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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCE Ordinary Level

<p>Paper 1123/01 Paper 1 - Composition</p>
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General comments

In the Composition component of the Syllabus, many candidates showed an ability to write thoughtful, confident and well-structured essays. There was some outstanding work at the top of the range, and it was evident that Teachers and candidates had prepared carefully for the examination. The interesting, amusing and thought-provoking responses testified to the hard work of the candidates and their enthusiastic desire to show their linguistic skills to advantage.

However, many of the weakest candidates in some areas had clearly not yet reached the level of competence in English demanded by the 'O' Level standard, and they were unable to cope with this Paper. Some developed their **Part 1** essays at too great a length and found that they had insufficient time to deal adequately with the Directed Writing task of **Part 2**. Long answers often deteriorated in accuracy and lost focus on the topic, whilst very short answers, of which there were many in **Part 2**, will incur a penalty and may also fail to include the required content points. Candidates are advised to note and abide by the advice given in the rubrics on how much time should be spent and the number of words expected in each part of the Paper.

Audience awareness appeared to be an evident and welcome feature of the scripts. Many essays were written with the clear and deliberate intention of arousing the reader's interest and some candidates had obviously planned their work carefully to address the chosen topic.

In many **Part 1** compositions, there were still examples of prepared introductory paragraphs describing scenery or weather conditions, or the inclusion of passages from practice essays written on topics from past Papers whilst preparing for this examination. Candidates must realise, however, that such devices become obvious and intrusive when the standard of linguistic accuracy in such passages differs noticeably from that of the rest of the essay or from that shown in the directed writing exercise of **Part 2**.

The more able candidates had imaginative tales and perceptive comment to offer with considerable freshness of approach and originality of expression. The increasing universality of the English language was reflected in the elimination of some archaisms and some typical errors of preposition and idiom seen in the past. Candidates often enlivened their essays for dramatic effect, where appropriate, with short passages of direct speech, helpfully paragraphed, if not always correctly punctuated.

Weaker candidates and those of average ability showed genuine engagement with the topics, even where there were difficulties with tense sequence and consistency, verb formation and flaws in idiom, leading to imprecise or clumsy expression. Meaning was rarely in doubt. However, limited or inaccurate use of complex structures, errors of agreement and failure to separate sentences correctly or to venture beyond a mundane level of vocabulary were features that marred some essays in this range.

In the weakest scripts, passages of multiple error, chaotic syntax and unstructured sentences blurred or even obscured meaning entirely and communication broke down. Such candidates had only a very generalised idea of the language but they wrote a great deal, with much repetition. The language used was often phonetic suggesting a better aural knowledge: 'first a fall' (first of all); 'snowkilling boads' (snorkelling boats). The sounds of the letters 'd' and 't' were frequently confused: 'accidend'; 'we have spend the money...'. In extreme cases the words of the question were repeated, in random order, again and again, making little or no sense to the reader.

Some candidates were unwise in their choice of topic, selecting subjects where they proved to have insufficient material and therefore resorted to repetition or claimed a word-count that was patently not fulfilled in the script. Others were over-ambitious and struggled to express complex and lively ideas beyond their linguistic ability, in 'learned', but inappropriately used, vocabulary. Some over-long, rambling essays took so much time to write that candidates had no time left to check for error.

Nevertheless, the essay topics of **Part 1** provided the opportunity for candidates to write from personal experience or conviction and most seized the chance eagerly and wrote lively and original essays, varying the tone and register effectively according to the subject matter. Although the more abstract topics of **Questions 4 and 5** attracted fewer candidates and presented greater difficulty to all but the best, no topic was conspicuously avoided this year.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1

Question 1

Describe the sights and sounds as students gather on the first morning of a new school term.

Candidates write well when they draw on their own experiences and this was reflected in responses to this topic, which proved popular across the ability range. It also appealed to mature candidates, giving mothers an opportunity to write about what they saw and heard on taking their children to school for the first time. There were some telling descriptions of the apprehension of new pupils, daunted by the sheer scale of their surroundings, and the sophistication and predictable disillusionment of the final year students who had done it all before.

Typically, essays began as the student woke to the sound of the alarm clock and to witness the sunrise. However, the interest of the account came from the vivid evocation of the mood of pupils as they re-grouped after the holidays. There was realistic focus on new sights and sounds provided by holiday gossip, renovated buildings, new hairstyles and shoes, culminating in the Principal's speech, organised 'with military precision'. The better candidates were able to offer the impressionistic word picture of the first day of term which the question sought, some even drawing attention to the characteristic smells of a new term: 'The dust smell in the class makes my sensitive(sic) nose itch.' The balanced focus on both sights and sounds was pleasing. In many instances, candidates wanted to include dialogue but, in some Centres, lack of understanding of correct paragraphing and punctuation and frequent blurring of the distinction between direct and indirect speech led to considerable confusion.

Sadly, confusion of tense often detracted from the impact of these accounts. Candidates found it difficult to be consistent and to sustain the immediacy afforded by the present tense. Many lapsed intermittently into the past or future or even used the inappropriate modal 'would': 'As students gather on the first day of a new term, some will greet their friends while others would stand outside the gate and looked around.' Very few described the day entirely in the past tense. Weaker candidates adopted a narrative treatment, some spending too long on their introductions describing their activities before arriving at school or even reporting to excess what they and their friends had done during the previous holidays. This was also a topic that attracted the 'prepared' opening paragraph involving 'blood red sunrises', 'chirping birds' and other familiar clichés. These openings were stilted and unconvincing but the writing began to flow and have greater impact as the narrators focused on the scenes at their schools, of which they wrote with genuine appreciation and affection.

Question 2

'Mother knows best'. What sort of problems do you discuss with your mother? Do you always take her advice?

This was the most popular question in some areas and attracted responses across the ability range. Examiners were impressed by the honesty and sensitivity of the candidates and by the careful balance found in most essays in dealing with both parts of the question. Problems raised with mothers were typically related to boy/girl relationships, school work, teachers, friends and the emotional and physical changes of adolescence. As well as admiration for their mother's qualities: wise, supportive, experienced, selfless, there were also some mature reflections on their mother's flaws: judgemental, patronising, nagging and bossy. Most recognised the problems of the generation gap and while they were comfortable discussing the usual range of teenage problems, a number referred to their reluctance to seek advice on puberty and girl/boy relationships, knowing the latter would be discouraged. Most were happy to admit that there were occasions when mother had, indeed, known best. Some responses relied on two or three anecdotes to illustrate their views or introduced cautionary tales to show the consequences when Mother's advice was not followed. Others wrote of situations where mothers had come to the rescue with perceptive, intuitive advice. Strong family ties, mutual respect, filial loyalty and a deference to adult opinion were much in evidence.

Weaker candidates ignored the question and wrote loving pen-portraits of their mothers. Others wrote narratives of their lives with their mothers from birth to the present day. In all responses, respect for the subject shone through, even in the weakest scripts.

Tenses proved less of a problem in this topic as candidates could rely on the present tense throughout but vocabulary tended to be repetitive, with key words like 'problem', 'discuss' and 'advice', 'advise' or, frequently, 'advices' being obtrusively over-used.

Question 3

(a) *Write a story about what happened when a family moved to a new home and found that the keys provided did not unlock the front door.*

As always, the narrative choices proved to be the most popular on the Paper, although, as already noted, much less exclusively so than in previous years. The form of the question here helped candidates to structure their narratives. Generally, they had thought about their conclusions before beginning to write and this gave the stories purpose and shape. Balance was sometimes lacking, with too much stress and space allocated to packing before the move at the expense of focus on the problem of unlocking the door.

There were some lively first person accounts, most of which reflected the eager anticipation of a move to more spacious accommodation, usually as the result of a pay rise, promotion or a lottery win and disappointment at the delay. Candidates made good use of genuine mistakes, con-men, unscrupulous vendors, estate agents or contractors, or attempting to enter the wrong house to explain the problem. Solutions were found in locksmiths, helpful neighbours, alternative entrances, breaking in or camping outside the door overnight. The best answers had pace, tension and humour. Less successful were those who spent too long describing the day of removal or digressed into adventures in the surrounding area. A few narratives took the reader into the realm of ghosts, murders and drug-trafficking but most were realistic accounts of a family move when a silly mistake was made. There was confusion in some areas over the concept of unlocking the door to enter a house: 'unlock' was confused with 'lock'. Some candidates wrote of attempting to lock the door after moving in but failing to do so properly so that burglars were able to get in - or the family could not get out again.

Most candidates used the narrative past tense without too much difficulty but selecting appropriate vocabulary posed some problems. Few knew the terms 'furniture removal' or 'removal firm'. Candidates wrote about the 'house moving lorry', 'moving house specialist', 'transporter' or simply 'mover'. Many wrote vaguely about 'shifting' their 'stuff', 'things', 'luggages', 'furnitures' or 'properties'. There was confusion over a set of keys or a single key: 'I reached for the keys and inserted it into the knob'. The term 'keyhole' was rarely seen. Some weaker candidates got side-tracked and found it difficult to work the key incident into the story at all. Many wrote at length and would have done better to have written shorter stories with greater care and accuracy.

- (b) *Write a story about what happened when an accident in a restaurant led to a very embarrassing situation.*

This was the most popular question in some regions. There were many well-controlled and vivid descriptions of calamitous scenes in restaurants. Some highly entertaining responses were handled with well-judged timing and offered sharp pen-portraits of customers and restaurant staff. The embarrassment was convincing in fact and feelings and in later rueful reflection on a disastrous night out. Almost invariably, the accident involved collision with a waiter; spillage of food or drink; stained, torn or split clothing; forgotten or empty wallets or going into the Ladies' or Gentlemen's cloakroom in error. There was much consequent sniggering and uncharitable finger-pointing at the loss of face suffered by the victim.

It was obvious that the candidates enjoyed writing about this slapstick humour and their complete involvement in the task may account for the very frequent mis-spelling of 'restaurant' and 'embarrassment', despite both words being clearly given on the Question Paper! Other errors found in these stories were those of idiom and preposition: 'sit on the table'; 'take a sit'; 'knock onto a waiter'; 'wash up my face'. Examiners also found some accounts involving immature lavatorial or sexual humour both tasteless and gratuitously offensive, although in general such occurrences are more likely to be misjudgements on the part of the candidates rather than any intention to offend.

Both narratives gave candidates the opportunity to enliven their work and increase characterisation and dramatic tension with the introduction of direct speech. Examiners noted a pleasing improvement in the aptness of expression, punctuation and paragraphing of such conversations.

Some candidates did not understand the word 'embarrassment' but seized upon the word 'accident' in the question and wrote about fires, cars crashing into shops or even attacks by armed criminals. Others did not know the meaning of 'restaurant' but dutifully copied the word from the Question Paper whilst describing accidents in market places, shops, villages or even on the beach. Candidates should always try to write from their own experience in settings with which they are familiar.

Question 4

Which aspects of your education do you think will be most useful to you in adult life?

This topic was seen as the most difficult on the Paper and was the least popular choice but it did elicit some cogent, carefully planned and thoughtful responses, which considered education in the broadest sense and wrote of the importance of moral and social education, rather than academic subjects on the school curriculum. Rhetorical devices made for persuasive arguments and precise and varied vocabulary was used effectively.

Weaker candidates chose a much narrower field, basing their answers firmly on the school curriculum, particularly the advantages of IT and Vocational training. Some simply gave a history of their own education to date. These answers tended to be repetitive in both content and expression, especially in frequent copying of the wording of the question.

Discursive writing, coping with abstractions and ideas, always presents difficulties of organisation and expression. Many candidates wrote of the value of an education in general, rather than of particular aspects. The word 'aspects' created problems in itself: some took it to mean specific subject areas, some to suggest periods of development such as childhood or kindergarten, whilst others took the expression to mean particular qualifications. Whilst all these interpretations were acceptable, the best essays were philosophical in approach and showed some maturity and linguistic competence.

Question 5

'Animals and birds should never be kept in cages.' What is your opinion?

This topic was not particularly popular but those who chose it often held passionate views that they were eager to express, producing some thoughtful and well-structured essays. It was generally felt necessary to cage animals or birds for reasons of public safety, research or conservation but the practice was deemed selfish when they were caged for human pleasure or entertainment as domestic pets, circus performers or in zoos.

Some candidates presented well-balanced arguments on both sides. Support for the idea that keeping animals and birds in cages was unnatural was found in simple comparison with Man: 'Could you imagine yourself staying in a cage.... until the day you die?' 'They are like prisoners of war.' On the other hand, if not caged, dangerous animals and pets might cause harm to human beings or the environment. There were some emotive, sentimental and very repetitive responses and some verging on the ridiculous, with the city full of animals released from the zoos. The best answers were firmly based on evolutionary or environmental issues, with the concepts of animals' rights to freedom, and human responsibility, discussed in some detail. In weaker candidates, poor control of structure and syntax led to major problems in sustaining an argument and to the obtrusive repetition of ideas and phrases, as candidates realised that they had run out of material on the topic.

Part 2

Although most candidates seemed to understand the scenario and format of the Directed Writing task and responded with enthusiasm, some were not familiar with the idea of a school club or a social club providing sport and leisure activities. Some wrote about football clubs and found it difficult to incorporate 'leisure facilities'; others wrote of more cultural clubs for dance or music and found it difficult to fit in the sport. The content points were used to structure the letters, with a separate paragraph devoted to each aspect.

Not all candidates seemed to grasp the purpose of the letter. Some asked the businessman for advice on spending the money or thought he was investing in a business venture, seeing the club as a shop which sold sports equipment. Most candidates adopted the appropriate polite but 'friendly' tone mentioned in the rubric, although some struggled to cope with the conventions of the letter format. The expected salutation in such a letter would include the business man's name, with a complimentary close of 'Yours sincerely', though some began over-familiarly: 'Hi Sammy', while others used the very formal business letter greeting: 'Dear Sir', with appropriate close. 'Dear Sir/Madam', carelessly adopted by a few candidates, was clearly unsuitable in the context, as were 'Yours friendly'; 'Yours thoroughly' or 'Yours lovely'. In some areas, the 'friendly' tone was too casual and inappropriately colloquial.

The expression of thanks was sometimes over-lavish and repetitious: '... heartfelt gratitude..'; '...very glad and thankful...'; '...thank you with gratitude and appreciation..'. Occasionally an inappropriately formulaic phrase was found: 'I hereby would like to thank you...'; 'Herewith, on behalf of my esteemed colleagues, I express greetings and thanks...'.

Suggested improvements to the leisure facilities varied from golf courses, swimming pools, saunas, 'jims' and massage rooms to library, arcade, movie and computer facilities. 'Air conditioners' or 'air conditionings' were frequently introduced. Sports equipment included a fascinating range of exercise machines: 'chest expanders'; 'threadmills(sic)'; 'push up and chin up machines', together with the more usual footballs, netballs, tennis rackets and hokey(sic) sticks. The word 'equipment' itself led to many problems, often being referred to in the plural (as with 'furniture' and 'luggage' in **Question 3 (a)**), with consequent agreement difficulties. Phrases such as 'pieces of equipment' or 'items of equipment' were seldom in evidence. A few candidates failed to realise that 'facilities' and 'equipment' referred to two different things. They did not give specific details, or thought merely copying the phrases from the Question Paper was sufficient to gain the content points, which was not the case. 'Leisure facilities' was a phrase frequently mis-understood and some candidates simply omitted it from their letters completely.

Tense and verb forms also caused confusion for some candidates, particularly the intrusive use of the conditional 'would' for 'will': 'We would invite you to the club on Saturday', and the misuse of the pluperfect when explaining improvements that were meant to have taken place 'recently' according to the rubric: 'We had used the money to encourage our members to stay fit.' or 'We have brought(sic) ten footballs and we had improvised(sic) our pitch.'

Generally the money was spent in an effort to increase membership. Invitations to visit the club were suitably warm and friendly though not always linked to the specific purpose: 'to see the facilities in use.'

Final comments

Teachers preparing candidates for future examinations will have noted various linguistic weaknesses mentioned in considering the individual questions in this report and will, no doubt, advise their pupils accordingly.

Problems with sequence, inconsistency of tense, incorrect verb forms, the increasing use of 'would' for 'will' and failure to separate sentences correctly with appropriate punctuation, all noted in last year's report, have again emerged as areas of particular difficulty. This year's Paper has also highlighted the problems of singular and plural form and agreement associated with some irregular, abstract and collective nouns:- hair, trousers, jeans, pants, clothing, advice, furniture, luggage, property, laughter, equipment.

It was disappointing to find text-messaging symbols, particularly 'u', still in use despite last year's warning. Some candidates are still too eager to use an informal tone and colloquial contractions: isn't; can't; I've; don't.. etc. Whilst acceptable in direct speech, this practice is not appropriate in presenting a formal descriptive, discursive or narrative essay in **Part 1** of this examination.

Teachers should emphasise the importance of candidates choosing topics that allow them to write from personal experience, in familiar settings, wherever possible.

Candidates should also be advised again that it is unwise to attempt to include rehearsed or partially memorised passages or to try to adapt essays written to past titles to suit those of the present Paper. Such practices are contrary to the purpose of the examination and are almost invariably obvious to the Examiners.

Candidates who are clearly not yet ready for the rigours of 'O' Level might be advised to try an examination at a lower level or to delay their entry to allow for more practice and increased fluency in the language.

Candidates should also be warned against the use of correcting fluid, which often leads to an illegible mess on the script or to words omitted when candidates forget or have insufficient time to insert their corrections.

Finally, many Examiners have mentioned how much they appreciate the clear handwriting, neat presentation and improved skills in spelling, paragraphing and punctuation that make the tasks of script-reading and assessment so much more enjoyable.

Paper 1123/02

Paper 2 - Comprehension

General comments

Some candidates encountered difficulty in handling the opening questions of the Paper, namely **Questions 1 to 3**, mainly because they misjudged the basic tests of language understanding or simple deduction they contained. Those who kept a closer eye on the lead of the rubric usually avoided the errors seen in the weaker answers.

Care in weighing up considering a questions wording and in setting it against the relevant area of text was examined further in the questions that followed. It was especially important to check that the text chosen to support answers was indeed in line with the direction of the question. Less observant candidates appeared to read many of these questions too quickly and often went off into the wrong area of the passage; a little more thought would have allowed a number of them to see that what they had copied out from the passage did not relate to the direction of the question.

In answering the vocabulary test of **Question 9**, the majority of candidates tried to relate words to their use in text and did not rely on half-remembered dictionary equivalents or guesswork. Some of the weaker candidates, although unable to catch the precision of a number of the words they chose, nevertheless offered answers which showed a partial understanding of their use in the text. The better responses demonstrated a secure grasp of meanings, often resulting in a good tally of marks.

Candidates who had experienced difficulty in the earlier sequence of questions tended to struggle in handling the test of summary in **Question 10**, and much for the same reason. The inability to align the lead given by the rubric with the relevant sections of the text led a number of these weaker candidates into generalisations loosely based on the text or the transcription of irrelevant detail. However, those who aligned the question rubric with the text in a more patient fashion often sustained a healthy run of points, and made a recognisable effort to use their own wording. The best candidates frequently presented a full and accurate selection of the relevant material, re-casting much of it in their own words, in a fluent and convincing style.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) This part was set as a linguistic test which proved within range of a fair proportion of candidates who had sufficient linguistic skills, with many offering apt expressions such as 'by chance' or 'accidentally'. However, a number failed to score because they had not seen the nature of the test and referred simply to the discovery of animal remains. Others made an attempt at a linguistic equivalent but missed the full import of 'stumbled across' and offered expressions such as 'they were not looking for them' or 'unknowingly found them'. Some strayed outside the paragraph reference for the question and brought in 'luck' from paragraph 3; this did not reflect the true meaning of 'stumbled across' within the context of paragraph 1.
- (b) This part was a test of deduction. Most candidates were able to reach the correct answer, centring on 'food', from the consideration of lines 5-8. Those who did not examine paragraph 1 patiently enough missed the relevance of these lines and extemporised with ideas about using stones as tools or that our ancestors had killed animals to save themselves from danger.

Question 2

The first purely factual test in this question. Not only had candidates to make an accurate selection of relevant detail, but they also had to express the identified material concisely. The majority of answers scored one mark for reference to animals eating the remains, but not nearly so many went on to include the second detail, the 'crushing' of the bones. Also there was a noticeable number of candidates who exceeded the prescribed 10 word limit, and though they might have scored the first mark for the idea of animals eating the remains, excessive use of the text stopped them from being credited for whatever else they wrote.

Question 3

- (a) This part continued the factual testing. The majority of candidates picked up the sun and the wind as the agents of the 'two ways' of discovery asked for in the question wording, with the wind sweeping the soil away and the sun making fossils gleam in the ground; they had accurately identified and copied out the appropriate areas of the text in lines 24-25 and 25-27. Even so, some candidates wrote too tersely that 'the sun and the wind helped find the fossils' and did not say *how* they helped. So, too, copiers who were not observant enough simply referred to the 'sun shining down'; the clinching idea of the sun shining on the bone or fossil, or making them gleam, was omitted.
- (b) Accurate answers to this part showed that candidates had properly noted the question wording 'what else helps...' and so picked out 'luck' from line 29. Others wrote along the lines of a fossil hunter seeing a 'fragment gleaming in the ground'; they had gone quickly to lines 28-29, and missed the conclusion to be drawn from the final sentence of the paragraph, i.e. the essential element of 'luck'.

Question 4

This question set another test of factual appraisal, though this time in sterner fashion. Candidates had to note the question wording 'undergo a great change' and then find the reference to that 'change' inside a fairly long paragraph. To their credit a good number correctly saw that lines 33 onwards marked this 'change'. After that they had to isolate 'two effects' on 'the creatures at that time'. This meant concentrating on lines 37-38, which named a diminishing of food, and then on lines 39-40, with their reference to the need to keep moving to find food.

Many candidates were unable to keep the question details of 'change' and 'effects' in front of them as they searched the paragraph. They often saw what the 'change' was initially, i.e. the dying off of the forests but then could not get any further into the 'effects' here, namely the dwindling supply of food. Some wasted words with a long preamble but eventually reached this relevant point and so gained credit for it, though frequently they rounded off their answers with material about our ancestors struggling to survive. They had not kept in mind the overall context of 'creatures' set up by the question wording which embraced all creatures, not just 'ancestors'.

In order to score for the second effect, answers had to reproduce the constant movement of creatures to find food. More bland expression appeared such as 'they looked for food' or 'they learnt to search for food'; this failed to reproduce the true force of the text.

Clearly, the bulk of lines 37-40 could be copied wholesale and earn both marks efficiently. Even so, it required a sound measure of skill to note that these lines supplied the essential answer, and to avoid the irrelevance about diminishing forests or the narrow reference to our ancestors' fight for survival.

Question 5

- (a) In handling this part, it was important once again to read the question wording with due care: 'Explain... the contrast the author is making ...' formed the heart of the question rubric, i.e. to look at the text and to see the wording there which makes the contrast between 'our ancestors and such people'. The first limb of the contrast comes in line 45 where 'stake a claim in empty territory' refers to 'such people'. Lines 45-47 refer to 'our ancestors', and their 'competing for a place in an environment already significantly populated with other animals'. Candidates were directed to use their own words, with reward being assigned to a suitable recast of the key expressions 'stake a claim' and 'empty' and then of 'compete' and 'significantly populated'.

Candidates often failed to follow the precise lead of the question wording, i.e. 'the contrast the author is making', and instead wrote in general terms about behaviour of modern human beings as compared to that of our ancestors, concentrating on the aggression of modern-day people compared to the simple aims of our ancestors. Others who had tried to keep close to the direction of the question wording, 'the contrast the author is making', overlooked the need to use own words. However sound the appreciation of the text evidence in these answers, reward had to be withheld since the rubric had not been obeyed. More careful candidates offered their own expression, though usually it was centred on our ancestors' rivalry with animals; the behaviour of 'such people' was often unattempted. Those who managed to reproduce the contrast, even in a limited measure, and had composed it in their own words, had done well in tackling a question that tested skills of question evaluation and text appreciation.

- (b) The wording of this part of the question, 'experience had given other animals a clear advantage', related to line 47, where the answer lay: 'experts by now in exploiting the food resources of the open plains'. Candidates who duly correlated 'had given' in the question wording with the text 'by now' saw the relevance of the line and were given full reward for a simple transcription. Many read the question too quickly, it appears, for they produced details about animals snapping at the feet of our ancestors or stealing their food. This was not an 'advantage' animals had already acquired. Others misaligned the reference of 'advantage' and related it to the animals, with the physical superiority they had or their superiority in numbers.
- (c) This part took candidates to lines 50-51 of the passage and the reason why our ancestors had to 'stay out of the reach' of big animals. The essential details sit in the wording 'it was physically impossible to master them'. Here candidates had to draw the inference from 'physically impossible' in terms of our ancestors' weakness or lack of strength. Many concentrated instead on the animals and wrote about their size, ferocity or aggression and so missed part of the real reason, that of our ancestors' inherent weakness. Reward was always given for correct equivalents for 'master', e.g. 'our ancestors could not defeat them' or 'they were unable to compete with them'. Fully accurate responses such as 'our ancestors would not have been able to defeat the animals since they lacked the strength' demonstrated an effective inference from 'physically impossible' and its correlation with 'ancestors'.

Question 6

This was a test of factual understanding where candidates needed to read the question wording patiently in 'what made these scientists think that they possessed these powers'. The text at lines 65-69 supplied the answer; the stones found at Olduvai and their use as tools were 'evidence' of 'invention'. Candidates who aligned 'invention' from the question wording with the text 'evidence...of invention' correctly isolated the use of stones as tools. Those who went speedily to the text failed to make this correlation and referred only to the use of sticks, overlooking that this idea was basically guesswork on the part of scientists. Others missed the important element of 'stone' and stated simply that our ancestors' used tools; this did not specify the essential element of 'invention', neither did the bald copying of our ancestors' lack of specialised claws and teeth from lines 63-64. Examiners were left to draw the conclusion in such answers, but that is never their practice.

Question 7

This question required that candidates study the details of the differing behaviour of animals and our ancestors from lines 74-81 and then sum up the contrast of this behaviour, to be expressed in their own words. The rubric warned against a mere transcription or reproduction of descriptive details, but even so a number of answers amounted to nothing more than a description of the differing activities of animals and our ancestors. No reward could be given for these over-descriptive answers. A fair number of candidates who followed the rubric more carefully made the leap from the mere description of animals' behaviour to an effective summary along the lines of 'the animals were resting', 'the animals seem relaxed' 'the animals appeared lazy'. The summary of our ancestors' behaviour proved more demanding; candidates had to see that lines 78-79 offered the contrast in the way our ancestors darted quickly among the trees in their constant search for food. Thus credit was readily given to interpretations which read 'our ancestors were very active' 'they were very hard-working' 'they were always busy'. Some candidates fashioned a summary but went off-line in referring to the characteristics of animals or ancestors; they had clearly missed the key word 'behaviour' in the question wording.

Question 8

In answering this question it was again necessary to consider the question wording and see how it related to the text before attempting an answer. Frequently candidates picked up 'enabled to become superior' in the question and then aligned it with 'gave them the edge over... rivals' in lines 88-89, which led them to 'communicating knowledge', from lines 87-88. They then selected 'communicating' but left the word more or less in the text format, e.g. 'they were able to communicate'. Since the prescript of the rubric about the use of own words had been overlooked, no credit could be given. In contrast, there were some effective re-casts of the word, e.g. 'they passed on' 'they shared', even if the candidates faltered in attempting 'knowledge'. The best renderings managed a succinct combination, along the lines of 'they shared information' or 'they exchanged information'. Answers which entirely missed the essence of 'communicating knowledge' revealed that candidates had not examined the question wording and its textual link with due care. They either went to details later in the paragraph about our ancestors being able to find secret scraps of food or ignored the paragraph reference for the question and went back to paragraph 8 in writing about the advantage our ancestors gained over animals by studying their habits.

Question 9

In answering this question, the test of vocabulary understanding, candidates in general made worthy attempts to set the words they chose against their particular use in text. Thus some effective equivalents were seen for 'attracted' 'rivals' 'in abundance' and 'trace'. Accurate answers here earned a good tally of marks for many candidates. The very best of them scored full reward, showing a discerning understanding of text usage, especially in the case of 'secret' and 'promised', with equivalents such as 'hidden' and 'indicated'. Others who did not have the same assured technique did not examine the text use carefully enough; they offered a different note for 'secret', e.g. that of not telling anybody about the food, or that it was private, acceptable meanings in other contexts but not in the context of the passage. These candidates also missed the true import of 'promised' in recasting it as 'ensured' or 'made certain', whereas 'indicated' or 'pointed to' were the true equivalents. Nevertheless, they made up ground by their accuracy over words such as 'rivals', 'likely' 'in abundance' and 'attracted'. Only the very weakest candidates appeared to resort to some sort of guesswork, allied to a superficial assessment of text usage, typified by equivalents well wide of the required meaning such as 'similar' for 'likely' 'companions' or 'animals' as a re-cast of 'rivals' and 'revealing' for 'significant'.

Question 10

There was a noticeable difference of attainment in answers in this test of summary. Candidates who had clearly kept the three main headings of the rubric in mind usually managed to reproduce a sound array of relevant details, often running in a coherent sequence, and spanning most of the text set for summary. Thus they saw that lines 47-50 in paragraph 5 were relevant to the first rubric heading, the 'difficulties' faced by our ancestors', and summarised the particular threats posed by animals, and the need to avoid the large or aggressive ones in particular.

Paragraphs 6 and 7 continued the theme of the 'difficulties faced' and also related to the ways our ancestors overcame them, the second heading of the rubric. In the better scripts, points centring on these elements of the rubric were often well assembled, chiefly those relating to the scarcity of food in the dry season, the discovery that plants hid their juicier parts underground which provided healthy eating, and the inventive skill of our ancestors in using stones and sticks to extract them.

Paragraphs 8 and 9 provided the material relating to the third heading of the rubric, i.e. the skills our ancestors acquired in coping with their difficulties, but here the apposite details were more widely spread, with a good deal of descriptive writing in the text that was not immediately relevant to the third heading of the rubric. Those who had patiently aligned the rubric up to this point with appropriate sections of the text often sustained the same technique and earned a sound run of marks for the closing content of their summaries. They selected some of the points from paragraph 8 concerning the knowledge our ancestors developed about their habitat and the different ways in which our ancestors used the behaviour of animals to their advantage, closing their summaries with material from paragraph 9 about the ability of our ancestors to avoid dangers and ensure survival.

In contrast there were a number of answers which made a competent start in assembling some of the points from paragraph 5 about 'difficulties' but from then on the candidates seemed to lose their way. The writing based upon paragraph 6 became too general, with broad descriptions of food shortages, and the way our ancestors used tools to find other sources, but the precision required to substantiate the points was lacking. Writing such as 'they had to develop certain skills to fend for themselves in the dry season' shows a neat fluency of own words, but it lacks the depth of information required in the summary task. Some candidates managed to give flesh to their generalisations by describing how our ancestors discovered richer sources of food underground, and how they lacked claws or teeth to get at it, though often such details were somewhat sparsely set among a rather loosely set description of 'difficulties' and 'solutions'.

Some of the points in paragraph 8 relating to the 'skills' acquired by our ancestors were recognisable in these more generalised summaries though again they were somewhat thinly spread and not always cogently rendered. Candidates writing in a more generalised fashion usually reproduced the knowledge our ancestors acquired (from lines 70-72) but they frequently digressed into the differing behaviour of animals and our ancestors (lines 74-78). By then they had used too many words, with the result that other significant details in paragraph 8 could not be included, though some had just enough left to pick up something from paragraph 9 relating to our ancestors' ability to ensure survival.

Examiners noted that many candidates had tried to follow the rubric instruction about using own words as far as possible. The writing in the more substantial summaries was often fluent and well developed, in expressions such as 'our ancestors lived with animals that were physically superior and it was imperative to avoid them' or 'they cultivated the skill of tool-making, evidenced by the stones found at Olduvai'. The summaries which had less substance in them nevertheless demonstrated a conscious effort by candidates to use their own words, blending text wording with recognisable originality, e.g. 'the African plains suffered from different weather seasons which made food of low quality' or 'because our ancestors did not have claws or teeth they developed other means to get at underground food'. However, in trying hard to use their own words, candidates tended to lose sight of the precision necessary to render relevant points. In the example just quoted, the 'means' needed to be spelt out, and again in writing such as 'it was impossible to tame or live with the animals', the candidate did not specify why living with animals was 'impossible', i.e. because of their size and menacing behaviour. Candidates should always make the incorporation of relevant content their first aim and then try to set it in their own words, as far as possible. Examiners do not expect that candidates can produce originality all the while and will always give credit to summaries which blend originality with the text wording.

In judging the style of writing Examiners must take into account not only originality of wording but also the overall accuracy and range of syntax. A good many summaries were free from seriously ingrained errors, with most points recorded in a straightforward quality of English. Sentences were accurately constructed, with full stops properly used to set their boundaries. Indeed, a fair proportion of candidates were able to develop sentence structures along the lines of 'as a result of this adaptation, they developed the ability to invent stone tools which made it easier for them to find food' or 'our ancestors acquired the skill of knowledge with which they were able to study their habitat and also the habits of animals which they used for their benefit'.

Only the writing of the weakest candidates was beset by seriously ingrained error; the writing of many ran smoothly for the most part, with errors every now and again, but never frequent or serious enough to impede understanding. Omissions occurred such as 'when dry season came' or uncertainty over prepositions, such as 'they invented a tool in which they could dig for food'. Verb forms were usually accurate, though tense inconsistencies and malformation crept in, e.g. 'our ancestors lived with animals which try to steal their food' 'a hard road laid ahead'. To their credit, a significant number of candidates presented summaries for the most part set in a coherent and clean style. Indeed, their work on the Paper as a whole was neatly presented, with answers properly spaced out and in a clear hand.