus on details
- write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description
- choose your vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects.

Narrative Writing

Question 4

Write a story that begins with an unexpected telephone call. (25 marks)

OR

Question 5

Write a story with the title, 'Stolen'. (25 marks)

Both narrative writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range and there was a very wide range of plots, characters and scenarios in these responses.

Better responses, as is often the case in narrative writing, were well organised and thoughtful interpretations of the title which used interesting but credible ideas and developed balanced and engaging stories. The telephone call which was required to begin the story in the first task varied very widely in purpose but at the highest level was always integral to the continuing story rather than incidental to it. There were various structures employed in these better responses rather than straightforward chronological recount. Stories sometimes began with a memory of the phone call and the narrator looking back at its consequences. Kidnappings and ransoms featured in many responses although less so at the highest level. Sometimes apparently innocuous invitations or information turned out to have momentous consequences, such as a phone call making arrangements with a friend leading to some subsequent disaster or disappearance.

While there were some graphic scenes included in some of the kidnapping scenarios, at the highest level these were written with restraint and control which made them all the more effective. Other responses at this level were characterised by an examination of a character's thoughts and feelings in response to a phone call. One such response began with a phone call in which the news that an old friend had been killed in an accident was given to a shocked narrator. The call triggered a memory of the how and why the relationship had ended badly in the past, with the narrator's regret and shock employed to draw the reader in to an intense but controlled narrative.

Middle range narratives were usually more straightforward in structure and approach and in some cases these responses sometimes relied on some over-dramatic and less likely scenarios. Kidnappings were common at this level and where the characters and setting were established carefully, Examiners could award marks in Band 3 even where the sequence of events was not very credible. Responses in this range, whilst often more predictable, were cohesive and balanced and contained a suitable ending depicting some resolution or conclusion to the story overall. Some kidnappings ended rather weakly but there were many

other kinds of stories which included invitations to join a national sports team, enter a prestigious college, calls to notify family members of some life-threatening accident and a range of other more easily controlled and credible plots.

Weaker responses were often more dependent on a series of events which were triggered by a phone call but which were not prepared for by attention to characterisation and setting. Many involved several calls from 'unknown numbers' which were not picked up until curiosity prevailed but the opportunity to develop characters and settings before a sequence of events was not taken. A simplicity of content rather than weaknesses in organisation were typical at this level. Often the same kinds of scenarios as in better responses were evident – kidnapping, accidents, invitations to parties – but there was less awareness of the needs of the reader and less skill in engaging the interest of the reader in terms of narrative shaping and the creation of credible characters.

For the second narrative question, there were many and varied interpretations of the title 'Stolen'. Some responses built a narrative on the theft of an item, often from a museum or bank, while others were more metaphorical. Both approaches resulted in high level, effective and engaging stories. Narrators or protagonists had their hearts, lives, futures or families stolen from them and while these ideas featured across the mark range, better responses prepared the reader and shaped the narrative in an entertaining way.

Band 3 responses were generally more straightforward accounts in which the content was ordinary but there was still some organisation and shaping of the narrative and a cohesive story was produced. These tended to be a little less imaginative in their interpretation of the task but with some understanding of how to create a satisfactory experience for the reader shown. At this level, burglaries which went wrong or love affairs destroyed were common subjects for narratives.

Responses given marks in Band 4 were usually simple accounts of events and showed limited awareness of the reader or the features of narrative writing which elevate an account into a developed story. Scenarios which can quickly become clichéd and unengaging were used, such as bank robberies by gangs of criminals whose characters were no more than names or simple accounts of wallets stolen in the street.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was lively and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. Punctuation within sentences, in dialogue and for effect was characteristic of responses in the higher Bands and where coupled with a sophisticated palette of vocabulary, the highest marks were given. Responses awarded marks in Band 2 tended to be less ambitious and complex but still accurate and largely fluent while Band 3 responses were plain in style and lacked some range in vocabulary but had few errors which damaged the clarity of meaning such as weak sentence control and sentence separation.

Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, if persistent, limited even competently told stories to Band 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation or grammar. The omission of definite and indefinite articles, the incorrect use of participles or errors in grammatical agreement contributed to a lack of fluency and accuracy which kept a number of responses out of Band 3. Similarly, basic punctuation errors and the mis-spelling of simple words and wrongly selected homophones sometimes appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes frequent enough to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy. The most frequent reason for keeping an otherwise clearly written story out of Band 3 was weak demarcation of sentences, most commonly the use of commas where full stops were needed.

A controlled, competent style secured a mark in Band 3 and even when written in a fairly pedestrian style Examiners could award a mark of seven or eight. Where there were errors, even quite frequent errors, but the style had more ambition and variety, a mark of nine was awarded. Weaknesses in constructing sentences, comma-splicing or frequent basic spelling and punctuation errors resulted in marks below Band 3. A few responses were very brief and faulty in style, 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 how to resolve your story in an interesting way before you start writing
- try to consider alternative interpretations of the titles given
- 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 (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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 style
- structure ideas logically and organise their writing effectively
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct sentences accurately and vary sentence types to create effects
- select appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary and use language with precision.

General comments

The great majority of responses showed confident awareness of what was expected in both the Directed Writing and Composition sections of the paper. There were very few responses which were very brief or undeveloped, and rubric infringements where more than the required number of questions were attempted were rare, with responses to one question from each composition genre very occasionally being seen. On occasions where such infringements did occur, marks were affected by there not being sufficient time allowed to write considered and substantial responses. A small number of scripts had no response to **Section 2**.

At all levels of achievement, clear understanding was shown of the reading material and the task in **Question 1**, and responses usually demonstrated strong engagement with the topic, while paying appropriate attention to the style and format of an article. The majority of responses showed very little evidence of simple paraphrase or indiscriminate copying of material in the passage. Although the reproduction of some key words and phrases was widespread, this was usually where synonyms were not readily available.

Some excellent answers which interrogated the views expressed by the writer of the passage showed a mature awareness of the pressures on modern youth in the digital age to be endlessly occupied in study or other improving activities and always fully engaged in social media, thus leaving little time for thinking about anything, much less the beneficial 'thinking about nothing' advocated in the passage. Concern about the mental health of today's teenagers was frequently expressed in support of the views in the original article. Some strong responses enthusiastically supported the writer's ideas about the wide-ranging benefits produced by the acceptance of boredom but were still able to develop their own views in a suitably evaluative manner. Others recognised the strength of the writer's feelings but with thoughtful reservations. Some refuted the writer's beliefs about the benefits of boredom without recognising the concerns behind their expression. Those responses which offered some challenge to the writer's assertions and attitudes more readily achieved evaluation of the material when they justified their objections.

The best responses combined an assured grasp of the content and attitudes of the passage with an independence of thought reflected in the structure of their writing: rather than a methodical consideration of the points in the same sequence as the original, they were evaluative of the whole thrust of the article from the outset, selecting and commenting on its details to support their views and sensitively aware of the attitudes of the speaker in the text. In Band 3, responses often simply reproduced the points made by the writer with some, often anecdotal, development, then gave their conclusion in a final paragraph which was sometimes at variance with the tone that had gone before.

While it was proper to give due consideration to the writer's belief in the much-vaunted benefits of boredom, the question also required the candidate's own views to be given, and quite frequently responses did not develop a clear stance on the topic. Although even at the lower levels of achievement there was very little completely undeveloped reproduction of the material, many responses made one or two valid points but showed such limited coverage of the material that Examiners could not award marks in Band 3 for Reading. Here, the writing was sometimes of a fluency and accuracy more typical of higher Bands, and in these scripts an originality of thought and invention was sometimes demonstrated in **Section 2** compositions that was absent in the handling of the reading passage.

Most responses paid some attention to the audience and style required for an article for young people and were evaluative in purpose to some extent, using the passage to create and structure arguments with some sense of audience. Some weaker responses however struggled to find the appropriate tone and style of address for writing for their peers.

In **Section 2**, there was usually a clear awareness of the differing requirements of the two genres; in this examination series the narrative options were marginally more popular, and there was writing of a high standard seen across the different types. As always, the best responses were typified by careful structuring, a wide-ranging and precisely employed vocabulary, and a high level of technical accuracy. **Question 2**, the least popular of the composition choices, evoked some excellent descriptive pieces, where conscious crafting for effect which did not drift into narrative was often seen, but some narrative framework for the purposes of cohesion was more often apparent in responses to **Question 3**. Weaker responses to both questions in the descriptive genre were typically dominated by simple, sequential narrative, the listing of ordinary details, and limited vocabulary. Strong responses to **Question 4** and **Question 5** frequently engaged the reader's interest from the beginning, and also provided a satisfactory and believable resolution to the story. The topic of **Question 4**, writing about something lost, produced some excellent narratives encompassing a wide range of scenarios, although most chose to write about lost possessions, relationships or loved ones. Many responses to **Question 5** concerned lies told within the family, often about adoptions or examination failures. At the lower end of Band 2 and in Band 3, often well-written stories were let down by weak and unconvincing endings: there needs to be more awareness of the distinctive requirements of the genre in this respect. A small number of engaging and promising narratives stopped very abruptly without any meaningful conclusion. Notable in this examination session perhaps more often than is usual were the numbers of compositions in both genres that were often imperfectly adapted to the requirements of this paper's questions, resulting in a lack of cohesion or credibility. A small number of responses were neither descriptive nor narrative writing, but rather discursive or even markedly didactic: moralising pieces on various topics only loosely connected with the questions were seen.

Weaker responses in both **Section 1** and **Section 2** sometimes struggled to find the correct register and tone for their intended audience, and were marred by the frequency of basic errors in punctuation and syntax. The use of commas where full stops or semi-colons were required and uncertain control of tense were evident at varying levels of achievement, and there appeared to be a considerable number of compositions which were unparagraphed, even in the setting out of dialogue.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 – Directed Writing

Question 1

Write an article with the title, 'Thinking about Nothing' for a teenage magazine.

In your article, you should:

- **explain the writer's ideas about boredom and its potential benefits**
- **evaluate how far these ideas are helpful in your life and the lives of your readers.**

Base your article on what you have read in the passage, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the bullet points.

Write about 250 to 350 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 15 marks for the quality of your writing.

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

Marks in Band 1 were awarded where the views in the passage were subjected to rigorous examination and there was an overview of the issues. Here, there was more than a straightforward listing of the points made in the text; the style of the response was both appropriate and displayed a high level of accuracy, and points were selected to support views in a cohesive and balanced argument. Where an article format and style were maintained throughout the response and the mode of address was consistently appropriate, the underlying assumptions and implications of the speaker in the text were recognised, and explicit assertions were scrutinised and challenged, Examiners could award very high marks indeed.

Marks in Band 3 were awarded when reasonable understanding of the issues was shown, albeit while accepting claims at face value, and some points were subjected to more extended discussion and development. Responses here were typified by often enthusiastic support for the benefits of boredom and the 'encounter with pure time' which it enabled despite awareness of the pleasures and advantages of popular teenage activities and social media being apparent. Many responses also recognised the dangers of addictive recourse to 'gadgets' at every available moment.

Weaker responses showed some understanding of the main ideas although demonstrating no clear point of view. Very thin use of the detail and weakness in organising ideas coherently were characteristic at this level.

The marks for Reading

The passage proved accessible at all levels of ability, with little evidence of widespread misunderstanding except where a lack of language competence prevented clear expression. The best responses were evaluative throughout, commanding the subject from the beginning, and demonstrating the ability to assess objectively the views expressed in the article and adopt a wider view. Here there was an implicit understanding of the subtleties and nuances of the passage, an ability to distinguish between the self-monitoring and introspection propounded by the writer and the use of times of boredom to think proactively about problems and aspirations which was the understanding evident in a majority of responses. Some responses awarded marks at the top of Band 1 challenged the writer's implied castigation of parents who 'signed up' their youngsters for every possible activity, countering that the self-development vaunted as a result of 'thinking about nothing' could be found in these pastimes and enterprises in forms far more amenable to young people: 'Exercise is a perfect medium to "learn about [oneself] and the world"; here I learn skills like responsibility, team work, kindness, camaraderie. I learn about different cultures through my ethnically and racially diverse team.' Some high level responses discerned generational prejudice in the phrase, 'smartphones dangling from their hands': 'You categorise a whole generation as lazy and obsessed with technology; this technology opens to us the great library of information which is the internet'; 'By listening to music teens can explore different genres, ideas, emotions and cultures. Playing video games on our phones teaches us strategy, perseverance and critical thinking far better than sitting gazing at our navels'.

There were also authoritative and perceptive responses which did not refute the writer's proposals but developed and evaluated them in a sophisticated manner. One adjured her peers to 'think of boredom as a breeding ground for epiphanies, a transcendental experience. Here we can contemplate the whys rather than the hows of our existence.' Another insisted, 'Purposelessness can serve a purpose: with our quotidian stresses of school, exams.... (the list is undesirably infinite), some time simply to be present in the moment is essential for our mental wellbeing.'

Marks in Band 2 were awarded when there was more than just simple agreement with or reproduction of the claims of the passage material, and some of the passage's implicit meanings were held up for scrutiny. Responses often began by reproducing and agreeing with the proposed benefits of boredom, covering the material with reasonable thoroughness, and with some degree of evaluation. Evaluation could reside in a single observation which demonstrated understanding of the essential thrust of the passage and brought it afresh to the purported teenage audience: 'Boredom is the inner you trying to talk to yourself. You just need

to let yourself loose and listen to its sane advice.’ Another said, ‘You will become at peace with your mind, a rare condition in 2018.’ Some responses were awarded a mark of seven because their attempts to define boredom in a more unambiguous way for their audience were in themselves evaluative. One response had assimilated the much-reproduced part of the passage about the German word for boredom and discussed instead its French cognate, *ennui*, showing that its root meant ‘annoying’. This negative perception of boredom was then discussed fruitfully. Responses awarded a mark of eight typically evaluated a number of points from the passage, or were evaluative throughout in their approach, sometimes signalling this in the opening paragraph. Some partly evaluative responses maintained too narrow a focus on one area of the reading passage—perhaps the use of smartphones—to the detriment of a fully developed article.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 3 for Reading where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the reading material but without recognition of its more abstract or implicit meanings or with less scrutiny of the points made in the passage

A mark of six could be given where the key points were reproduced with some appropriate development, such as discussing the advantages for health of enforced ‘quiet time’ or the benefits of more traditional teenage activities. Responses at this level often uncritically reproduced and supported points in the passage and then offered contradictory views so that no clear stance was discernible. Where there was clear understanding of the main thrust of the article but only a limited selection of points discussed a mark of five was given. At this level the irony of the passage’s first paragraph often went unrecognised, and responses urged active participation in as many pastimes as possible and then expounded the beauties of boredom as well. The response would often conclude with a personal or admonitory comment.

Examiners gave marks below Band 3 where there was some misunderstanding of the main thrust of the article, although this was quite rare, or a lack of focus on the reading passage, or overlong anecdotes which did not express a clear view on the topic. Firmer links with the material and a wider range of points could be awarded a mark of four, but where coverage of the material was very flimsy a mark of three was more appropriate. Only a very few responses were given marks below three, when very little had been written and connection with the text and task was only peripheral. A small number of responses simply ‘lifted’ material or copied unselectively, thus seriously affecting both Reading and Writing marks for **Question 1**.

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

While most responses began with at least some recognition of audience –if only, ‘I am going to tell you about an article that I read...’ and employed second-person or first-person plural address, significant numbers appeared to forget their intended audience and desired format and simply did not write an article of their own but described, summarised or paraphrased the passage in a formless and undirected way. Some responses were perceptive and evaluative discussions but without any recognisable form as an article. It was thus not unusual for Examiners to award marks for Writing in a Band lower than the response had earned for Reading. Sometimes the style was too formal for an article for a teenage magazine: occasionally a range of imprecise and inappropriate vocabulary was used at this level.

The most effective responses took into account their intended audience, and maintained an appropriately direct and inclusive tone and style of address. The best responses demonstrated considerable authority and confidence, one in the top Band beginning, ‘In today’s fast-paced, media-obsessed world, we can often feel that we don’t have time to breathe. Every moment is the next picture, the next tweet, the newest hot trend, who’s wearing what, the next viral joke. God forbid we focus on only one thing for too long; we might face our greatest enemy, boredom!’ Another, less supportive of the views in the passage, began, ‘What is Time? Is it Einstein’s theory of the progression of the universe in relation to the space we occupy? Is it Nietzsche’s ideas of the moment we occupy, and the moments gone, and the ones to come? Or is it simply something we’re running out of because of the omnipotent draw of an illuminated sheet of crystallised carbon?’ These and others at the same level had clearly assimilated the reading passage into their response to the task and often made no explicit reference to it.

Responses given marks in Band 2 and Band 3 were often appropriate in tone and form, but followed and reproduced the wording of the passage quite closely; while there was little wholesale copying of clauses or sentences from the passage, paraphrase was often so close that the response had no discernible style of its own and was almost entirely dependent on the vocabulary of the original. In some middle and lower level responses the requirement to write an article was forgotten, and the material in the passage was merely described with an occasional, almost cursory use of direct address. These responses often began with a little sense of audience as they continued, referring to an article the source or content of which was not identified: 'the author believes that boredom is not as bad as we think.', or, 'It starts off with, "How to think of nothing"'.

Structure

Responses awarded high marks for Writing handled the passage confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a persuasive overall argument which was clearly derived from the ideas in the passage but was not dependent on its structure and sequence. At the highest level, an overview of the abstract concepts underlying the debate on time and boredom was given rather than a list of the advantages and disadvantages of introspection and activity. Here, the reading passage was seamlessly incorporated into an authoritative and engaging response.

Responses given Band 2 for writing tended to reflect the priority of points made in the passage but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed to meet the demands of the task. Responses opened with a considered introduction and ended with a concluding paragraph which showed a clear sense of the purpose of the article. Some responses awarded marks in Band 3 were very lengthy, covering all the material in the article exhaustively and only offering a brief personal view at the end. Others offered lengthy anecdotal development on the perils of smartphones and social media. Weaker responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more tied to the sequencing of the passage whereas Band 3 responses usually organised and re-sequenced ideas more selectively.

Some weaker responses given marks below Band 3 were limited in structure and dependent on the sequence of ideas in the passage. This often led to some basic reiteration of the points in the passage but without the re-ordering of them which was needed to give the article a sense of purpose and audience. These responses showed a lack of awareness of the conventional form of an article and conclusions were cursory or omitted. Some responses offered little more than a summary of the passage in exactly the original order with little changed but for the substitution of a few synonyms.

Accuracy

Responses in Band 1 combined a fluent and authoritative style, typified by precisely employed, appropriate vocabulary and a wide range of sentence structures, with a very high level of technical accuracy. Responses given a mark of eight or nine were often clearly and competently written, but their vocabulary lacked ambition or precision and indeed would often have been deemed quite limited had it not included many words from the passage. Errors of sentence separation and a lack of paragraphing often restricted the Writing mark to a Band below that awarded for Reading. Two types of writing typified responses awarded marks in Band 4 and below: the first, more common one, lacked any evidence of controlled shaping, and simply followed the patterns of speech. There were very frequent basic errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar, although the inappropriate use of capital letters seemed less widespread than in previous sessions. The second type was often characterised by secure spelling and quite ambitious vocabulary, but marred by serious structural faults in sentences and syntax, errors of agreement and tense, and an uncertain use of prepositions. Here, articles were sometimes omitted or 'the' was used rather than 'a' or 'an'. Meaning was sometimes blurred by the levels of error. There was often confusion and inconsistency in the use of person and pronoun. Sentences such as the following were commonplace: 'Thinking about ourself can make one understand himself better.'; 'It is only through boredom where one could learn about themselves and the world which surrounds you.' The not infrequent misspelling of such key words from the passage as 'boredom' and 'privilege' was noted.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Be prepared to explore, challenge and discuss the ideas in the passage.
- Make sure the ideas you use are derived from the passage.
- Look for, and use in your response, inferences made indirectly by the writer.
- Aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them.
- Be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly. Think carefully about the kind of style the audience for your article would expect as well as how articles should begin and end.
- Check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing full stops, weaknesses in grammar or misspellings of key words.

Section 2 – Composition

Write about 350 to 450 words on one of the following questions.

Up to 13 marks are available for the content and structure of your answer, and up to 12 marks for the style and accuracy of your writing.

Descriptive Writing

2 Describe the final preparations for a trip with your family or with your school, and the moment of departure. [25 marks]

OR

3 Imagine you return to your school or college long after the end of the school day. Describe what you see and hear, and your thoughts and feelings as you walk through the building. [25 marks]

This genre was chosen across the range of abilities, with the second option being marginally more popular. At all levels of achievement many felt it necessary to provide some context for the required scene, weaker responses, especially to **Question 3**, sometimes developing their writing too far along the path of narrative, thus forgetting the requirements of this type of writing. Stronger responses framed their descriptions in a much more controlled manner, providing just enough context to introduce their writing and to provide cohesion, but the most successful responses to both questions involved the reader immediately without preamble. Some responses were more narrative in manner than is usually desirable for this genre, but included much vivid detail and developed images. Here, Examiners were able to award marks in Band 3. The best responses to both questions produced writing of a very high order, earning marks at the top of Band 1. These were highly evocative, often creating overall pictures of considerable clarity and employing a wide-ranging and ambitious vocabulary.

Question 2 was the least popular of the four composition choices, but produced some of the most accomplished responses. Most descriptions involved family trips, but descriptions of school groups assembling gave rise to some excellent and often very humorous responses. There was writing of a high order in both approaches. The majority of the responses awarded marks in Band 1 and Band 2 were also aware of the words ‘final’ and ‘moment’ in the task and restricted the time scale of their descriptions accordingly. One response awarded marks in the top Band was relatively brief but conveyed absolutely convincingly the few chaotic minutes during which a teacher distributed tee-shirts bearing the school logo and pupils struggled to don one-size-fits-all garments which in actuality didn’t fit anyone. Elsewhere the excitement of the moments preceding departure and the characters involved were conveyed with the observation of minute detail: ‘Mr Uffindall’s eyebrows furrowed over his clipboard.’; ‘In the sudden, shocking silence after the shriek of the whistle the faint click of a pen is heard.’ Such responses created the ‘convincing, original, overall picture with varieties of focus’ required in Band 1 of the mark scheme.

Responses given marks in the Band 2 and Band 3 approached the task more straightforwardly, with varying degrees of accomplishment. Many successfully used the framework of the departure to create convincing sketches of family members involved in the preparations. There were recurring tropes of the highly-organised mother, the nonchalant father, the overly-relaxed siblings. At this level some responses lapsed into narrative, and recounted fraught and lengthy journeys to ports and airports, losing some focus on description. These responses often included enough descriptive detail to create the ‘impression of reality’ required for marks in Band 2, and were clearly intending to describe, but lacked the intensity of gaze upon the subject apparent in Band 1 responses. Sometimes the intended effect was diluted by trying to describe too many aspects of the scene, or by spending too much time on lengthy preambles explain the planning and preparation of the trip.

There were at this level however many effective pieces which demonstrated a grasp of the requirements of the genre; some, if lacking the assurance of Band 1 responses, were interesting and original. There were some engaging pieces awarded marks in Band 3, but often a higher mark was precluded by a lack of clarity in the description created, or it was marred by exaggeration: everyone in the house was screaming, every vital document was missing, every vehicle broke down, every suitcase burst open. At the lower end of the Band and below it, the writing often became driven by narrative, even though a few relevant descriptive details were included. Some simply recounted what happened chronologically with limited attempt to forge a piece of description.

The second option was considerably more popular, and elicited responses across the mark range. The words of the **Question 3** task were interpreted in several different ways: a majority of candidates described returning to school in the evening or night to retrieve something forgotten earlier the same day, but a substantial number of responses described returning to school, perhaps for a class reunion, many years after having left. A small number of responses misread the task and described returning home after school and entering their own houses. In all cases Examiners sought to reward the qualities of descriptive writing as detailed in the Mark Scheme. Across all levels of achievement responses attempted to evoke the contrasting atmospheres of an empty building which was usually bustling with activity, with varying levels of success. The desired 'impression of reality' was very often achieved, even where competence in language restricted marks for a response to Band 4 or below. In responses awarded marks in Band 1 there was some very sophisticated writing, with richly detailed sensory description. A key discriminator here was the originality of the images of often mundane and familiar objects and places such as lockers, whiteboards and corridors, rendering them fresh and new to the reader, and the sophisticated precision of the vocabulary which conveyed them. One most assured response created and sustained a convincing vision of a school as a theatre, an arena in which successive generations played out their adolescent years, full of tragedy and comedy, the influence of predecessors 'the ventriloquists crouching behind the velvet of stage curtains [who] seem to have abandoned their act, just as these students leave the hallways.' Another, musing on the strange emptiness of a school usually thronged with people, imagined the building itself taking on intimidating life, stairs tilting and doorframes shifting slightly: 'Now a lone basketball rolls down the court as if fleeing from some unknown monster; the pull up bars morph into a guillotine, eager to chop off the heads of little girls wandering where they shouldn't be.' Others, more prosaically perhaps but just as effectively, focused on the creation of precise and striking images: 'The silhouette of an anatomical figure sits ominously by the window of the science lab...'; 'Unheard in the day, the slight constant hum of the ventilation system....'

Most responses to **Question 3** were awarded marks in Band 2 and Band 3: they were competent and often convincing descriptions, offering some well-chosen images, or effectively describing their thoughts and feelings about their school days. There were repeated tropes, of graffitied lockers, shoes squeaking on polished floors or unwiped whiteboards, but these were usually executed well enough to avoid cliché. Responses awarded a mark of seven and below often lacked a sufficiently close focus on the school and the writer's thoughts and feelings as required by the task; there were often lengthy accounts of the journey to the school, and even of the preceding circumstances in which the absence of a forgotten project or laptop was discovered. With unexpected frequency, these journeys were often made through perilous or even haunted forests, or through terrifying storms. These were sometimes very lengthy and detailed, appearing to belong to another topic altogether, resulting in a lack of cohesion in the response. Sometimes, the years intervening between the writer having left school and returning for a reunion were described in exhaustive and irrelevant detail.

Responses given marks below Band 3 were often simple narrative accounts with little descriptive detail or evocation of feeling, setting or atmosphere.

Marks in the top Band for Style and Accuracy were awarded to those Descriptive Writing responses which demonstrated a wide-ranging and ambitious vocabulary in the creation of images and effects but were also controlled and crafted to produce a harmonious whole virtually free of error. In the middle ranges, vocabulary was plainer or less-precisely applied, and images less striking. Weaker responses were sometimes limited to unelaborated accounts of personal experience, especially in response to the first of the two questions. Consecutive sentences beginning with 'I' (often lower case) typified these formulaic responses.

In previous sessions, the most frequent issue in awarding Style and Accuracy marks for Descriptive Writing was the significant number of responses in which many sentences were without a main or finite verb. Even where there were other qualities which went some way to compensate, Examiners found it very difficult to award a mark higher than Band 4 where this error persisted. While this is still the case in numerous responses, uncertain control of tense now seems more frequently apparent and is equally damaging. This was more often seen in responses to **Question 3**, where varying periods of experience were being described. Responses awarded Writing marks in Band 2 or 3 for **Question 1** often earned lower marks for the compositions. A lack of effective paragraphing, and misuse of commas, also reduced the marks for many responses. Sometimes responses given marks in Band 4 or below for Style and Accuracy demonstrated an extensive range of vocabulary, and accurate spelling, but had poor control of syntax and sentence structure, sometimes to the point where communication was impaired. Occasionally the tendency apparent in some descriptive pieces to pack writing with as many multisyllabic or arcane examples of vocabulary as possible, often mistakenly or imprecisely employed, resulted in low marks for style and accuracy because communication was impaired. This tendency was however less marked than in other recent examination sessions.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved:

- Remember the key requirements of descriptive writing; you are not writing a story
- Try to be original, both in the scenarios and the images you create
- Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no separate rules for descriptive writing
- Make deliberate choices in your vocabulary and sentence structures to create effect

Narrative writing

4 Write a story about a time when you lost something important. [25 marks]

OR

5 Write a story with the title, 'The Lie'. [25 marks]

Narrative writing was the choice of more than half of the candidature, with **Question 5** being rather more popular. Marks across the range were awarded to responses to both questions. Examiners were able to award marks at the top of Band 1 in a number of cases, but at all levels of achievement engagement with the tasks was evident, with both titles producing some lively and often intriguing narratives. Responses to both titles often included interesting descriptive detail, which enhanced the narratives. The difficulty evident in many responses of creating satisfactory conclusions to the stories was noted, underlining the need to have the end of the story in mind in the process of writing it. A significant number of responses to both questions concluded with a moral aphorism or injunction.

Responses to the first of the narrative options recounted the loss of a variety of important things, most commonly a piece of inherited jewellery or a watch of sentimental importance, a passport or a statement of entry to an examination. Other responses detailed the loss by bereavement of beloved parents or grandparents. Less material losses were of friendship, romantic relationships, opportunities or, often movingly told, that of one's self-respect or dignity. Those responses to **Question 4** awarded marks at the top of Band 1 were narratives closely focused in time and space, employing a few well drawn characters and spare but effective dialogue and telling setting detail. One such response began with the narrator and her terrified brother fleeing unnamed pursuers: intriguingly, these sympathetically-drawn characters were clearly guilty of some crime, but its nature and that of the 'loss' incurred were only gradually revealed in a well-managed dénouement. The subject of another engaging response was the loss of a national badminton title, but its interest lay in the depiction of the narrator's hubris and the management of the reader's response to an essentially unpleasant character. Similarly concise and tightly structured, was a convincing and moving narrative about the recovery of an inheritance upon which a family reunion depended but which came just too late.

In the middle range there were often stories with interesting concepts and engaging characters which might have qualified their narratives for inclusion in the top Band of marks, but they were frequently marred by precipitate or ill-planned and unconvincing endings. A frequent scenario involved the protagonist arriving at an airport to travel to an important and imminent interview or engagement, and discovering that the vital passport was missing. A hectic search or a dash home amid general panic and lamentation would ensue, and the document would be found in the nick of time. Many of these stories were well-managed and convincing, but some responses failed to display the narrative qualities which engage the reader. Writing in

the first person should not preclude the creation of character and believable settings, or indeed tension and convincing resolution. Personal accounts of bereavement and other personal losses were often similarly devoid of these qualities and also, markedly, of dialogue. These were given marks for Content and Structure in Band 3 or below.

Responses given marks below Band 3 tended to be undistinguished series of events, weaker examples sometimes limiting their settings to 'my grandmother's house' or the name of a city the characteristics of which played no further part in the story. Typical of many event-driven responses was an imbalance in their constituent parts, with the crucial loss, recovery or personal renaissance occurring abruptly and often in a final, short paragraph. Most structures too were unvaryingly chronological. There was often effective description of feeling in these responses but more is required to constitute a successful narrative.

The second narrative question, to write a story entitled *The Lie*, was the most popular of the composition choices and elicited some effective narratives and a wide range of subject material, and there was much effective management of plot twists. Many of the responses to **Question 5** were rather dark and sometimes disturbing tales of deception or abandonment in childhood or marriage, although the most commonly occurring scenario was that of long-secret adoption. Responses awarded marks in Band 1 included some tightly plotted, assured narratives: one memorable and most engaging response focused on the plight of a Syrian refugee in a storm-tossed boat off the Italian coast. The horrors of the present were concisely and movingly juxtaposed with the phantom scents and sounds of her remembered home's sunlit lemon grove. Another awarded full marks entailed the pursuit of a demon killer by a crack military brigade. The use of convincing detail such as the barely concealed disgust of the commanding officer as he scraped the grime of the sordid locale from his polished boots engaged the reader throughout.

In the middle ranges were many predictable stories of deceived lovers and spouses, and a considerable number of stories involving the protagonist's lying about examination grades. Most of these avoided a simply chronological account, and were often quite engaging even where flashback was inexpertly handled. Characterisation was sometimes limited; some stories of quite close focus and effective narrative drive could have achieved higher marks but they supplied only predictable or simple endings. Some weaker responses were over-packed with events or characters barely distinguishable from each other: in one, a character only identified as Ben committed two hundred murders in a year—a career mentioned only in the final paragraph. Occasionally plots drifted over many years or even generations and were not well managed.

Responses below Band 3 were usually simple series of events undifferentiated in importance and were often packed with unlikely combinations of events and characters. The weakest responses were usually very brief or aimless, offering little to engage the reader.

Style and Accuracy

Examiners were able to award high marks for Style and Accuracy to many candidates whose vocabulary and sentence structures were varied and effective, and whose writing was free of repeated error. In Bands 1 and 2 syntax and sentence structure were often effectively manipulated for effect, especially in the creation of narrative tension. In this genre, any inability to punctuate and paragraph dialogue properly was exposed, and sometimes proved a pitfall for otherwise fluent and accurate writers. In Band 3, where there were a few basic errors of spelling and punctuation and plain, unvaried, vocabulary, the Examiners could award a mark of seven or eight: conversely, clear and accurate sentence structure and straightforward paragraphing could compensate for a lower mark for Content and Structure. Marks in Band 4 were given when writing was marred by misuse of commas and weak punctuation. Faulty tense control was frequently seen, as were errors in agreement. Confusion or inconsistency in the use of gender pronouns was seen quite often. The misuse or omission of capital letters inevitably reduced the marks given for otherwise sound writing. Occasionally only a mark in Band 5 could be awarded because serious errors in sentence structure and syntax impeded communication.

Ways in which the writing of narratives could be improved:

- Plan your story so that you do not run out of ideas for the plot, and you can bring it to an interesting conclusion.
- Remember that you can use your own interpretation of the titles.
- Make your story believable by creating realistic characters and settings.
- Leave some time to check through your work for errors which will seriously affect your mark, such as basic errors in spelling, capital letters and punctuation.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/33
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 style in both questions, adapted for the intended audience and genre
- structure ideas and organise their writing effectively, keeping the reader in mind
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct sentences accurately and vary sentence types to create specific effects
- select appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary and use language with precision.

General comments

Examiners found that in most cases a secure understanding of what was expected in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition, was shown. Most responses, regardless of achievement, were sustained and there were relatively few very brief scripts, although there were some. Hardly any scripts were found by examiners to have had more than one composition question attempted, showing that the great majority were familiar with the rubric of the examination. In these rare cases, while each response was given due regard by Examiners, there was inevitably some effect where insufficient time had been devoted to one of the tasks.

Most responses showed a clear engagement with the topic in **Question 1**, often with a sound understanding of the opinions featured in the magazine article used for the reading material entitled: 'Can adults praise children too much?'. There was usually some attention paid to the style and format of a letter. The majority of candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the passage. Better answers here tended to structure their responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the passage to support a cohesive point of view. Weaker candidates tended to reiterate the ideas in the passage, often in the same sequence rather than selecting and regrouping points. Most made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response. Occasionally, insufficient use was made of the reading material or there was only a tenuous grasp of the task itself. The implied register of expression between a reader writing to a published writer was usually successfully applied. In weaker responses there was often some general commentary concerning the giving of praise, with one or two points from the passage addressed, but opportunities to discuss, weigh up and evaluate the ideas in the passage were missed.

Better responses paid attention to the audience and style required for a letter written to a professional writer. These were engaging in purpose, using the passage to create and structure arguments with some sense of audience and rhetoric. Some in the middle range of marks showed an insecure register, becoming overly colloquial in style and vocabulary. In other weaker responses, valedictions were frequently forgotten, a feature symptomatic of an insecure grasp of audience and purpose, and at this level the points made about the ideas concerning praising children followed the sequence of the passage with less selection and reordering to create a point of view.

In the compositions, the descriptive and narrative 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 and the particular ways in which the reader's interest could be engaged.

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and although there was some narrative content in the middle range, most responses gave a range of descriptive detail. Most responses to the first descriptive question, about describing a journey on an unfamiliar route, were well-organised and paragraphed, with sections about the route, the unfamiliar surroundings, and some effective description of feelings and emotions. As is usually the case, these were better when there was specific detail and where the description created a clear sense of atmosphere. There were some engaging descriptions for the second question: 'Through the Window', with some very focused and credible descriptions of different views, seasons and locations. Weaker descriptive responses tended to fall into narrative with limited descriptive detail. Some responses to the first title spent too much time describing the setting out rather than being focused upon the unfamiliar area.

The best narrative writing engaged the reader with well-drawn and interesting characters and scenarios which were credible and cohesively developed. Weaker narrative writing was often characterised by inconclusive or unsatisfying endings, sometimes with simple storylines which were largely a series of events with limited awareness of the reader. In some cases there was limited narrative progression, even where the characterisation was quite effective. Responses to the first narrative task, dealing with an unexpected delay on a journey, were often suitably tense and evocative. The second narrative question elicited a wide range of situations and locations where the composition could end with the words '... if only I had listened'. The characters involved in these narratives often had engaging and emotional events to detail.

Composition responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in specific genres. Descriptive writing was usually, but not always, focused on detail and evoking atmosphere and could have been improved by the use of less clichéd ideas and expressions. The conscious shaping of narratives to interest and intrigue the reader and the creation of characters to stimulate the reader's sympathy were features understood by effective writers.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 – Directed Writing

Write a letter to the writer of the article, 'Can adults praise children too much?'

In your letter, you should:

- **consider the different ideas about praising children in the article**
- **evaluate which of the experts' views you find most convincing.**

**Base your letter on what you have read in the passage, but be careful to use your own words.
Address each of the bullet points.**

Begin your letter: 'Dear Ms Delisio...'

Write about 250 to 350 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 15 marks for the quality of your writing. [25]

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 there was some challenge and discussion of the points made in the passage, rather than a straightforward listing of the points made in the passage. Where the letter was also both accurate and appropriate in style, often with a consistent sense of audience and a polished style, Examiners could award very high marks indeed. Better responses here tended to pick up the implied points made by the wide range of professional opinions that were given in the article and could develop a detailed evaluation of them. While the more straightforward aspects, such as the claims made for praise being good for self-esteem, or insincere praise being easy to spot, were readily identified in most responses, Examiners awarded the highest marks where the benefits and downsides of giving, or not giving, praise were teased out and examined.

Responses given marks in the middle range tended to be more straightforward, with some listing of the ideas made by the various experts, and an acceptance or rebuttal of these claims at face value. These details were an accurate reflection of the ideas in the passage but there was limited comment on or examination of them.

Weaker responses showed some understanding of the main ideas of the magazine article, although there was also some misreading of some points. A thin use of the detail or weaknesses in organising ideas coherently were characteristic at this level.

Marks for reading

The best responses, as always in this task, adopted a consistently evaluative stance and read effectively between the lines of the passage to provide a subtle critique of the ideas concerning the giving of praise. At this level, for example, the points for and against the ideas in the material of why it is, or is not, important to praise children were fully addressed, often with some personal interpretation. The need for praise to be sincere and purposeful in order to help a child develop and evolve, to learn through progress and disappointment, through success and failure, was clearly evaluated. Some of the details in the passage were probed and challenged effectively. For example, the fact that children were perceptive enough to see through insincere and fake praise, or that the praise often given to children might not be a realistic preparation for the rigours of adult life. The apparently contradictory claims made by the range of professionals were also examined with some insight. Most agreed that the positivity of regularly giving praise was probably well-intentioned, but was not always appropriate for mature character development. A few questioned the need to give praise at all, believing in a world of rules and discipline. Many felt that a balance was required and that some of the so-called experts had gone too far in only one direction.

The best responses also examined the idea of the nature and purpose of giving and receiving praise. At this level, there were also some thoughtful reactions to the role of the parents, teachers and psychologists in this situation. In this way, better responses used thoughtful inferences drawn from the passage rather than making straightforward expressions of opinion or preference.

This kind of consistently evaluative approach to the material in the passage was required for marks in Band 2 and above. A mark of seven was given where there were glimpses of evaluation, often offering a reason as to how and why praise should be delivered, but a more consistently evaluative stance was required for higher marks. Where responses reproduced the points made in the passage with limited comment on it or discussion of the ideas in it, Examiners could not award marks above Band 3.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 3 where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the passage but without the more implicit meanings mentioned above. Responses at this level showed a sensible understanding of the specific claims made in the passage and some of the drawbacks as suggested by the reading material. Such responses tended to list the positives and negatives, usually in the sequence in which they appeared in the passage. Where there was some commentary on these issues, these remarks were not really evaluative at this level and could not be credited as such by Examiners. For example, Band 3 responses often stated that giving praise was good or bad for the reasons stated by the experts and left the ideas at that point. While such arguments were a valid response to the task, they did not make use of the implications and inferences that better responses could tease out of the passage. Examiners could award a mark of six where there was straightforward but wide-ranging coverage of the points in the passage but responses with more limited selection could be given five marks.

Weaker responses showed some misunderstanding, drifted away from the passage or addressed the material thinly. Some were hampered by some misreading of the task and a difficulty in understanding the concepts expressed in the material. Where a mark of four was awarded, some firmer links with the passage were needed, whereas three was generally given for very thin or brief responses in which misreading appeared. Marks below three were rarely given but in these cases the response was often a general commentary with very little connection with the passage.

It was equally appropriate in a response for the writer of the letter to decide that they agreed with either side of the argument, or that they favoured a balanced approach.

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

An appropriate tone was required for a letter of this kind and most responses were written in a suitable register, even where the writing was technically weak. Some high scoring responses combined a mature tone with some effective rhetorical devices. Candidates developed some points about the range of professionals and offered effective and considered opinions concerning their ideas.

In the middle range, the style was often appropriate although there were sometimes lapses in candidates' awareness of the intended audience. Letters sometimes started informally but changed tone, showing some insecure understanding of the appropriate style for the task.

Weaker responses sometimes failed to address the author at all and offered little adaptation of the style and tone of the passage for a different audience and purpose. A few responses had an almost aggressive and even abusive tone towards the professionals and this was not considered to be appropriate. Valedictions were often missed at this level.

Structure

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for writing, handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a persuasive overall argument which was clearly derived from the ideas in the passage but was not dependent on its structure and sequence. At the highest level, an overview of the issues involved was given rather than a list of the points made in the material.

Responses given seven, eight or nine for writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the passage but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed to meet the demands of the task. Responses opened with a considered introduction and ended with a concluding paragraph which showed a clear sense of the purpose of the letter. At the lower end of Band 3, responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more tied to the sequencing of the passage whereas higher Band 3 responses usually organised and re-sequenced ideas more selectively.

Some weaker responses given marks below Band 3 were less coherent in structure and more dependent on the sequence of ideas in the passage. This often led to some basic reiteration of the points in the passage but without the re-ordering of them which was needed to give the letter a sense of purpose and audience. These responses showed a lack of awareness of the conventional structure of a letter.

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. While these responses were clearly appropriate in tone, the range and precision of vocabulary used allowed for some quite complex arguments about the nature of praise to be made with clarity and style.

Responses given seven, 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, a range of quite basic errors was made which marred the overall impression given. The nature and focus of the task exposed many simple grammatical errors, such as the very frequent use of 'could of' and 'would of' and the confusion of 'your' with 'you're' or 'their' with 'there'. The use of capital letters where they were not needed, even where there was otherwise general accuracy in the writing, was also noted by Examiners. Apostrophes were very often not used appropriately and sentence demarcation by commas rather than full stops began to creep in at the lower end of Band 3. Commonly used words were also wrongly spelled in many responses. These included words used in the passage such as 'psychologist', 'beneficial' and 'self-esteem' and frequent errors with homophones and grammar errors such as 'you was' and 'we was'. These errors, particularly in grammatical agreement created a jarring note sometimes in responses which were otherwise accurate and appropriate in style.

While some of these minor errors could be compensated for by secure sense of audience or a varied vocabulary, faulty sentence structures 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 punctuation and grammatical errors which meant that Examiners could not award in Band 3 where mostly correctly structured sentences are required. Persistent 'comma-splicing' was perhaps the most common reason Examiners were unable to award clear, coherent responses marks in Band 3. Some whole paragraphs were actually strings of simple sentences with commas rather than full stops to separate them.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- be prepared to criticise or question the ideas in the passage
- look for, and use in your response, inferences made indirectly by the writer
- aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them
- be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly; think carefully about the kind of style the recipient of your letter would expect
- check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing full stops, missing or wrongly used capital letters, weaknesses in grammar or key words mis-spelt.

Section 2 – Composition

Write about 350 to 450 words on one of the following questions.

Up to 13 marks are available for the content and structure of your answer, and up to 12 marks for the style and accuracy of your writing.

Descriptive Writing

- 2 On your way to a friend’s house, you decide to take a different route and find yourself lost in an unfamiliar area for a few minutes. Describe your surroundings and your thoughts and feelings in these few minutes before you find your way again. [25 marks]**

OR

- 3 Write a description with the title, ‘Through the Window’. [25 marks]**

Both descriptive writing questions provided responses that achieved marks across the mark range, although **Question 3** was the most popular. In the first task, there were some strongly evocative descriptions of many different types of unfamiliar locations, often dangerous and threatening. The repeated hint in the question that the description was only covering ‘a few minutes’ was disregarded at times. In the second question, responses were able to describe a range of viewpoints and interpretations with a considerable degree of creativity. Generally, the best responses included some combination of physical description alongside some description of the narrator’s thoughts and feelings. As in previous series, some inexperience in tackling descriptive writing tasks was seen by Examiners in responses which became narratives or which contained limited descriptive detail or only rather mundane levels of detail.

The events described in the first descriptive task were, in the best responses, engaging and evocative descriptions. Candidates wisely avoided too much narration concerning the reason why the friend was being visited. It was fitting and appropriate for the response to vary in focus from concern to joy at the different stages implied in the question.

Middle range responses to this question were characterised by more straightforward, often more physical descriptions of places and people. There was some clear descriptive detail, although the way in which it was organised was less varied and the approach more repetitive. Each detail was described with less subtlety and effectiveness overall. In many cases, there were descriptive lists for the location and the writer’s range of feelings, losing the range of descriptive opportunities offered by the title such as the changes in descriptive focus.

Weaker responses were often characterised by over-long narrative preambles involving getting ready to set out without really describing the key elements in the title. There was also some generalised and rather clichéd description at this level. A number lost sight of the structure implied in the title and focused almost entirely on the ‘unfamiliar area’ and its sights and sounds.

For the second question, the best responses often included a particular setting or location. The question allowed for a variety of interpretations. Better responses opened with engaging, well-realised pictures and observations ‘Through the Window’. Different responses considered a range of settings, viewpoints and seasons. The perspective chosen varied from looking out through the window, to looking in from the outside. Some effective responses focused on the changing of the seasons seen through the window in one year, or describing the growing of a child as if in time lapse through the same window.

Responses given marks in the middle range were more straightforward in their approach to the task, including some rather more generalised description. The quality and effectiveness of the writing varied but the structure of many average pieces relied on this straightforward approach. Examiners were often able to reward some description even where the overall structure and focus was more discursive or narrative. Examiners gave marks below Band 3 where the writing was more typically narrative than descriptive in focus, where there was limited organisation of the details described or where strings of details were listed rather than described. Band 4 responses a narrative focus dominated at the expense of description. In some at the top of the Band, some general impression of what could be seen was given but with limited detail or elements which brought the environment to life for the reader.

Marks for Style and Accuracy were sometimes lower than those for Content and Structure, even in some original and interesting responses. In the best responses, precise and varied vocabulary and controlled complex sentences with secure punctuation within and between sentences were used. Images, words and phrases were employed to create specific effects and to bring the scene or character alive or the reader. In weaker responses, as is often the case in descriptive writing, tenses switched between past and present, sometimes within sentences, and incomplete or verbless sentences were common, even in scripts where responses to **Question 1** showed a secure grasp of sentence structure.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved:

- try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content
- remember the key features of descriptive writing and keep your focus on details
- write sentences with proper verbs: there are no special sentence structures for a description
- choose your vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects.

Narrative Writing

4 Write a story that begins with an unexpected delay on a journey. [25 marks]

OR

5 Write a story which ends with the words, ‘... if only I had listened.’ [25 marks]

Both narrative questions attracted a range of responses, but **Question 5** proved the most popular question on the paper. Marks were awarded across the range for both.

The first question elicited some engaging stories, often written in the first person, which included some interesting characterisation and setting. Scenarios included a number of things not going to plan with assignments with family, or friends, aliens or long-lost relatives. In better responses there was a clear resolution to the narrative as well as some control of tension and suspense to shape the reader’s reactions. Better responses also clearly focused attention on characterisation and setting.

Middle range stories were characteristically straightforward in structure and approach and in some cases, although the characterisation was effective and credible, the piece overall lacked narrative progression and drive. One feature noticed by Examiners was the tendency to evoke quite convincingly the state of mind of the narrator but without a real story. These responses were effective descriptions but little happened to the characters and there was no real plot or narrative cohesion.

Weaker responses tended to involve less well drawn characters as well as some simple ideas, usually about feeling frustrated. Some responses often relied too heavily on dialogue without narration and the plotlines were simple, linear accounts with less awareness of the needs of the reader shown.

For the second narrative question, the variety of situations covered was very wide with varying success and credibility. The title led to many moral mazes, where the writer had an unfortunate sequence of avoidable events ‘... if only I had listened.’ Many dealt with relationships which ended badly. A few concerned themselves with a philosophical consideration after failing to listen to their inner voice. The best were those which had a ring of authenticity about them and the build-up or preparation was crucial in creating a believable and effective narrative.

Average and weaker responses were characterised by less effective, more contrived narratives or by less control over the material. Responses given marks in Band 4 were particularly dominated by events, some of them rather unlikely, while Band 5 marks usually reflected very brief accounts with very little to engage the reader in terms of characters and setting. A number of responses to **Question 5** concerned characters who, for some reason, visited a haunted house, even though they had clearly been warned about the consequences. Some stories became a series of events which did not really cohere and some scenarios lacked credibility; in a few cases there was little sequencing or clarity overall.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was lively and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. Punctuation within sentences, in dialogue and for effect was characteristic of responses in the higher Bands and where coupled with a sophisticated palette of well-used vocabulary, the highest marks were given. For 10 and above, a degree of fluency was needed as well as a clarity and accuracy of style.

Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, if persistent, limited even competently told stories to Band 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation or grammar. In many scripts, the punctuation of direct speech was insecure, even when the story itself was quite well-structured. Again, basic punctuation errors with misused or omitted capital letters, the mis-spelling of simple words and wrongly selected homophones appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes so frequent as to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy. 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 7 or 8. Where there were still errors but the style had more ambition and variety, a mark of 9 was awarded. Weaknesses in constructing sentences, comma-splicing or frequent basic spelling and punctuation errors resulted in marks below Band 3. A few responses were very brief and faulty in style, 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 how to resolve your story in an interesting way before you start writing
- think about how to create tension and a climax in your story
- 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 (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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 original 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, avoiding typing errors and errors caused by the inaccurate use of the spell check.

General comments

There were very few errors or misjudgements in fulfilling the requirements of the syllabus, and the Moderators congratulated centres on the presentation of their folders. There was a high standard of word processing and the work was overall very orderly. The folders were generally of a high standard and Moderators noted many examples of very good writing. This report sets out to help centres to make further improvements to assist candidates in achieving the highest marks of which they are capable.

Content of the folders: One noticeable improvement over previous sessions was that candidates were frequently given a considerable choice of topics for Assignment 1, which resulted in more personal opinion and originality. The quality of the narratives written for Assignment 2 varied both in the maturity and originality of the content, and in the management of language. There were still some problems in the final assignment, largely owing to enduring misunderstandings about the need to analyse and evaluate ideas and opinions from the chosen text in order to demonstrate the scope and depth of the reading. These matters are detailed later in this report.

Assessment: Most of the assessment was satisfactory but frequently slightly lenient. This resulted in a typical scaling of between -1 and -3 , which is fairly normal for this component. In some cases there was a scaling of $+1$ to $+3$, often at the bottom of the mark range, owing to comparatively accurate writing and qualities of style. There was a trend towards higher marking of reading, and it was not always possible to justify the frequent award of marks in the top band, often owing to the quality of the responses to individual ideas and opinions and the lack of evidence of a grasp of the text as a whole. The rank order of candidates was generally sound.

Administration: Centres are asked to check the section of this report that deals with administration. While there were very few major issues, there were a number of details that caused problems to the Moderators. These generally arose from a lack of understanding of the Moderating process. The chief problems concerned the information given on the CASF, the secure fastening together of the folders, and the annotation of drafts and final versions of work. In general, the administration of this component has improved over the past few years, and centres are thanked for their hard work and attention to detail.

The following section on good and less good practice is repeated from an earlier report as it is still relevant and is also a useful checklist for centres.

Good practice was where:

- a wide range of topics was provided for Assignments 1 and 2, and candidates were allowed to choose to respond to what interested them
- some imagination was used in suggesting unusual ideas for writing, and there was a certain amount of risk taking
- there was a strong sense of the candidate as an individual writing with conviction and enthusiasm
- drafts were considered and improved
- teachers gave clear advice about how Assignment 3 was to be attempted, and it was explained that it was a test of reading in depth and with understanding, often of subtle shades of meaning.

Less good practice was where:

- the teacher set the same topic for an assignment to everyone and gave too much guidance as to the content. The result was undue similarity between the work of candidates, and this affected the marks
- there was little imagination in task setting, and candidates wrote on well-established themes without conviction or imagination
- there was a particular problem in Assignment 2 where candidates wrote incredible and often immature stories about unrealistic topics
- in Assignment 3, candidates addressed the topic rather than the text
- the work was significantly too long or too short, which affected the quality. However, centres should remember that the word lengths are given for guidance, and there should be no automatic penalty for ignoring them.

The content of the folders

Consistency: the best candidates were those whose standard of writing was consistent from assignment to assignment. It is recommended that a weak assignment should be replaced with a better one before the final assessment is made.

Variety: one of the aims of the component is to encourage candidates to write in different genres, for different audiences, and in different registers. There were examples where two of the three assignments were very similar, for example, where the first assignment was based on a text or texts, which made it similar to the third task. Centres that planned the course imaginatively achieved this variety of task setting.

Length of assignments: there was a tendency for candidates to write at much greater length than advised in the syllabus. While there was no automatic penalty for this, some candidates were unable to sustain the quality of the work and both the structure and the content sometimes faltered. A few excellent candidates benefited by writing at such length, but there was no advantage for the majority.

Assignment 1: This was an opportunity for candidates to present their views on a topic with which they felt knowledgeable. While it was perfectly acceptable for them to write informatively they often had more scope when arguing a case and writing persuasively. It allowed them to adopt a register which the best of them sustained throughout the piece.

- **Using texts and references:** some centres based the work on texts and internet references (the research essay). Most candidates deconstructed the references and reconstructed them as their own account. However, without looking up all the references the Moderator did not know how much of the resulting piece was in the candidate's own words, and the comments by teachers suggested that they did not either. These pieces needed a statement that the final work was original. However, very often, the work was academic in nature and did not express candidates' own ideas and opinions. Centres should consider whether this approach was the best for the assignment. In many ways the candidates who wrote about their outward bound trip to Mount Snowdon approached the intention of this assignment more successfully.
- **Structure:** it was in this assignment that the candidate's grasp of structure best manifested itself. Some of the writing was not sustained, so that it ran out of developed content before the end. Some of the paragraphs were in no logical order, but just a series of divisions. Lastly, within the paragraphs, weaker candidates lost the sequence of sentences, and it was here that the writing became more confused and even repetitious.
- **Choice of content:** it was wise to let candidates choose their own topics. One centre required everyone to write about the Holocaust, which had the potential to be an interesting topic, but proved difficult for less able writers, who leant heavily on shared ideas. Guide books, restaurant reviews and accounts of films all seemed a little limited in content and were best when they did not follow a template or a professional writer's style. Topics such as social media, video games, euthanasia, the death penalty and drugs have been used too frequently, and many of them lacked originality of thought.
- **Register:** Candidates were sometimes successful in adopting an appropriate register for a speech. However, others used too colloquial a voice that tended to interrupt the flow of the argument. It is recommended that they experiment with various types of register and decide which is most effective for the topic and audience.

The following are a selection of topics that were chosen for Assignment 1:

The Paris terror
Procrastination
Academic study v athletics
Is war good for anything?
The banning of guns
Is the US still racist?
The life of a forensic scientist
Ultimate Frisbee
The effects of alcohol
Middle child syndrome

Assignment 2: There were the usual assortment of narratives, descriptions and personal writing. Perhaps this time there was more fiction, some of which was very fine with various devices such as more than one narrator, time lapses and flash backs. Descriptions were fine, but sometimes became lists of details without much structure. The best descriptions allowed for some movement of time and place – they did not have to be static.

- **Content:** it took a fine writer to succeed with a haunted house or a zombie – and nearly all of these stories were so incredible as to become childish and laughable. They should be avoided completely since the reader has to be engaged, and the only way to do this is through an element of realism. Many of the violent stories also lacked a sense of credibility, as in this quotation: *Dave scratched the rope with his collar and it slowly was sawed through and he jumped on the witches back and put her in a sleeper hold.*
- **Style:** it is in this assignment that candidates show their range of imaginative vocabulary. In some cases they tried too hard. The use of language at best was wide ranging and assured, which meant the right word in the right place. These were examples of language that was too colourful to make sense: *Glimmering light poured down upon the floor exterminating the silence of the rainforest, and His footsteps accelerated into a crescendo and sounded like a wondrous funeral bell.* It was also in this assignment that some of the writing used disappointingly simple language, so that candidates missed the opportunity to give an indication of their potential range of vocabulary.

- **Detail:** the most outstanding stories chose the details that were most relevant to the narrative and which best engaged the reader's attention. Such details made the story sound realistic. Some personal accounts include details that did not assist the reader in imagining the situation because they were mundane and barely relevant.
- **Endings:** the majority of these stories had arresting endings, some of them unexpected, but still realistic. Others tended to fade away at the end, which was a disappointment after a promising beginning.

There was an imaginative selection of titles, including:

The cursed doll
The grass is greener
The yellow brick
The elevator
The outsider
Thunders end
No-one is up the chimney

And for personal writing:

Life with Dad
A recurring nightmare
Life as an army child
Dartmoor zoo

As in Assignment 1 there were several titles that have been used so often that it was considered time to move on: These included:

The beach
The deserted fairground
Train station
A place in summer and winter

A number of candidates imagined themselves as a bird or animal and wrote about a day in their life. Some of these were imaginative, but others were not particularly effective. Some care was necessary in planning their content.

Assignment 3: it should be remembered that this was a test of reading as well as writing, and that at a high level candidates had to show a grasp of the whole text and also the writer's attitude to the topic. This extended overview was missing from many of the responses given marks in the top band.

Text choice: there were some good choices of controversial arguments, but a number of the texts were informative, which made it very difficult to grapple with individual ideas and opinions. The text generally proved difficult to handle if it was longer than two sides of A4 paper, but insufficient if it was shorter than one.

Content of answer: the best responses either started with an extended overview of the text (see above) or wrote an overall, structured response that assimilated ideas and opinions as it proceeded. Candidates who chose a minimum of four ideas and opinions from the text and evaluated them for consistency and bias scored high marks for reading. However, many candidates made a choice but their comments were simple and did not evaluate: some of them simply stated that they agreed or disagreed. It was not sufficient just to choose single words to discuss.

Attacking the writer: some of the texts were extreme in their views, tempting candidates to attack the writer rather than what was written in the text. This was not what was required and cannot be rewarded by the mark scheme.

Use of the text as a stimulus: this was not what was envisaged. As a test of reading, candidates who wrote their own responses to the topic rather than to the ideas in the text were given very few marks for reading. However, their responses were marked in the normal way for writing without reference to the text.

Structure of the response: there were some very cohesive answers with strong introductions and a series of interconnected points leading to good endings. However, other candidates wrote a few lines for an introduction and then made a series of random points that did not connect into a progressive piece of writing.

Some good texts included the following topics:

Grenfell Tower (a disastrous fire in a block of flats)

Celebrity politicians

Self esteem

Single sex schools

A speech by Donald Trump

Football is more of a business than a sport

Transgender issues

A defence of boxing

Assessment of coursework

The standard of assessment was generally good. Where there was disagreement it was either because all the four assessment objectives, (content, structure, style (including register) and accuracy had not been equally weighted or because there was more than one teaching set and the marks had not been fully brought into line.

Content: at the top of the range, the content should be sufficiently complex and mature. It should allow for a variety of points to be made and successfully thought through.

Structure: the structure should be effective in that the reader is clearly guided from one section of the writing to the next. The sequence of sentences and paragraphs should be considered carefully to avoid loss of clarity in arguments and events.

Style: many candidates did not vary their sentence structures enough. Lengthier sentences provided fluency, but sentences that were too long easily caused confusion. Better candidates demonstrated a varied register from task to task.

Accuracy: few centres annotated accuracy fully in the final versions of assignments. In particular, attention should be paid to the number of sentence separation errors, and marks adjusted accordingly. As this is a coursework component, it is expected that there will be few errors, as candidates are able to redraft and review their work before submitting, and word process their assignments using spellchecking software. Homonym errors often indicate where this has been ineffectively used. Some of these included:

Children will need to emphasise with each other

How bazar is that!

There was lots of nosie coming from the room

It was not clear what was meant by *atramentous*.

The mark schemes: the mark schemes describe standards for each of the objectives in each mark band. Centres should ensure that all are appropriately met before awarding a mark in a particular band. Where there is a weakness in one of the objectives, the mark will be lower in that band, or it may be necessary to consider the band below.

There was some evidence that the mark scheme for reading was not used carefully enough if at all. The current syllabus has re-numbered the mark bands. Some centres were still using the old numbering.

Drafts: some drafts were sufficiently different from the final versions to show the development of the work. Others were unmarked sheets with or without teachers' general advice for improvement at the end. Very occasionally, drafts had clearly been corrected by the teacher and this is strictly not allowed. There should be no teacher marks in the margin or the body of the text because it is the responsibility of the candidate to produce the final version.

Some candidates had obviously worked on their draft. It is envisaged that there should be evidence in coloured pen of editing, revising and correcting a draft. It would be sensible if the candidates were to sign the draft to make it clear that the changes were their own.

The draft should be clearly marked as such so that it cannot be mistaken for the final version.

Administration

Internal moderation

Centres are reminded that where there are two or more sets, all the marks must be formed into a reliable rank order at the end of the process. It is normally possible to sample a set and to scale the marks according to the trend. These marks must be entered on to the CASF because the Moderator needs to check what changes have been made to the marks of the different set teachers. There were some indications that where sampling had taken place the only marks that were changed were those in the sample. If the sampling shows that there is a trend to leniency or severity, then this should be applied to the whole or part of the set, or it may be necessary to hand the set back to the teacher for re-marking.

Folders

Most, but not all, folders were securely fastened together so that no sheets of paper could be lost or put into the wrong order. The centre's submission is handled by a variety of different people once it is posted, and if items are not securely fastened there is a risk that pages will be lost or muddled. We do request that folders are not placed in plastic folders because this makes it difficult to handle.

The work should be annotated. Each piece should carry the teacher's opinions about its strengths and weaknesses so that the Moderator can follow the centre's marking justification.

The text used for the third assignment must be included with the folders. It is not the Moderator's responsibility to look it up online.

If the folder is not complete a mark for writing should be awarded and one third of the marks deducted for each missing piece.

Forms

There were comparatively few problems with the forms which were carefully and fully completed.

The Moderator carries out checks to ensure that the marks on the CASF are the same as those on the folders and the submitted mark sheet. The Moderator also checks the addition of the marks in the sample. The CASF is the master form because it has the details of every candidate, including the set teacher and changes to the marks made at internal moderation.

Moderators thanked centres that indicated the candidates in the sample by placing an asterisk against their names on the CASF.

Some of the changes to candidates' marks were indicated on the folders and these marks were then transferred to the CASF. However, the Moderator wanted to see the original marks before internal moderation took place and these should have appeared on the CASF with the changes written in the right hand column.

Some centres entered the original marks on the submitted mark sheet instead of those agreed at internal moderation. Centres are reminded that they are responsible for ensuring all forms are completed and submitted accurately. Where there is confusion, delays in awarding grades can occur.

Conclusion

Once more, the Moderators congratulate and thank centres for their hard work. Coursework is not a matter of just completing three pieces of work: it is a way of encouraging students to think and to write – hence the emphasis on imagination and personal response. Apart from its educational validity it gives teachers the chance to develop their skills of assessment. This year's folders were a substantial proof of all this.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/05
Speaking and Listening

Generally, centres prepared their candidates thoroughly and conducted the exam competently and professionally. The choice of topics was interesting and varied and generally reflected the candidates' interests. There were relatively few candidates who had little to say in Part 2 because their choice of topic had been misguided. As is often the case, the more successful candidates were passionate and knowledgeable about their subjects, resulting in more sophisticated and enthusiastic performances in the Part 2 discussion.

The majority of material listened to was very impressive. Candidates demonstrated good language skills and delivered well informed talks. Very few presentations seemed to rely heavily on notes although some were over-reliant on memorisation. The level of preparedness and the articulacy demonstrated by the majority of candidates remains impressive in this component.

Key messages

Administration – General Points

It was evident that centres had carefully read the instructions on the administration of the test. As a result, administration of the tests was generally competent with rubric applied appropriately.

Where there were issues reported by the moderating team, the following guidelines should be applied:

- The centre should include the following in the packet sent to Cambridge to be moderated:
 - all the recordings for the candidates entered for the series
 - the Oral Examination Summary Forms for all the candidates entered
 - a copy of the marks that have already been sent to Cambridge.Each of these items is very important in the process of assessing a centre's performance so if a packet is incomplete a delay in the moderation process is inevitable.
- Centres should generate audio files – ideally transferred to a single CD or USB drive - in a recognised common audio file format such as mp3, wav and wma (but not aup) that can be played by standard computer software.
- Centres should check the recordings at regular intervals during the testing process to ensure their quality. Please also check the CD or USB drive before despatching to Cambridge. Faulty recordings continue to delay the process of moderating a small minority of centres.
- The examiner should introduce each candidate's recording by stating the following: the centre's name and number; the candidate's name and number; the name of the examiner and the date on which the test is being conducted. This is a windowed test so the date on which the recording is made must be included to confirm the test has been carried out within the specified dates.
- A separate introduction is required for each candidate's test. It is not acceptable for one generic introduction covering the whole of the centre's cohort to be included with the sample recordings in the same way it would not be acceptable for a generic coversheet to be provided for every candidate taking a written examination. This is a formal terminal test and the same principles apply.
- Where there are multiple examiners at a centre involved in the testing, internal moderation is required. Where the total marks for a candidate have been altered because of this internal moderation, please indicate on the Summary Form which of the three marks have been changed. It is unhelpful if only the total mark is altered.
- Where candidates have been entered but fail to take the test they should be recorded as 'absent' and not awarded a mark of zero. A mark of zero should only be awarded to a candidate who is present for

the test but who does not say anything worth awarding marks for when assessed against the marking grids.

- Each examiner at a centre is expected to complete their own summary form, thus providing the moderator with a clear overview of the centre's process.
- It is helpful if candidates are ordered by candidate number when completing summary forms.
- Centres are reminded that the correct addition and transcription of marks on the required forms is very important. Where errors occur the moderating process is impeded and often delayed.

Conduct of the Speaking and Listening Test

When considering candidates' marks, the importance of timings must be appreciated.

- Part 1 should be a minimum of 3 minutes and a maximum of 4 minutes. Please note this does not include the examiner's introduction. Where a Part 1 response is short, please consider whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met and assess accordingly. It is difficult to see how a response can meet higher level criteria in a performance lasting significantly less than four minutes.
- Equally, a response which is significantly overlong cannot be regarded as fulfilling the criteria for Band 1. It is in the best interests of the candidate that the examiner intercedes to halt any Part 1 talk that exceeds the maximum time allowed. In terms of assessment, if an intervention is deemed necessary, it should be considered whether the candidate has successfully fulfilled the criteria for Band 1 if this level is to be awarded.
- Given that both Speaking and Listening are assessed in Part 2, it is important that the question and answer session lasts long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. In Part 2 a minimum of 6 minutes and a maximum of 7 minutes of discussion is expected. It is the examiner's responsibility to ensure these timings are adhered to.
- Candidates can take into the test one cue card containing prompt notes. These notes should not be written in full sentences or be read verbatim. A reliance on written material in Part 1 is counter-productive and only leads to a lack of natural fluency which affects performance. Please note that each cue card should include the name of the candidate and be retained by the centre for six months after the date on which the results are published.
- Examiners should not interrupt or halt candidates within the time allowed for Part 1. Examiners should only interrupt to move the candidates into Part 2 if they show no signs of reaching a natural conclusion after the maximum time allowed.
- If candidates falter during Part 1 (because they have forgotten what they were going to say or lose their flow) the examiner should use prompts without resorting to asking questions.
- The use of pre-prepared responses to known questions in Part 2 is not permitted. When they plan and prepare their responses, candidates are encouraged to consider what questions they may be asked during Part 2 but there should be no collusion between the examiner and candidate. Candidates who prepare long and unnatural monologues in response to anticipated questions only penalise themselves. The discussions should evolve and to do this an element of spontaneity must be apparent.
- The test should only be attempted once in any examination series. Once the test has begun it should not be re-started or interrupted.
- It is important that the tests are undertaken within the prescribed test window published by Cambridge for each series. Centres are reminded that the full date should be quoted as part of the examiner's introduction to every individual test undertaken.

Accuracy of assessment

Component 5 centres had applied the marking criteria with a general accuracy that is to be applauded. In most cases it was clear for the moderator as to why particular marks had been awarded and how centres had applied internal moderation, where applicable.

Where there was a level of disagreement between the moderator's assessment and the centre's assessment the following applies:

- Timings were not adhered to in one or both parts of the test but the marks awarded did not take this into consideration. A very short Part 1 will most likely not fulfil the criteria for the higher bands. This is equally true if Part 2 is very short.
- Articulate, confident candidates tended to be over assessed in Part 1 where the content was factual rather than demonstrating more analysis and reflection.

- Some centres under-marked candidates at the lower end of their range. This may be due to how few candidates fell into this part of the range and the infrequency with which centres experience such performances but it is worth noting that the criteria for Band 5 suggests a performance that is so inhibited by the delivery that little sense can be made of what is said. In other words, when the examiner is working very hard to extract any meaning from the delivery and no structure to the comments is evident, then Band 5 is applicable.
- One prominent cause of inaccuracy was generosity in the awarding of marks in Part 2 for short responses which were not of sufficient length or challenge to secure the higher bands. Responses need to be consistently detailed in Part 2.
- It is important that the examiners do not over-dominate in Part 2. Candidates should be allowed to talk and their contribution should be dominant, particularly for those being awarded marks in the higher bands where detailed responses to questions are expected.

Approaches to Part 1

Moderators reported a wide range of topics being undertaken although the tasks generally took the form of an individual presentation. Some examples of monologues delivered in role were evident and these were mostly successful. There were few examples of generic topics this session and it is pleasing to see that centres are giving candidates greater choice in this respect. It is important to consider that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when choices are made. To achieve the higher bands, the presentations should move beyond the descriptive to include elements of comment, reflection and analysis. Lively delivery fully engaging the audience by using a range of language devices effectively is always a good indicator of a higher band Part 1.

Without exception, successful topics were always those where the candidate held a genuine interest in the subject and demonstrated a breadth of knowledge and passion that under-pinned the whole performance. In a small number of centres the examiner adopted an approach presumably designed to put candidates at ease by engaging them in a brief informal dialogue before the actual talk. This seemed to undermine the Part 1 and there was evidence that candidates who had prepared to begin their talk immediately were somewhat disrupted by then having to wait to begin. The formality of the introduction and then the talk helps candidates to focus whereas this 'chat' was a distraction and is to be discouraged.

Successful topics included:

- Colonising Mars
- Analysis and discussion of a famous painting, literary work or piece of music
- What are dreams?
- Critical thinking
- The value of travel
- Failure
- Discrimination
- In role monologue
- Nuclear fusion and its prospects
- The problem with democracy
- Orange – as a concept

Topics that worked less well included:

- Room 101
- Social media – too broad and often clichéd
- Holidays – too broad or liable to be a list of events only
- Football – too broad
- Bullying
- Technology – too broad
- Video games
- A historical figure – where the candidate has no real affinity for the subject

It is very important to stress that topic choice by itself was not a strong indicator of effectiveness. There were examples of the same topic being successful and less successful, depending on candidates' preparation and competence. Those topics deemed less successful above are cited as being typical of the general trend encountered whilst moderating. Centres know their candidates best and should offer general guidance on topic choice accordingly.

Management of Part 2

This was mainly satisfactory with most examiners conducting the discussions effectively. Candidates were encouraged to extend and develop their ideas relevant to the topic being discussed. Examiners exhibited sympathy for the candidates and interest in the chosen topics. Discussions were focussed and did not veer off-task.

Supportive examiners ask open questions that encourage the candidates to extend their ideas and reflect on the points made in Part 1. Pertinent, focused and challenging questioning works best, giving candidates every opportunity to display their skills. Less successful examiners dominate the discussion, often interjecting when the candidate is still speaking, allow pre-conceived ideas to influence their tone and train of questioning and quickly move off-task when the topic holds little interest for them personally. The best examiners engaged fully with the topic and corresponding discussion and increased the complexity and subtlety of the questions in order to allow candidates to appropriately demonstrate their ability to deal with 'changes in direction of the conversation'. Such progressive questioning provides the examiner with the means to find the highest level that the candidate can rise to. It remains a real pleasure to hear candidates talking on equal terms with the examiner where both parties are clearly enjoying the test.

Advice to Centres

- This is a formal terminal test: Prepare for this examination as any other – i.e. techniques / research / thought about appropriate topics. Practise methods of presentation and response to questioning in other situations as preparation for this test.
- The test timings are as important as they are in any written examination, so examiners, teachers and candidates should adhere to them.
- Follow the instructions on how to present the recordings and documentation efficiently and concisely.
- Please check both documentation and recordings before sending to Cambridge.
- Encourage candidates to choose topics that they know well through personal experience and are passionate about. Issues and ideas work better than factual topics unless the candidate has an individual flair or interest.
- Ensure that the examiners know the topic titles in plenty of time so that they can think about some of the possible areas for questioning. Examiners should have plenty of questions to ask to push candidates to use the time allowed effectively.
- Examiners should use prompts and ask questions strategically to encourage and help the candidates to think for themselves and demonstrate what they can do. Examiners should avoid saying too much or interrupting too early, which can affect the candidates developing their own ideas.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/06
Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

Key messages regarding administration

Cambridge requires a centre to provide four different items in the package sent to the moderator. These are:

- All the recordings of Task 1 and Task 2 for the whole cohort entered for the series. Preferably, these can be sent on a CD or USB drive.
- All the Coursework Assessment Summary Forms for the whole cohort entered. If more than one teacher/examiner is involved in the process then a separate form completed by that teacher/examiner should be included. This allows the moderator to cover the range of teacher/examiners used by the centre.
- The Individual Candidate Record Cards for all the entered candidates in the cohort.
- A copy of the marks that have already been sent to Cambridge.

It is essential to successful completion of the moderating process that all the required items are present in the packet sent to Cambridge. Of equal importance is that the addition and transcription of marks is accurate and that the marks on the separate forms tally against each other. The moderator will undertake an administration check before moderating and any discrepancies can cause a delay in the process.

The following guidelines may prove helpful in completing the sample successfully:

- Centres should generate audio files in a recognised common audio file format such as mp3, wav and wma (but not AUP) that can be played by standard computer software. It is helpful if for each candidate, a separate track is created and its file name is the candidate's name and examination number. Where possible, the recordings should be transferred to a single CD or a USB drive. It is highly recommended that the quality of the recordings is checked regularly during the recording sessions. The final CD or USB drive should also be checked before despatching to Cambridge.
- The teacher/examiner should introduce each recording using the rubric in the syllabus. For paired activities, it would be helpful if candidates introduce themselves and the roles they are playing before beginning the task so the moderator can clearly distinguish as to who is speaking when.
- Although there is no formal requirement that activities should be of a minimum length, please consider whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met if the activity is very short.
- An Individual Candidate Record Card is required for each candidate entered. These cards should be treated as 'living' documents that are completed when each task is undertaken. Specific information about the choices made for each task is required by the moderator and not just generic statements that are unhelpful. For Task 1 a comment reading 'a talk about a hobby of your choice' is not helpful but 'my interest in (explain specific hobby)' is useful for the moderator.
- Where there are multiple teacher/examiners in a centre, internal standardisation and moderation is encouraged for obvious reasons. If, as a result of this internal moderation, the marks for candidates' tasks are changed please indicate on the Summary Forms exactly where these changes have taken place. Changing just the total marks is unhelpful for the moderator.

General comments

Generally, the standard of administration and accuracy of assessment continue to be of a high standard. There was pleasing and substantial evidence of centres and their candidates fully committing to the component and producing work of a very good quality as a result. A wide range of topics were chosen in response to Task 1 and some inventive literature-based paired discussions were evident in response to Task 2.

Centres are reminded that the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form are specific to Component 6 and cannot be substituted by forms from any other component such as Component 5.

For Component 6, centres are encouraged to be creative in the choice of tasks but the assessment criteria should always be used as a guide to the skills being assessed. The integration of literature-based activities is encouraged where it will benefit the candidates' performance.

Comments on specific tasks

The most successful tasks attempted were those chosen by the candidates themselves with the beneficial guidance of their teachers also apparent. Candidates who were genuinely interested in the topics they had chosen often had more to say in greater depth.

Well planned and prepared responses to tasks are generally more successful but responses do not benefit from over-scripted and seemingly 'artificial' performances where spontaneity is missing.

Task 1

A wide range of topics were undertaken although the task generally took the form of an individual presentation. A pleasing alternative was the use of dramatic monologues created by the candidates at one centre.

Candidates perform best when they are able to choose their own topics, rather than attempting to talk about a generic theme imposed on the entire group. It is important to consider that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when these choices are made. More able candidates should be encouraged to choose more exacting and mature topics that extend their abilities to construct a compelling argument within a time frame of approximately 3–4 minutes that includes an element of introspection and reflection.

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

- A significant moment in time
- My love of a personal interest/hobby (that moves beyond the purely descriptive and is reflective and thought-provoking)
- An in-depth and evaluative review of a movie, piece of music or work of art
- Hope
- Why I recommend a specified holiday destination
- The benefits of being technologically adept in the twenty-first century
- Helicopter Parents
- In-character monologues

*Some examples of less successful **Task 1** activities include:*

- Should cannabis be legalised? (This has potential safeguarding issues)
- Football (Most often too generic and unfocussed)
- A single topic imposed by the centre for the whole of its cohort in which no individual choice is allowed (Ownership of and commitment to the topic is not always evident)

Task 2

The Pair-Based Activity works best between two candidates of similar ability discussing a topic they have prepared and that they feel strongly about or engaging in a lively role play that allows them to demonstrate their discursive strengths. A clearly defined focus is better than a general exchange of views. 'Football' remains a popular topic amongst boys but where there is no sense of audience or specific focus there will be little evidence of the skills expected for those wishing to attain a mark in the higher bands. Where candidates have clear viewpoints that lead to persuasive argument the resulting task will be more successful than when candidates are unsure of their opinions.

Generally, entirely scripted responses, be they discussions or role plays, do not allow candidates to access the higher attainment bands.

It is unlikely that both candidates in the Paired-Task activity 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 four minutes. Given that both speaking and listening are assessed for both candidates, it is important that the activities last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both if marks in the higher bands are to be awarded.

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

- Arguing for and against a current affairs topic such as the benefits of modern technology or the moral implications of cloning
- Discussing a text or author both candidates know well
- Planning a special event – either at school or for a more personal joint function
- Facebook or Instagram? Apple or Microsoft? Modern Art or Traditional Art?
- Comparing the merits of two famous people where each candidate acts as a champion for one of the celebrities
- In-character discussions between two literary personalities focussing on a specific point(s) in the text

*Some examples of less successful **Task 2** activities include:*

- Should cannabis be legalised? (This has potential safeguarding issues)
- Interviews where one of the candidates acts solely as the interviewer (This is limiting for the candidate)
- Disagreements between neighbours
- Customer complaints regarding faulty service

A single topic imposed by the centre for the whole of its cohort in which no individual choice is allowed (Ownership of and commitment to the topic is not always evident)

Task 3

Task 3 may take the form of a group discussion debating an issue which is topical and or a role-play where each candidate plays the part of a character. Both can be successful as long as the assessment criteria for the group work are met. 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. To this end, it is advisable to create groups of similar ability levels so that weaker candidates are not disadvantaged and to consider the group dynamic so that each member has the opportunity to contribute to the best of their ability. A group should consist of no less than three members and it is advised that it does not exceed five candidates. A group consisting of three or four candidates is preferable for the logistical purpose of being able to assess each candidate's performance more accurately.

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

- A trial scene, possibly based on a literary text – e.g. George Milton, Arthur Birling
- A discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- Balloon debate – who to include/discard from a list of famous people where each candidate champions the cause of their chosen celebrity
- An interview panel discussing potential candidates for a job

General conclusions

Component 6 remains a successful vehicle for candidates to express their opinions, demonstrate their oral skills and genuinely engage with speaking and listening.

The standard of assessment by centres is accurate and easy to follow.

As in all examinations, candidates clearly benefit from clear instruction, careful planning and thoughtful practise.