

# CONTENTS

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<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>GCE Ordinary Level .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Papers 1115/01, 1123/01 and 1124/01 Composition .....	1
Papers 1115/02, 1123/02 and 1124/02 Comprehension.....	4

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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

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## GCE Ordinary Level

Papers 1115/01, 1123/01 and 1124/01

Composition

### General comments

The choice and range of questions allowed candidates to show their true ability in this component. It was pleasing to see that all the questions in **Part 1** found favour with a large number of candidates; also it was pleasing to see that **Part 2** produced very little difficulty for the vast majority of candidates. The performance overall was well up to the standard of that in previous years, if not better. There continues to be a shortage of scripts at the very highest level but also very poor scripts were comparatively rare. There were hardly any rubric offences and certainly there were very few scripts that were irrelevant. Candidates now seem in the main to be heeding the advice about wasteful, lengthy first drafts. Spelling was also considered to have improved.

Some linguistic problems persist and the same comment must be repeated from last year's report. Candidates can struggle with verb forms and tenses; there is increasingly the overuse of commas to separate sentences and the correct punctuation of speech still requires more thought than some candidates give it.

### Comments on specific questions

#### **Part One**

##### **Question 1**

*Describe a local market or a popular harbour at a very busy time.*

This was one of the less popular questions in a year when all the essays were done by many. Furthermore, the choice between a harbour and a market led to the majority choosing the market – indeed the harbour choice was not popular at all and surprisingly seemed outside the experience of most. All candidates who chose to describe a busy local market had actually had experience of visiting such a place and most of them tried to describe it in such a way that a reader could become familiar with what could be found there. Only a few had the linguistic skills and confidence to produce an impressionistic description and most adopted a more factual approach ('You will see men with handcarts. They are there to help people get their purchases home...' etc.) which stayed focused on the scene and fulfilled the requirements of the task. Many had attended the market on sufferance but this did not stop them describing the place well enough. Many candidates did dilute their efforts slightly by talking more about the layout of the market rather than giving a picture of the busy side of it. Inconsistent tenses could be a problem in this question as some weaker candidates struggled to combine a narrative approach to the topic with a more reflective one.

##### **Question 2**

*Write about two occasions when you had great fun as a young child.*

This was a particularly popular choice as it was another topic which allowed candidates to write from their own experience and it produced good responses from many of those who chose it. Most of the 'fun' times consisted of surprise birthday parties and religious celebrations; the memories came across as convincing and enjoyable to read. Most candidates concentrated on describing the *occasions* (which is what the question asked for) whereas those who produced the most interesting responses made some attempt to write also about the *people* who were involved in those occasions and helped to make them great fun. Being firmly a past tense narrative, most candidates had very little problem in structuring this answer; this was helped by the need to write about two occasions which everyone did and so it was difficult to run out of ideas. This suited candidates of all abilities and colourful, enjoyable, well-balanced answers resulted. There were occasionally some poignant reflections on the security of childhood compared to more adult times which gave depth to responses. Very occasionally the question was misunderstood so that a story about behaving as a child resulted. Linguistically, a large number of candidates were guilty of repeating 'I remembered' instead of using the present tense to introduce the incident.

**Question 3**

*Write a story which includes the words: 'I realised he was only human when...'*

This was a fairly popular choice but quite a few of those who attempted it seemed to find considerable difficulty in coming to terms with the requirements of the question. Whilst there were clearly some very good answers, a number seemed uncomfortable with the concept in the quoted words and did little more than produce an all purpose story that managed to tack on the quoted words at some point so that it was relevant. There was a wide interpretation of what was meant by 'only human' with many candidates seeing it as little more than someone of a particularly unpleasant nature being moved to tears by an unfortunate experience (although with the right linguistic skills these could be quite moving); very few really understood the metaphorical implications of the phrase. Indeed, there were a number of candidates who took the question much too literally and had 'ghosts' or 'visitors from outer space' suddenly being recognised as acquaintances. There were some amusing essays from those who described their fears as they saw some 'terrifying monster' (usually as they were walking past a graveyard at midnight) which eventually turned out to be someone in fancy dress.

**Question 4**

*Do you consider sport an important part of life?*

This was probably the most popular topic which was surprising as it was discursive. There were instances of very good writing indeed where powerful arguments were presented, one notable one which argued passionately that sport certainly was not necessary under any circumstances. Unfortunately, the vast majority of candidates who attempted this task ran out of ideas and arguments after their first two paragraphs; consequently, they tended either to repeat themselves, by continually emphasising that sport benefits us both physically and mentally, especially if we have conditions like obesity and diabetes, or simply list again and again the names of their favourite sports ('foot ball' 'volley ball' etc.) or of their favourite sportsmen – rarely sportswomen. There was also quite a common confusion between sport and exercise and it was felt that a lot of candidates relied heavily on Biology or Physical Education notes for their material whereas an expression of genuine personal opinion would have been stronger. Most candidates would have benefited from taking each of the benefits of sport mentioned in their opening paragraphs and then elaborating on each of them in a separate paragraph but few seemed to adopt this approach. The best responses came from those who eschewed the philosophical generalisations and wrote about why sport was important to them and which sports they particularly enjoyed and why.

This topic also led to some considerable problems with linguistic expression; not only was there the very common 'sport is/sport are' construction but candidates frequently referred to 'people' in the plural only to follow it up with a reference to their single 'life'. Also, attempting to develop arguments through key, learned vocabulary ('furthermore', 'thus', 'moreover') often resulted in the arbitrary use of that vocabulary.

**Question 5**

*Write about a time when a friend defended you in difficult circumstances.*

This was another popular question and almost always well done. Female candidates were often rescued from allegations of theft or immorality by a sterling friend who confronted the accusers with compelling logic. Boys tended to be rescued from physical danger, often by another boy who had previously been regarded as introverted and weak until the moment of truth arrived. These responses were enjoyable to read partly because of the credible storylines as well as the twists and often they showed the beginnings of effective character construction and delineation. In the better scripts, direct speech was used very effectively. Occasionally there was evidence that some candidates misinterpreted the expression 'difficult circumstances'; rather unexpectedly, some candidates wrote about an occasion when someone lied to cover up for someone who was obviously guilty of some misdemeanour or even crime.

## **Part 2**

In **Part 2**, candidates were asked to imagine they had been chosen to represent the school in a general knowledge competition and they had to solicit the help of a friend who would join the team. The majority of candidates responded extremely well to this task and were able to gain all five content points very easily; in fact, gaining the five content points was the norm this year as the scenario seemed to be within the experience of every area of the world. The results were generally very good pieces of writing with appropriate register and a strong sense of audience – they were organised, informative, courteous and persuasive as one would expect such a letter to be. The locations mentioned, the specific reasons for wanting the particular friend to help, and the competition prizes were many and various and contributed greatly to the interest of the responses.

A perfect answer had:

- a genuine request to a friend, not an order, nor something half-hearted
- clear details about when *and* where the event was to take place
- a definite reason beyond friendship for wishing the friend's participation
- realistic preparations, for both people, given the timescale
- which prizes would be the reward.

Where candidates failed to gain the content points they were usually guilty of simply omitting the point or misreading the question or the scenario; there was some evidence of too hasty a response by some. When the request was made, some candidates were a little too forceful and gave the recipient little or no choice to decline. A request could quite easily be strongly implied by expressions such as "...and I thought you would be a perfect choice." However, it was difficult to award the point if it was clearly only the teacher's choice or the friend was the only choice available. Nor was it enough to say someone was chosen merely because they were the 'best' friend; this was only repeating the question. Preparations usually involved using a library or the Internet and this point was done very well, even if some were very ambitious about what could be revised in the time. Particularly good were answers that were specific about gaps in knowledge that the friend could fill and therefore prepare individually to complement other team members. Prizes ranged from rather modest library credits or free passes to incredible sums of money and international travel – very often it seemed a wish list. Balance is a vital ingredient in this **Part 2** question. It is impossible to give equal time to each aspect of the question and this was done well this year. Additional detail is always welcome if time allows and previous competitions won by the friend provided excellent evidence for the request. Where this question went very wrong for a very small but significant minority was when candidates ignored the need for the competition to be about general knowledge. A request to be in a sports team was usually the mistaken scenario and preparations such as jogging became totally inappropriate, as were the reasons for wanting the friend in the team.

As far as the linguistic mark was concerned this was very much tied to the linguistic mark given in **Part 1**. However, those who were able to enthuse over the prospect of the competition and could make the friend seem really wanted scored highly if their linguistic ability allowed. On the whole, letters were set out correctly although there was too much use of the formal 'Yours faithfully'. The very common mis-spelling of 'prices' for 'prizes' was also a feature. Furthermore, some candidates who had paragraphed **Part 1** well seemed to lose the skill in **Part 2**, perhaps because of the relative shortness of the piece, and leave the letter as one paragraph – it is always worth candidates remembering that the bullet points can help to indicate paragraphs if they are in any doubt.

**Guidance for teachers preparing candidates for future examinations**

Much of the advice for improved performance would be the same as that given in previous years and therefore attention to previous reports is recommended. It was rewarding this year to see less obvious rehearsed material although there is still a distinct trend towards starting essays with reports of waking up, getting out of bed to the sound of alarms clocks and/or birdsong (with sunlight filtering through curtains) and then having breakfast, all of which often does little more than delay the real writing. Also, it can not be stressed too strongly that discursive essays are only for those with the linguistic skills necessary for such an undertaking. Candidates embarking on such a piece of writing would be very well advised to draw up a short, quick plan to ensure they had sufficient ideas to meet the required essay length without reverting to mere repetition or endless lists. The **Part 2** exercise this year proved the need to try and put yourself very much in the place of the writer and imagine exactly what details the recipient would need to know – the date of the competition would be absolutely necessary for the friend to know if they would be available whereas ‘early next term’ would necessitate a return letter to clear up the issue. It may be a directed writing task but the invitation to add extra, creative (but relevant) detail always exists.

Texting language continues to be an issue with a minority of candidates and there is an overuse of the word ‘gonna’ in a significant number of cases. Similarly, ‘pen off’ is considered more than awkward by Examiners as a means of signing off in the letter.

On a practical note, candidates could be reminded that double spacing of work is still considered distracting by Examiners, as much as very small writing in pale blue ink. This is also true of rough drafts not crossed through and the use of correcting fluid.

**Final comment**

As always, the marking of this component was a pleasure because of the many insights it allowed and Examiners overwhelmingly commend the achievement of the candidates who took the examination.

**Papers 1115/02, 1123/02 and 1124/02**

**Comprehension**

**General comments**

The topic of the passage seemed to be accessible to most candidates and to engage their interest, and the narrative nature of the text was intended to offer a contrast to the discursive nature of recent passages set in this examination.

The performance of candidates showed that, in general, they had been well prepared by their teachers and understood the nature of the examination. Candidates seemed to be familiar with the layout of the paper and, in the main, the types of questions likely to be asked. Almost without exception, candidates completed the paper, although not all managed to offer both a rough draft and a fair copy of their response to the summary question. The paper followed the usual pattern. Twenty-five marks were allocated to the testing of literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, vocabulary, use of own words and appreciation of writer’s craft. A further twenty-five marks were allocated to the summary question, these marks being divided between assessment of ability to select content points from the text and assessment of the ability to express these points fluently and in own words. The type of question giving most difficulty was the question which required candidates to answer in their own words; some candidates seemed to ignore this rubric or, even when they identified the key words for re-casting, found it impossible to find synonyms.

Some, very isolated, problems were reported by Examiners. In one Centre, two candidates had attached their Paper 1 script to their Paper 2 script; these Paper 1 scripts could have been overlooked completely. A few candidates used red ink to underline or number answers; this interfered with the Examiners’ marking of the script in red ink. A few candidates did not put their candidate number on the script, or used a wrong or illegible number. However, it has to be stressed that such problems were extremely isolated.

Examiners reported a higher incidence than usual of candidates' misunderstanding of the rubric in **Question 9**, the vocabulary question. Instead of offering a word or phrase to define the chosen word in context, candidates merely wrote a sentence containing the word. Further concern was expressed over the number of candidates who wrote, either in error or deliberately, the wrong number of words used in their summary. Sometimes the discrepancy here was as great as forty words. Candidates must understand that accuracy in the summary word count is important and that their word counts will be checked by the Examiner.

As is reported every year, concern was expressed by Examiners about Centres which issue candidates with sixteen page booklets on which to write their answers, when a booklet half that size would be more than adequate and would be more cost effective in terms not only of paper but also of postage.

### **Comments on specific questions**

As the introductory question, **Question 1 (a)** was designed to ease candidates into the examination with a fairly accessible test, the answer could be scored by lifting from the passage. Most candidates scored the mark for writing that pet owners expect their pets to behave as they would like them to, to be obedient, or to do as they are told. The mark could be gained by lifting lines 1-2. **Question 1 (b)** proved to be rather more difficult. It asked for the 'single characteristic' possessed by Pavlo which meant he could not be turned into something he was not; that characteristic was his strong personality. It seemed that some candidates did not know the meaning of the word 'characteristic'; many saw the significance of the question but merely repeated the question by writing that Pavlo could not be turned into something he was not, or else they wrongly lifted the word 'resistant'. Other lifted the expression 'strong personalities' and, although this plural version was not strictly accurate, it was allowed as an acceptable answer.

The majority of candidates scored the mark available for the answer to **Question 2 (a)**, which was that the writer felt relaxed, or at ease, or some own word synonym. Some candidates confused the issue by referring to the forest scenery rather than a feeling; if reference was made to scenery it was regarded as a neutral extension provided that reference to feeling was also made, but mere reference to scenery on its own was not the answer to the question.

**Question 2 (b)** proved to be a discriminating question. The candidates were required to respond to the negative nature of puzzlement, distilling the idea that the writer's puzzlement was caused by knowing neither from where the sound had come nor what had made the sound. Merely lifting at line 12 ('trying to see where the sound had come from') did not answer the question but rather gave the writer's response to his puzzlement. Distillation of line 12 was required. The second limb of the question was scored by many candidates by the sometimes fortuitous lift of lines 12-13 ('It seemed the wrong sort of note for an insect and far too sharp to come from a bird'). However, some candidates lost both marks by dividing their answer wrongly. These candidates offered the reference to the insect as their first answer and then the reference to the bird as their second answer; as neither of these references on its own scored, the candidates got no marks at all. In answers requiring two reasons, only the first two answers offered were credited, and two correct answers being offered as one limb scored a maximum of one mark. Some candidates lifted extensively from lines 10-13 without identifying two answers; some referred to the noise or to a needle driven into the ear, from lines 10-11, but neither of these references distilled the idea of puzzlement.

**Question 2 (c)** was the first of the three questions on the paper which required candidates to answer in their own words. It was easier than the later questions of this nature because it did not require the candidates to isolate the key words for re-casting, but rather presented them in the question as 'fortune' and 'skill'. Many candidates were successful with 'fortune' offering correct synonyms such as 'luck', 'chance' or 'accidentally'. However, 'skill' proved more difficult and correct synonyms such as 'talent', 'expertise', 'ability' and 'cleverness' were rarely seen.

Many candidates were successful with **Question 3 (a)**, although sometimes merely by stumbling on marks after a series of lifts. Such success was possible here because the question asked for a full answer rather than two reasons; consequently credit was given for correct answers where they appeared rather than the first two answers offered. Candidates had to work on the contrast between the monkey in South America and those in the pet shop; however, they did not have to spell out reference to each group in their answer, as it was possible to score both available marks by reference to one group or the other, the other group being the opposite by inference. So, the first mark was available to candidates who wrote either that the marmosets in the pet shop were in captivity, or in a cage, or not free, or that the monkey in South America was free, or not in captivity, or in a cage. The second mark followed a similar pattern: the monkeys in the pet shop had to fight for a place to sit, or were cramped, while the marmoset in South America could go where he liked, had plenty of space, did not have to fight for a place to sit.

**Question 3 (b)** was a separating question, where one of the available marks required distillation of the text. Pavlo was the monkey chosen by the writer because he was always getting knocked out of the way, or some own words synonym e.g. he was bullied. Most candidates scored this mark. However, the second limb was more difficult and could not be scored by lifting: Pavlo was chosen by the writer because he was the smallest monkey. Popular wrong answers here came from references to pity for all animals in captivity (line 21) or to having to rescue one of the animals (line 23). As with **Question 2 (b)**, problems arose because this was a question asking for two reasons and, as with **Question 2 (b)**, only the first two answers were credited, and two correct answers being offered as one could score a maximum of one mark to avoid a rubric infringement.

**Question 3 (c)** asked candidates to give the expression in the paragraph which meant the same as 'moved by pity'; the answer was 'my heart went out to'. The words 'my' and 'to' were optional but any other excessive detail denied an otherwise correct answer. Unfortunately, sometimes candidates lost the available mark by writing into excess, particularly by adding 'to the smallest one'. Such answers lacked the precision required by the question and had to be penalised. 'The contrast was too much for me' was a common wrong answer. Other candidates misunderstood the question and explained in their own words what the expression meant, highlighting the need for careful reading of the question.

Most candidates answered **Question 4** correctly by linking its key word 'doubtfully' to the question posed in the paragraph 'How can a monkey live in a house?'. Thus acceptable answers focused on the idea that monkeys are not domestic animals, that they are not meant to be kept as pets. Strictly speaking, it should have been necessary to convert the text question to a statement in order to answer the question, as questions cannot be answered by questions, but any sensible re-working of line 28, even in interrogative form, was worth a mark.

**Question 5** asked for an answer that was specific to Pavlo, the answer being that the family would not keep him for long, that he would die within a year, or soon. The generalisation from lines 31-32 (marmosets never live more than a year in a tropical climate) was a neutral extension, in other words it did not deny an otherwise correct answer, nor did it score the point on its own. Although many candidates scored the available mark here, many others merely offered the generalisation about marmosets and failed to answer the question.

**Question 6** was the second of the questions on the paper which required candidates to answer in their own words. It was also probably the second worst done question on the paper. Unlike the own words question **2 (c)**, in which candidates were given the key words for re-casting, **Question 6** demanded that candidates first isolated the key words. There was also the added difficulty that one of the key words was expressed in a negative fashion and therefore had to be re-cast accordingly. Candidates also had to grapple with the surprising element of Pavlo's illness; in addition, it seemed that the word 'outcome' in the question was not always understood by candidates. However, such an increase in the level of difficulty was appropriate at this stage in the paper and this question was designed to be a separating question. It was surprising that, although he had been ill, Pavlo was not more delicate and in fact seemed almost indestructible. Therefore the key words had to be isolated as 'not more delicate' and 'indestructible'. There were many acceptable synonyms for 'not more delicate', and there was no insistence on the comparative form, and so candidates could write 'not more weak', 'not more frail', 'not more fragile', or express the idea in a positive way, e.g. 'stronger' or 'more energetic' or 'livelier', or simply 'strong' 'energetic' or 'lively'. Far more candidates managed to score that mark than managed to score the second mark by offering 'would never die', 'would not be ill again' or 'was immune to illness' for the idea that Pavlo was 'almost indestructible'.

Better attempts were made with **Question 7**, which could be scored by lifting. The first mark was available for candidates who made the point that the cat was unable to catch Pavlo unawares because Pavlo hid from her or that he lay under the plants; the second mark was scored by writing that the cat was easily seen by Pavlo or by the lift of line 77 that she was conspicuous. Candidates who strayed into the text at lines 72-74 and made reference to the fence or to Pavlo catching spiders were denied the first mark in otherwise correct answers on the grounds of excess material; likewise those who strayed into excess at line 76 by making reference to Pavlo being like a rat were denied the second mark in an otherwise correct answer. Sometimes the cat and Pavlo were confused with each other, resulting in loss of marks. As with **Question 2 (b)** and **Question 3 (b)**, this question asked for two reasons, and, as with the other questions of this type, two correct answers appearing in one limb of a candidate's answer was worth one mark maximum.

Probably the worst attempted question on the paper was **Question 8**, the third of the questions requiring candidates to answer in their own words. This seemed surprising as it was testing a very short paragraph with the word 'attractive' in the question designed to lead candidates to the appropriate words for re-casting, namely 'quirky' and 'affectionate'. Perhaps many candidates isolated these key words and had no idea as to the meaning of 'quirky', even in context, as being 'odd', 'unusual', 'one of a kind'. However, 'affectionate' might have been accessible to more candidates, with synonyms such as 'loving' or 'friendly'. Some candidates understood the meaning but failed to score the mark because they described the affection which the family felt for Pavlo rather than his affection for them. Some candidates resorted to lifting in other areas of the paragraph, making reference to the empty garden and the depressed cat, with no attempt at any re-casting, despite the rubric that this was an own words question.

**Question 9** was the customary vocabulary question, in which candidates were required to show their understanding in context, not necessarily in direct synonyms, of five words or expressions from a choice of eight. There was much difficulty with 'curious', where candidates ignored the context and offered the idea of 'wanting to know' and 'inquisitive', whereas in the context of the passage the word in fact meant 'odd' or 'strange'. Many candidates missed the force of 'bundled', suggesting it meant 'put' rather than 'put roughly' or 'thrust'; others, as with 'curious', ignored the context and offered 'tied together'. Misunderstanding also arose as to the meaning of 'crack' as 'slit' or 'space', rather than the often wrongly offered 'hole'. More success was gained by candidates who correctly offered 'fierce' or 'frightening' for 'ferocious', 'copy' or 'make the same as' for 'imitate' and 'happily' or 'peacefully' for 'blissfully'. The least popular choices were probably 'intensity', meaning 'concentration' or 'sharpness', and 'in profusion' where acceptable synonyms were 'abundantly' or 'in large quantities'. Examiners reported fewer candidates than in the past gaining full marks in this question, which highlighted the need for them to examine the word in context before suggesting a synonym. Examiners also reported a higher incidence of candidates giving the question word in a sentence rather than trying to explain its meaning, and more candidates offering two or three synonyms for each word; such candidates must realise that only the first word offered will be credited.

The final question on the paper was, as is customary, the summary question, carrying half the total marks for the paper. Candidates were asked to summarise the means by which the family and Pavlo himself made sure that he was kept warm. As is normal, the rubric asked candidates to base their summary on around half of the original text, expressing content points as far as possible in their own words, using a maximum of 160 words, the first ten of which were given. They were to write in continuous prose, not note form. There were twenty-one content points, of which they could identify any combination up to a maximum of fifteen points carrying one mark each. Examiners reported that almost all candidates completed the summary question, often with a rough draft and a fair draft. However, there was a higher incidence reported of candidates failing to cross out their rough draft, thus making it clear to the Examiner which version was to be marked.

There were five content points available in paragraph five. The opening ten words were designed to ease candidates into the summary by leading them to the first content point, which was that the family turned up the heating for Pavlo. They also massaged him with olive oil, wrapped him in cotton wool, and carried him round, or took him into, the garden when the sun shone, placing him in sunlight to keep him warm. There then followed a distraction about Pavlo's illness; candidates who strayed into that area of the text wasted valuable words, because this material contained nothing about keeping Pavlo warm.

In paragraph six, another five content points were available. Pavlo was given a bottle filled with hot water in his bed; although there was some confusion as to the nature of hot water bottles, where some candidates thought that the water was for drinking rather than a way of keeping the bed warm. Examiners were generous and awarded any reference to hot water bottles as long as the candidate did not spell out that the bottle was filled with drinking water. Pavlo was given this hot water bottle even in summer, he was given a drawer to be his bed, and this was closed to maintain heat. He was also given a piece of fur as a blanket; reference to either fur or blanket was sufficient to score the available mark.

A further five marks were awarded in paragraph seven to candidates who wrote that Pavlo went into the bed of the writer, then that of his brother and then that of his sister; a generalised observation about going from bed to bed, without making clear who were the owners of these beds, scored one mark rather than three. Another mark was available for the point that Pavlo burrowed under the writer's pillow and, although it was not necessary to specify the pillow's owner, if a wrong owner was given the mark was withheld. The other mark in the paragraph went to the candidate who made reference to Pavlo's baby blanket; it was not necessary to mention that this had been bought by the writer's sister.



The final paragraph for summary, paragraph eight, contained a further six content points. Pavlo sat inside the lampshade or next to the bulb, he had a cushion by the fire, and he drank warm milk. There was some confusion as to the meaning of 'washed down' which means that Pavlo drank warm milk with his food, not that he bathed in milk. Furthermore, the family kept the windows closed to keep Pavlo warm, and in spring he liked to go into the garden and lie under the plants there.

As is customary, ten marks were allocated to the style of writing in the summary question, where style was assessed according to how well the candidates were able to use their own words and the extent to which they were able to write error-free, continuous prose, using a variety of sentence structures. Examiners reported that ability to break away from the words of the original text varied from candidate to candidate and even from Centre to Centre. Most candidates coped with the change from First Person in the text to the Third Person required by the rubric. Some very weak candidates lifted almost indiscriminately from the text, producing little more than a random transcript which scored badly on use of own words and, inevitably, did little to pick up relevant content points. Some other weaker candidates played safe by relying fairly heavily on the text wording, but in so doing gained several marks for content points. It seemed that some candidates had been taught, or had decided, to adopt this latter strategy and, indeed, it may be a good course of action for candidates who are lacking in skill or confidence in the use of English. However, only those candidates who were competent and confident enough to grapple with the original text, re-shaping and re-casting it in original complex sentence, were able to gain many, or full, marks for style.

Common errors reported were failures of agreement in singular and plural, misplaced or omitted prepositions, omission of definite and indefinite articles, and inconsistent and illogical verb tenses. Spelling and punctuation were generally very good, and handwriting clear, although Examiners also reported problems with some handwriting being so small as to be almost illegible, crossing out in the first draft causing problems with legibility in cases where the candidate had not written a second draft, and candidates writing in the right hand margin of the paper, which is best reserved for the Examiner's marks.