# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

**Paper 0500/11**
**Reading Passages (Core)**

## Key messages

- Candidates should check their work carefully to avoid unnecessary errors - for example, missing words/comma splicing.
- In **(g)** Candidates should remember that **(ii)** requires a comment on the writer's use of language in the whole phrase – simply repeating the same definition as that given for **(i)** is insufficient as an answer.
- For **Question 2**, it is important to take note of the given genre and to use a format and register appropriate for it.
- Candidates should ensure they refer to all 3 bullet points in **Question 2**, and attempt to develop ideas, both factual and inferential from the passage. The key message here is to go beyond the text for the third bullet point.
- Candidates should take note of the number of marks available for each question – if there are 3 marks then they should try to find 3 discrete points for their answers.

## General comments

Candidates need to read the rubric for the paper very carefully and be aware that it is not possible to 'explain fully' by simply lifting sentences from the passage.

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the article had been clearly understood and many candidates responded well to the more straightforward questions.

Whilst most candidates answered **Question 2** adequately, many appeared not to appreciate the importance of giving a credible account of what happened *after* the writer arrived inside the house which restricted them to a Reading mark in Band 2 at the most for this question. In some cases, the undeveloped response to the third part of the task came about because the candidate did not recognise the insert as being a mystery story, and therefore left the reader to guess what happened next, inadvertently leading to lower marks. In general, the level of written English in **2b** was mostly good.

As far as the use of time was concerned, most candidates attempted all questions. Some, however, appeared to run out of time, as evinced by overly long **Question 2**s which led to incomplete or omitted responses to **3a**, **3b** or both.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

**(a)** Give two reasons why the narrator found it difficult to get to the house (paragraph one, 'My path to the...').

Most candidates gained at least one mark on this question and many gained two. Some gave only one of the 4 available responses, but complete misunderstanding of what was required was rare. A small number merely copied the opening sentence 'My path to the house was by no means an easy one' without saying why, and therefore gained no marks, but such responses were quite rare.

**(b)** Using your own words, explain what the writer means by 'this odd and picturesque building made me pause' (line 6).

Many candidates were able to establish the strangeness of the house in their own words, although quite a number merely repeated the word 'odd'. Fewer candidates managed to understand the contrasting reference to 'picturesque', with some either ignoring it or thinking it meant 'ugly'. Some attempted to explain 'picturesque' as being 'like a picture' or 'as in a painting or photograph' which were not sufficient as explanations of the word's meaning. Similarly, attempting to explain the oddness of the house by saying simply that it was 'different' did not go far enough, as the house can be different for many different reasons. A large number of candidates neglected to focus on the whole phrase and did not attempt an explanation of the phrase 'made me pause' for which the second mark was awarded. Many of those who did attempt to explain this phrase often interpreted it with reference to the writer's feelings as in 'surprise' or 'shock', but these of course do not relate to the building's oddness and beauty which give rise to his physical reaction. The least successful responses came from those who merely lifted the words 'odd' and 'pause' when responding and therefore did not gain any marks. Some candidates also showed a tendency to over-explain, owing perhaps to feeling the need to explain the situation, rather than simply say what the words mean.

**(c)** Why did the narrator decide not to go back to the road (paragraph two, 'The quiet and apparent...')?

The answer to this is that the narrator is tempted back to the house owing to its promise of comfort. Many candidates identified this point, but a significant number focused their responses on the narrator's feeling 'foolish' with a vague reference to the house's 'interior' without referring explicitly to its cosy /inviting/comfortable promise and simply said that he thought "it would be foolish to deny himself".

**(d)** Re-read paragraph three, 'But half-way...hurriedly leaving'. What was unusual about the way the man left the house?

This was answered successfully by most candidates although some thought that the question required a less obvious answer than `didn`t close the door' despite the fact there was only one mark available. The most frequent incorrect answers referred to the man placing his watch back in his pocket as an unusual action, or identified his looking back at the house he was leaving as being unusual.

**(e)** Re-read paragraph four, 'As we met...to the man'. Explain as fully as you can, what caused the narrator to feel 'puzzled' about the behaviour of the man.

The majority of candidates gained two marks out of the three available for this question. Only a small number made the mistake of relating the question of the narrator's puzzlement to that of the 'man' and again relatively few misunderstood the paragraph by asserting that the man was puzzled and not the narrator. Most candidates were able to identify the 'raising of the hat', showing respect and not being surprised by meeting a stranger in such a remote place, although the 'not saying a word' point was often overlooked. Some misread the phrase "showed little surprise" interpreting it instead as "showed a little surprise".

**(f)** Explain as fully as you can, what the narrator says about his attempt to speak further with the man (paragraph eight, 'A peculiar greeting...').

There were two aspects to this question. The first was that the two men were some distance apart and the second that because of this they were unable to hear what was said 'clearly'. Many candidates were able to understand the first point but only a minority successfully made clear their understanding of the second, and simply stated that the two men couldn't 'hear' what was said, which of course was not true. Each knew that the other was speaking, it's just they could not make out with certainty what was being said. Those candidates who were able to identify this lack of clarity, however expressed, were awarded the mark for the second point. Candidates who merely lifted the sentence 'his voice returned to me ... his answer reached me' were awarded one mark only, because such direct lifting does not constitute an explanation.

**(g) (i)** Re-read paragraphs one, two and ten ('My path to the...so invitingly.' and 'The house...more inviting.'). Explain, using your own words, what the writer means by the words underlined in three of the following phrases:

A small number of candidates failed to follow the question instructions accurately and chose a different combination of phrases to respond to in **(g)(i)** and **(g)(ii)**.

As stated in the 'Key Messages' section of this report, this question requires candidates to explain the underlined word in **(g)(i)** and to explain the whole phrase in **(g)(ii)**. The repeating of answers to **(g)(i)** – whether right or wrong – in **(g)(ii)** with little or no development is not sufficient to gain further marks. A further concern is that in response to **(g)(ii)** candidates often failed to attempt their analysis in the terms of the question, which, on this paper, focused on the house and the narrator. Again, those candidates who did address the question often merely focused on one of these aspects. Finally, it is worth noting that for **(g)(i)** some candidates did not attempt to explain the identified word but attempted another word from the phrase instead. This was particularly so with phrase 4 where the focus was sometimes on 'intruder' rather than on 'disuse'. Candidates who attempted to relate the word/phrase to the passage context were more likely to gain marks on these two questions.

**1** 'I found doors and windows open to the pervading mist' (lines 3–4)

'Pervading' caused a problem for many candidates with very few identifying the mist as spreading everywhere in the room. The most frequent answer was `thick` or `menacing` or `ghostly` but the widespread/everywhere aspect was mainly missed.

**2** 'this silent room, with its sinister atmosphere' (lines 7–8)

This word was probably understood more clearly than those from the other three phrases. The sense of 'evil' implied by 'sinister' or its 'creepy/scary' connotation were common correct answers.

**3** 'I now scrutinised more carefully' (line 36)

This word caused problems for many candidates who attempted to explain it. Many felt that scrutiny implied judgement or criticism as opposed to studying something more closely. Many candidates merely responded with 'looked' or 'observed' without any qualifier to indicate the intensity implied, and a significant minority merely added the two words 'more closely' to their answer which is a direct lift from the phrase itself and, therefore, could not be rewarded.

**4** 'it had about it an air of disuse which made me feel like an intruder' (line 39)

'An air of disuse' led many candidates to think it was the actual air itself which was 'disused' rather than the building. Many responses believed that 'disuse' meant 'no use' or 'never used' as opposed to 'no longer used'. A few candidates correctly identified the implied neglect or abandonment suggested by the word.

**(ii)** Explain how the writer conveys the nature of the house and the narrator's feelings about it through the use of language in each of the phrases you have chosen in **Question 1(g)(i)**. You should refer to the whole phrase in your answer and not just the word underlined.

In their responses to this question it was clear that some candidates were making an attempt to engage with the writer's use of words; for example, one response suggested that the first phrase linked `open` with `pervading`, producing a picture of the house wide open to invasion by the mist which spreads everywhere and is unwelcome / threatening. In general, however, very few achieved more than 2 or 3 marks in total. These marks were generally gained for identifying a sense of spookiness, a feeling of disquiet or curiosity on the part of the narrator, or the narrator's sense that he somehow shouldn't be there. Many of the less successful responses resulted from what would appear to be a failure to focus on the specific rubric requirement to comment on the whole phrase quoted, and not just the word that was defined in answer to **(g)(ii)**. The outcome of this was a large number of repeated or slightly modified attempts to provide another synonym for the single word underlined, without attempting to explain what effect the author was trying to achieve in the phrase as a whole.

**Question 2**

Imagine that you are the narrator of the story. You enter the house and after waiting a few minutes, other people begin to arrive. It is now the afternoon of the following day...

Write a letter to your older brother or sister describing your impressions of the house and your experiences since you discovered it.

In your letter you should:
- describe how you first discovered the house
- describe your thoughts and feelings when you met the man leaving the house
- explain what you discovered after you entered the house.

All candidates were able to respond in some detail to this question, generally showed an at least satisfactory understanding of the extract and were able to develop a convincing voice on the part of the narrator. However, there were examples of uninspired copying from the passage, and a few candidates failed to demonstrate understanding of the conventions of writing a letter to a family member. Many could have produced a more convincing letter by remembering to include an appropriate valediction as a conclusion to the task. A large number of overall satisfactory responses ended their accounts as soon as the narrator entered the house (no matter how much “suspense” had been built up) and effectively omitted to address the third bullet, which meant that they could not be awarded a mark for Reading higher than one in Band 2.

On the other hand, some letters launched straight into the discovery of ‘the house’ with no explanation of how the writer had stumbled across it and a presumption that the brother or sister would know what they were talking about. A very small number of candidates wrote letters based on Passage A, thus earning marks only for 2W. Most candidates, however, made a positive attempt at writing an appropriate letter with the majority achieving a Band 3 mark at least for their efforts with 2R and 2W. The most successful responses made very good use of the passage, using it as a springboard for their own imaginations to deal with all manner of ghastly and ghoulish goings-on in the shady haunts of the house’s inner depths which, nevertheless, were convincingly developed from details implied in the original.

Less successful responses revealed a generally secure understanding of the passage but tended to be over-reliant on its content and language, to the point where their own creativity was left relatively undeveloped apart from a passing comment on what was discovered when they entered the house, usually relating to the details provided in the final paragraph. The least successful responses produced only a very bald narrative with a few references to the strangeness and confusion rather than tracking the more subtle changes in reaction, especially to the house and the man. As noted above, most letters were generally well done and engaged with the text in a suitable manner.

In general, most candidates showed the ability to convey their ideas in writing with reasonable clarity although many responses were marred by avoidable errors of expression and punctuation. The most common failings were comma splicing and apostrophe errors, but generally letters were written in a register that befitted a sibling audience. Relatively few candidates achieved a mark lower than Band 3 for this task. A small number of candidates disadvantaged themselves by producing handwriting which was almost impossible to decipher.

**Question 3**

Read carefully Passage B, Hadrian's Villa, in the Reading Booklet Insert and then answer **Question 3(a)** and **(b)** on this Question Paper.

**Question 3(a)**

What do you learn about the structure and main features of Hadrian’s Villa and grounds and the reasons why it was built, according to Passage B?

Write your answers using short notes. Write one point per line.

You do not need to use your own words.

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

Candidates generally scored quite well on this summary question, although the most common error arose from their not clearly identifying what were the main features and structure of the Villa and its grounds, by including irrelevant details such as the car park, picnics, signposted buildings, and the historical fact about the attack by the barbarian hordes, none of which was credited. The most common repetition points were references to libraries, bathhouses and so on as separate points and similarly the Grove of Academe and Canopus references.

Some candidates included more than one point on a line in spite of the rubric and a few continued to add points after the 10 in the grid had been completed. It is important that candidates read the rubric carefully so that they do not lose marks because of positioning of valid points.

A few candidates thought that 'Pluto' had lectured his students there and others that Hadrian had built a Marmite Theatre. As this task assesses reading skills, these slips of the pen were credited as correct points. Overall, most responses gained at least 5 or more points with the most successful focusing on the precise detail of the appropriate points in note form as opposed to merely copying overlong sentences from the passage – those who attempted this approach frequently lost marks as they tended to include more than one point per line (as mentioned above).

**Question 3(b)**

Information about the structure and main features of Hadrian's villa and grounds and the reasons why it was built:

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about the structure and main features of Hadrian's Villa and grounds and the reasons why it was built.

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 **Question3 (a)** and must be 100 to 150 words.

It is important for candidates to keep in mind that the instructions for this question require them to attempt to turn their own points into a summary. Those who go back to the Passage and attempt to summarise from that give themselves a much harder task when attempting to use their own words. In general, candidates did not find it easy to re-word and reorganise and many produced generalised responses about the delights of visiting the villa and its grounds, rather than simply writing a summary focused on the wording of the question, ('the structure and main features of Hadrian's villa and grounds and the reasons why it was built').

This was the question which was most often not attempted, presumably because of time constraints.

In conclusion, most candidates performed at least satisfactorily on this paper and their answers showed that they had a mainly secure understanding of the reading passages and that they were capable of expressing themselves with some accuracy and competence when producing a piece of written English. Nearly all engaged well with the Reading Passages and made positive attempts to respond conscientiously to the different tasks. Future candidates are advised to ensure that they read carefully the wording of the sub-questions in **Question 1** and attempt to respond precisely to their requirements to ensure that they can achieve the highest marks of which they are capable.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

**Paper 0500/12**
**Reading Passages (Core)**

## Key messages

- Candidates should check their work carefully to avoid unnecessary errors - for example, missing words/comma splicing.
- In **(g)** Candidates should remember that **(ii)** requires a comment on the writer's use of language in the whole phrase – simply repeating the same definition as that given for **(i)** is insufficient as an answer.
- For **Question 2**, it is important to take note of the given genre and to use a format and register appropriate for it.
- Candidates should ensure they refer to all 3 bullet points in **Question 2**, and attempt to develop ideas, both factual and inferential from the passage. The key message here is to go beyond the text for the third bullet point.
- Candidates should take note of the number of marks available for each question – if there are 3 marks then they should try to find 3 discrete points for their answers.

## General comments

Overall, the passages proved to be accessible to the vast majority of candidates. The vocabulary was well within the range of students at this level.

Candidates need to read the rubric for the paper very carefully and be aware that it is not possible to 'explain fully' by simply lifting sentences from the passage.

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the article had been clearly understood and many candidates responded well to the more straightforward questions. The types of questions asked enabled all students to produce some correct answers and at the same time challenged those who were more perceptive to gain higher marks.

Overall most of the candidates applied themselves well to the paper with most achieving marks from the middle 20s to middle 30s. There was a very small proportion of papers where the candidates had not answered any of the questions and a small proportion who gave no response to some questions. Whilst most candidates answered **Question 2** adequately, many appeared not to appreciate the importance of giving a credible account of what happened *after* the writer turned to face whatever had grabbed his arm which restricted them to a Reading mark in Band 2 at the most for this question. In some cases, the undeveloped response to the third part of the task came about because the candidate did not recognise the insert as being a mystery story and therefore left the reader to guess what happened next, inadvertently leading to lower marks. In general, the level of written English in **2(b)** was mostly good.

As far as the use of time was concerned, most candidates attempted all questions. Some, however, appeared to run out of time as evinced by overly long **Question 2**s which led to incomplete or omitted responses to **3(a)**, **3(b)** or both.

Many scripts were presented in good, easily legible handwriting, with deletions and corrections neatly executed. Handwriting on some scripts, however, was difficult to read and trying to decipher what was written was very time-consuming.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

**(a)** *Using your own words, explain what the writer means by, 'Its marks of age contrasted so sharply with its unfinished condition' (paragraph 1).*

Most candidates gained at least one mark on this question and many gained two. The key to gaining both marks was to show some understanding of the idea of 'contrast'. A large number of candidates demonstrated understanding of the building looking old or damaged and at the same time being incomplete. Fewer showed they saw the contradiction in these two aspects. Candidates who gained no marks tended to be those who lifted large sections of the passage, but such responses were rare.

**(b)** *Give two details from the paragraph 1 that tell you that the house was unfinished and abandoned.*

A number of candidates gained two marks for this question by identifying two of the three possible points (roof was decaying or moss was growing over it/there was still scaffolding up/only two windows had frames) and choosing carefully the relevant textual quotations. A number of candidates gained only one mark which was allowed where none of the above examples were referred to, but where the candidate referred to its 'unfinished condition' or 'deserted structure' – these being regarded as acceptable evidence that the candidate had understood the task and found some relevant detail in the passage even though it was not the details from the description of the building's appearance anticipated by the mark scheme.

**(c)** *The narrator says that he glanced instinctively at the scaffolding (lines 14–15). Why does the narrator do this?*

Although a large number of candidates correctly stated that the narrator was concerned that the scaffolding might fall on him, there were also many who failed to gain the mark by giving over complicated responses; for example, giving explanations about what the scaffolding was supporting and what might collapse if the scaffolding failed to support it. There being only 1 mark available, it is an example of where a more concise answer was quite adequate.

**(d)** *Give two details that the narrator mentions about the condition of the staircase (lines 21–24).*

This was answered successfully by most candidates with the large majority gaining the two marks available by identifying that the staircase was 'without bannisters' and was 'otherwise unfinished' or 'fairly well preserved'. Those who did not get both marks generally failed to do so by mentioning details about the staircase that were not about its condition: e.g. it ran through the centre of the house.

**(e)** *Using your own words, explain that narrator's reason for climbing the stairs (lines 21–24).*

A large number of candidates gained the two marks for this question. However, despite the reminder to use 'own words', there were a significant number of candidates who lifted the whole, or most of, the final sentence of paragraph 2 (lines 23–24) and did not conclusively show understanding of what was being stated. These candidates did not gain any marks for this question. It is an important example of the point made in General Comments (above) to find words, wherever possible, that explain the those used in the passage rather merely repeating them.

**(f)** *Re-read paragraph 3 ('Here the doors…from behind.'). Using your own words, explain as fully as you can, the narrator's thoughts about the mystery of the house.*

There were many candidates who gained two marks by commenting on two of the three possible points (the narrator's thoughts about why the house was abandoned, what had become of the owner and any heir to the property or of the house had ever been lived in). Again the reminder to use own words was significant as the candidates who failed to gain any mark for this question were those who used extensive lifts from the passage. Where candidates did not explicitly mention any of three possible points, 1 mark could awarded if they referred in some way to the narrator's thoughts being about the story of the house. A small number of candidates received this mark.

**(g) (i)** *Re-read paragraphs one, two and four ('One autumn day… climbed the stairs...' and 'Was I then… my surroundings.'). Explain, using your own words, what the writer means by the words underlined in three of the following phrases: (see below for phrases)*

A small number of candidates failed to follow the question instructions accurately and chose a different combination of phrases to respond to in **(g)(i)** and **(g)(ii)**.

As stated in the 'Key Messages' section of this report, this question requires candidates to explain the underlined word in **(g)(i)** and to explain the whole phrase in **(g)(ii)**. The repeating of answers to **(g)(i)** – whether right or wrong – in **(g)(ii)** with little or no development is not sufficient to gain further marks. A further concern is that in response to **(g)(ii)** candidates often failed to attempt their analysis in the terms of the question, which, on this paper, focused on the house and the narrator. Again those candidates who did address the question often merely focused on one of these aspects. Finally, it is worth noting that for **(g)(i)** some candidates did not attempt to explain the identified word but attempted another word from the phrase instead. This was particularly so with phrase 1 where the focus was sometimes on 'solitude' rather than on 'desolation'. Significantly, the other common error was, in effect, the reverse with phrase 4 where the focus was on 'desolate' rather than 'solitary'. Candidates who attempted to relate the word/phrase to the passage context were more likely to gain marks on these two questions.

1 *'…it gave the appearance of picturesque solitude almost approaching desolation.' (lines 5–6)*

A large number of candidates did attempt to provide a synonym or other explanation for 'desolation' and many were successful. The main cause of not gaining a mark was as stated above.

2 '*...my curiosity made me want to take a closer look.' (line 10)*

This word was understood clearly by the great majority of candidates who gave responses such as 'needing to' or 'wanting to know' or having a 'strong interest in.'

3 *'The heavy front door which had endured years of dripping rain.' (line 11)*

This word was understood by many candidates who gave explanations such as: 'survived', 'put up with' and 'existed'. The main problem for candidates with this example was that some explained the word, but continued to explain the phrase, but did not always go on to gain the mark in **(g)(ii)** it appears because they had put all the relevant information into **(g)(i)**.

4 *'Was there some solitary being who inhabited this desolate place…' (line 34)*

As noted above, there were a number of candidates who focused on the wrong word and gave an explanation of 'desolate'. As with phrase 3, a number of candidates found it difficult to explain 'solitary' without explaining the whole phrase, but then did not do so in **g (ii)**. That said a large number of the candidates who did correctly focus on 'solitary' gave acceptable explanations such as being alone or cut off from other people,

**(ii)** *Explain how the writer's use of language in each of the phrases you have chosen in **Question 1(g)(i)** helps to suggest the nature of the house and the narrator's feelings about it. You should refer to the whole phrase in your answer and not just the word underlined.*

In their responses to this question it was clear that some candidates were making an attempt to engage with the writer's use of words. In general, however, very few achieved more than 2 or 3 marks in total. These marks were generally gained for identifying a sense of decay or ruin, of a building that had stood a long time, that intrigued and/or mystified the narrator or that might be haunted. Many of the less successful responses resulted from what would appear to be a failure to focus on the specific rubric requirement to comment on the whole phrase quoted and not just the word that was defined in answer to **(g)(ii)**. The outcome of this was a large number of repeated or slightly modified attempts to provide another synonym for the single word underlined, without attempting to explain what effect the author was trying to achieve in the phrase as a whole.

**Question 2**

*Imagine that you are the narrator of the story and you are a journalist. It is two days after the events described in the passage and you are writing an account of your experience for your newspaper with the headline 'Mysterious events at the old stone house.'*
*In your article you should:*

- *describe how you first came across the house and your impressions of it*
- *describe your thoughts and feelings while you were exploring the house*
- *give an account of what happened after your arm was grabbed*

Almost all of the candidates were able to respond in some detail to this question, generally showing at least a satisfactory understanding of the extract with some using an appropriate style for a newspaper article. However, less successful responses contained examples of uninspired copying from the passage. A large number of overall satisfactory responses ended their accounts as soon as the narrator entered the house (no matter how much "suspense" had been built up) and effectively omitted to address the third bullet, which meant that they could not be awarded a mark for Reading higher than one in Band 2. Often these candidates retold the passage and finished their response with a very similar ending to the original. Most candidates, however, made a positive attempt at writing an appropriate article with the majority achieving a Band 3 mark at least for their efforts with 2R and 2W. The most successful responses made very good use of the passage using it as a springboard for their own imaginations to deal with all manner of strange and ghoulish secrets inside the house or effectively built up suspense over who had grabbed the narrator before deflating expectations by revealing it be someone known to the narrator and quite harmless. Less successful responses revealed a generally secure understanding of the passage but tended to be over-reliant on its content and language to the point where their own creativity was left relatively undeveloped apart from a passing comment on what was discovered when they entered the house, usually relating to the details provided in the final paragraph. The least successful responses produced only a very bald narrative with a few references to the strangeness and confusion rather than attending to the more subtle details about the house and the man.

In general, most candidates showed the ability to convey their ideas in writing with reasonable clarity although many responses were marred by avoidable and unforced errors of expression and punctuation. The most common failings, as always, were comma splicing and apostrophe errors, but generally letters were written in a register that befitted a sibling audience. Relatively few candidates achieved a mark lower than Band 3 for this task. A very small number of candidates disadvantaged themselves by producing handwriting which was almost impossible to decipher.

**Question 3**

*Read carefully Passage B, Great Zimbabwe, in the Reading Booklet Insert and then answer **Question 3(a)** and **(b)** on this Question Paper.*

**(a)** ***(Notes)***

*What do you learn about the structure and history of Great Zimbabwe according to Passage B?*
*Write your answers using short notes. Write one point per line.*
*You do not need to use your own words.*
*Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer.*

Candidates generally scored well on this summary question although the most common error arose from their not maintaining their focus on what were the main features and history of the site and by including too much irrelevant detail from paragraphs two and three. As usual, the main causes of candidates missing points occurred where they included more than one point on a line in spite of the rubric and by writing too much to fit into the space provided. A few continued to add points after the 10 in the grid had been completed. It is important that candidates read the rubric carefully so that they do not lose marks because of positioning of valid points.

Overall, though, this part of the task was completed well by the majority of candidates gaining at least 6 or more points with the most successful focusing on the precise detail of the appropriate points in note form as opposed to merely copying overlong sentences from the passage – those

who attempted this approach frequently lost marks as they tended to include more than one point per line (as mentioned above).

The points listed in the Final Mark Scheme for this question were as follow:

**(b) (Summary)**

*Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about the structure and history of Great Zimbabwe.*
*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.*

It is important for candidates to keep in mind that the instructions for this question require them to attempt to turn their own points into a summary. Those who go back to the passage and attempt to summarise from that give themselves a much harder task when attempting to use their own words. In general, candidates did not find it easy to re-word and reorganise and many produced a piece of writing that was not developed much beyond the original list in **3(a)**. The more successful responses were those that recognised there were two categories of information ('structure' and 'history') and used that two organise the material and keep the summary focused on the wording of the question.

This was the question which was most often not attempted, presumably because of time constraints.

In conclusion, most candidates performed at least satisfactorily on this paper and their answers showed that they had a mainly secure understanding of the reading passages and that they were capable of expressing themselves with some accuracy and competence when producing a piece of written English. Nearly all engaged well with the Reading Passages and made positive attempts to respond conscientiously to the different tasks. Future candidates are advised to ensure that they read carefully the wording of the sub-questions in **Question 1** and attempt to respond precisely to their requirements to ensure that they can achieve the highest marks of which they are capable.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

**Paper 0500/13**
**Reading Passages (Core)**

## Key messages

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- Candidates should ensure they refer to all 3 bullet points in **Question 2**, and attempt to develop ideas, both factual and inferential from the passage. The key message here is to go beyond the text for the third bullet point.
- Candidates should take note of the number of marks available for each question – if there are 3 marks then they should try to find 3 discrete points for their answers.

## General comments

Candidates need to read the rubric for the paper very carefully and be aware that it is not possible to 'explain fully' by simply lifting sentences from the passage.

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the article had been clearly understood and many candidates responded well to the more straightforward questions.

Whilst most candidates answered **Question 2** adequately, many appeared not to appreciate the importance of giving a credible account of what happened after the writer climbed through the window, which restricted them to a Reading mark in Band 2 at the most for this question. In some cases, the undeveloped response to the third part of the task came about because the candidate may not have recognised the insert as being a mystery story, and therefore left the reader to guess what happened next, inadvertently leading to lower marks. In general, the level of written English in **2(b)** was mostly good.

As far as the use of time was concerned, most candidates attempted all questions. Some, however, appeared to run out of time as evinced by overly long **Question 2**s, which led to incomplete or omitted responses to **3(a)**, **3(b)** or both.

**Comments on specific questions**

**Question 1**

**(a)** Explain what the narrator means by the phrase 'mentally photographed' (line 1).

The key to gaining this mark was in identifying that the narrator was storing an image in his mind. Many candidates were successful in doing so. The most frequent misunderstanding of what was required was by candidates who put merely that the narrator observed or 'looked closely', the latter simply repeating the phrase just before in the same line.

**(b)** Using your own words, explain fully the narrator's thoughts when looking at the window (paragraph 2 'More than anything…').

Many candidates gained two marks for this question, making such points as: it disturbed him/he wanted to put his hand through it/he wanted to climb through it. The important feature with this task, as noted above, was the requirement to use own words. Thus, candidates who lifted words ('uneasy' was a popular example) would not show an understanding of the narrator's words, and these answers could not be credited.

**(c)** From lines 16–22 give two reasons why the narrator is persuaded not to knock on the door of the house ('It was clearly…unrewarded.').

The majority of candidates seemed to have understood what was required and achieved two marks on this question, the main reason for less successful responses being answers that were too brief and did not cover two points.

**(d)** Using your own words, explain the narrator's reasons for thinking that the house was definitely empty (lines 26–28).

The first element of this answer, that the window had been left open, was identified successfully by many candidates. However, only a small number gained two marks by going on to explain that if someone was in the house they would have shut the window. There were very few candidates who referred to the blind being left up.

**(e)** What answer did the narrator plan to give in the event of being seen climbing through the window (lines 30–31).

As with **Q1(d)**, a large number of candidates gained 1 mark on this question for suggesting that the narrator would say he was just about to raise the alarm. Far fewer candidates obtained the second mark as they said little about the circumstances. Both **Q1(d)** and **Q1(e)** highlight the need for candidates to have an awareness of the total number of marks available and provide sufficient detail for the full number of marks to be awarded. It also highlights the problems that arise when candidates rely on lifting text and only use one relatively simple phrase when more than 1 mark is available.

**(f)** State two of the narrator's thoughts while climbing through the window (lines 32–41 'In such damp weather… What was I to do next?').

This question was answered effectively by a large number of candidates – many identifying more than just two points.

**(g)(i)** Re-read paragraphs one, two and seven ('I looked closely…in my bones.' and 'However, it gave…to do next?'). Explain, using your own words, what the writer means by the words underlined in three of the following phrases:

A small number of candidates failed to follow the question instructions accurately and chose a different combination of phrases to respond to in **(g)(i)** and **(g)(ii)**.

As stated in the 'Key Messages' section of this report, this question requires candidates to explain the underlined word in **(g)(i)** and to explain the whole phrase in **(g)(ii)**. The repeating of answers to **(g)(i)** – whether right or wrong – in **(g)(ii)**, with little or no development is not sufficient to gain further marks. A further concern is that in response to **(g)(ii)** candidates often failed to attempt their analysis in the terms of the question, which, on this paper, focused on the house and the narrator. Again, those candidates who did address the question often merely focused on one of these aspects. Finally, it is worth noting that for **(g)(i)** some candidates did not attempt to explain the identified word but provided a short explanation of the phrase which they repeated for **(g)(ii)**. Candidates who attempted to relate the word/phrase to the passage context were more likely to gain marks on these two questions.

**1** 'An instant earlier, the world swam before my eyes.' (line 2)

Almost all candidates chose this word and very few did not find an acceptable explanation, such as: moment/second/very short period of time.

**2** '…a curious tightening of my throat…' (lines 4–5)

Again, this was a popular choice and was successfully explained by most candidates who chose it, popular examples being: strange, unusual or odd.

**3** '…caused by a sense of uneasiness.' (line 5)

A little less popular than options 1 and 2, this was handled well by the majority of candidates who chose it; successful responses included: uncertainty, worried and scared.

**4** 'It did not betray me – not even by the slightest sound.' (lines 36–37)

Some found this challenging which may have been in part as a result of having to deal with a phrase rather than one single word. There was a tendency to explain the whole phrase rather than just the part underlined. Successful responses included: 'it didn't let me down' and 'didn't give me away.'

**(ii)** Explain how the writer's use of language in each phrase you have chosen in **Question 1(g)(i)** helps to suggest the narrator's thoughts and feelings. You should refer to the whole phrase in your answer and not just the word underlined.

In their responses to this question it was clear that many candidates were making an attempt to engage with the writer's use of words; for example, a number of responses made a connection between the narrator's uneasiness and the possibility of the house being occupied or with questions about whether he should enter or not. In general, however, very few achieved more than 2 or 3 marks in total. These marks were generally gained for identifying a sense of menace, a feeling of disquiet or curiosity on the part of the narrator, or the narrator's sense that he somehow shouldn't be there. Many of the less successful responses resulted from what would appear to be a failure to focus on the specific rubric requirement to comment on the whole phrase quoted and not just the word that was defined in answer to **(g)(ii)**. The outcome of this was a large number of repeated or slightly modified attempts to provide another synonym for the single word underlined, without attempting to explain what effect the author was trying to achieve in the phrase as a whole.

**Question 2**

Imagine that you are the narrator of the story. It is the morning after the events described in the passage and you are writing a journal entry in which you describe the events of the day before.

In your journal entry you should:

- describe how you first discovered the house and your impressions of it
- describe your thoughts and feelings while you were standing in the rain
- give an account of what happened after you climbed through the window.

All candidates were able to respond in some detail to this question, generally showed an at least satisfactory understanding of the extract and were able to develop a convincing voice on the part of the narrator. However, there were examples of uninspired copying from the passage, although few candidates failed to write in a manner appropriate to a journey entry. A large number of overall satisfactory responses ended their accounts as soon as the narrator entered the house (no matter how much "suspense" had been built up) and effectively omitted to address the third bullet, which meant that they could not be awarded a mark for Reading higher than one in Band 2. On the other hand, some responses did not include sufficient detail to give a clear sense of the narrator's predicament and need to find shelter.

Most candidates, however, made a positive attempt at writing an appropriate response with the majority achieving a Band 3 mark at least for their efforts with 2R and 2W. The most successful responses made very good use of the passage, using it as a springboard for their own imaginations to deal with all manner of possible situations faced once inside the house, taking clues from the passage to help develop the response.

Less successful responses revealed a generally secure understanding of the passage but tended to be over-reliant on its content and language, to the point where their own creativity was left relatively undeveloped, apart from a passing comment on entering the house, usually relating to the details provided in the final paragraph. The least successful responses produced only a very bald narrative with a few references to the strangeness and uncertainty rather than referring the more subtle suggestions about what might transpire when entering. As noted above, most letters were generally well done and engaged with the text in a suitable manner.

In general, most candidates showed the ability to convey their ideas in writing with reasonable clarity although many responses were marred by avoidable errors of expression and punctuation. The most common failings were comma splicing and apostrophe errors, but generally letters were written in a register that befitted a sibling audience. Relatively few candidates achieved a mark lower than Band 3 for this task. A small number of candidates disadvantaged themselves by producing handwriting which was almost impossible to decipher.

**Question 3**

Read carefully Passage B, Ggantija, in the Reading Booklet Insert and then answer **Question 3(a)** and **(b)** on this Question Paper.

**Question 3(a)**

What do you learn about the building structure of Ggantija and the activities that took place there, according to Passage B?

Write your answers using short notes. Write one point per line.

You do not need to use your own words.

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

Candidates generally scored on this summary question although the most common error arose from their not clearly focusing on the need to identify the structural features of Ggantija and including irrelevant details, particularly about the priestess and the female giant, Sunsuna. There was relatively little repetition of points and where this did occur it tended to be over the activities that took place in Ggantija such as details of how the place was used, particularly for point 3 (see below). Some candidates included more than one point on a line in spite of the rubric and a few continued to add points after the 10 in the grid had been completed. It is important that candidates read the rubric carefully so that they do not lose marks because of positioning of valid points.

Overall, most responses gained at least 5 or more points with the most successful focusing on the precise detail of the appropriate points in note form as opposed to merely copying overlong sentences from the passage – those who attempted this approach frequently lost marks as they tended to include more than one point per line (as mentioned above).

**Question 3b**

**(Summary)**

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about the building structure of Ggantija and the activities that took place 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.

It is important for candidates to keep in mind that the instructions for this question require them to attempt to turn their own points into a summary. Those who go back to the Passage and attempt to summarise from that give themselves a much harder task when attempting to use their own words. In general, candidates did a reasonable job of re-wording and reorganising and many produced acceptable responses. Less successful responses tended to be more generalised pieces that linked the notes in the order recorded, but were less successful at putting them into an organised whole.

A small number of candidates did not attempt this question, presumably because of time constraints.

In conclusion, most candidates performed at least satisfactorily on this paper and their answers showed that they had a mainly secure understanding of the reading passages and that they were capable of expressing themselves with some accuracy and competence when producing a piece of written English. Nearly all engaged well with the Reading Passages and made positive attempts to respond conscientiously to the different tasks. Future candidates are advised to ensure that they read carefully the wording of the sub-questions in **Question 1** and attempt to respond precisely to their requirements to ensure that they can achieve the highest marks of which they are capable.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

**Paper 0500/21**
**Reading Passages (Extended)**

## Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read both passages thoroughly, paying attention to key detail
- read each question carefully, paying attention to the specific guidance offered
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- planned the structure and sequence of each answer, making each point once only in a response
- allowed time to address fully each section of each question
- avoided copying whole sentences or sections from either passage
- used their own words in **Questions 1** and **3(b)** and when exploring and explaining choices in **Question 2**
- ensured that ideas were fully explained and developed in **Question 1** and **Question 2**
- checked their responses carefully to correct errors of spelling and grammar affecting meaning
- used a range of appropriate, precise vocabulary.

## General comments

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

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 and in all but a handful of responses, all parts of the task were attempted. Good responses displayed a sound understanding of the ideas in Passage A by including a range of relevant ideas that were often developed effectively and supported by apt detail. Less good responses tended not to pick up on implicit ideas from the passage, for example, that Maria Rose Head had written the winning entry, or that her pain in the neck was not due to the pillows. Some of the least successful responses displayed little modification of the material and/or lost sight of the task in hand. The vast majority of candidates read the question carefully and wrote the letter from Maria on holiday to her friend back home. 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 letter to Al once Maria was home, or writing as Al's wife. Some included their own home address and their own name at the base of the letter, missing opportunities to incorporate details from the passage as evidence of their Reading skills. 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 which were largely concerned with the most straightforward ideas for the first two bullets as a result. A mechanical use of the passage 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 passages. Candidates are reminded that lifting or copying from the text, even of relatively short phrases, can be an indicator of less secure skills and understanding, and should be avoided.

For **Question 2** candidates needed to offer appropriate choices of words and phrases from each of the two paragraphs and make specific, detailed comments about these choices. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to write detailed explanations of the effects of their choices in both parts of the question, demonstrating sound understanding of the writer's purpose and teasing out those connotations and associations of the language used affecting the reader's view. 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 top bands. Many contained some accurate explanations of meanings and the identification of some linguistic devices but only partially explained effects. Weaker responses tried to explain the selected language in the same words as the language choice – for example, suggesting that 'entranced' means that Al was in a trance, or that 'laced' meant the sunlight looked like lace on the trees. 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 'the image here is one of warmth and beauty' and/or simply labelling devices without exploration of how the example was working within this particular context.

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 **Questions 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 relying on lifted phrases from the passage to communicate a number of ideas. 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 'honey' and 'hive' did not need to be replaced or explained. Some candidates attempted to write a persuasive piece rather than the required informative response, often including unnecessary comment and additional information as a result, and prejudicing their ability to summarise the key aspects of the passage effectively.

Although Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to keep in mind that 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. Leaving sufficient time to edit responses is advisable. The majority of responses were within the recommended length guidelines and thus were focused and without the repetition that can come with excessive length.

## Comments on specific questions

### *Section A*

**You are Maria from Passage A. The day after the rafting trip you write a letter to a friend back home. Write the letter.**

**In your letter you should comment on:**

- **your impressions of the hotel and its staff**
- **your thoughts and feelings about your husband's attitude and behaviour on the holiday**
- **your plans for the remaining days of your holiday.**

**Base your letter 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 letter, 'Dear friend, This place is everything I imagined…'.**

To demonstrate their Reading skills in this question candidates were required to modify the narrative account of the events in Passage A and write a letter to a friend from Maria's perspective, reporting and reflecting on various aspects of the holiday from her point of view and predicting, based on close reading of the passage, how she might choose to spend the remaining days of her stay. Good responses were able to sustain the use of supporting detail throughout the response, firmly tethering development to details in the passage. The first bullet allowed them to use evidence from throughout the passage to describe the ambiance and

hospitality of the 'Honey Hotel' along with its helpful staff who were clearly eager to please. The vast majority of responses picked up on the prompt in the question that the place was everything Maria had imagined and attempted to present the hotel and staff positively. For example, in stronger responses the hotel's remote location and distance from the airport was interpreted as offering an oasis of calm, whilst even those who considered Al's attentions as indicating someone trying a little too hard were mostly able to recognise that Maria would have appreciated the effort involved and reacted sensitively. Those few who criticised aspects of the hotel which they personally might not have found attractive – for example, the presence of the cat on the terrace – showed less convincing evidence of careful reading since Maria's reaction to the animal was clearly far more positive. Those candidates who made reference to swimming pools and went into great length speculating on the facilities in the suite such as wide screen televisions and mini bars were in similar danger of losing focus on the passage and drifting into creative writing based on their own ideas and experiences rather than evidencing close reading. The few who criticised Al and the hotel throughout had often misunderstood both task and text.

The second bullet allowed candidates to move beyond the explicit and explore judgements about Mr Head's behaviour. In many answers this section proved the strongest of the three. Some judged his behaviour more harshly than others, with those reading closely noting and developing ideas based on the other guests' reports and reactions as well as Maria's reluctance to accompany him on the rafting trip and decision to leave him in the hospital until the end of the holiday despite the minor nature of his injuries. Where ideas were supported by careful reference to details and suggestions in the text they could be rewarded.

The third bullet point required candidates to identify and develop ideas based on clues from the passage. Many candidates referred to the places that Maria might visit or return to – the ruins, the animal sanctuary and the market. They also developed ideas about enjoying the freshly cooked meals, writing on the terrace or learning more about the bees. Where candidates had not read detail closely, this third bullet was likely to be especially challenging and in weaker responses it often received a rather perfunctory treatment at the end of the letter ('I'm just going to relax and recover from a stressful week), or was treated as an opportunity for creative writing moving outside the bounds of the text ('I'm planning on sky-diving and bungee jumping for the rest of the holiday). Some of the least successful responses missed details in both the task and text suggesting ideas that the couple headed home immediately after the accident or Maria moved in to another hotel near to the hospital. More successful responses understood that she was likely to be planning on making the most of her remaining time in an area she found fascinating, and was likely to have been at least a little annoyed or disappointed by events to date. Many candidates were able to expand and develop ideas successfully in this section. A feature of better responses was equal attention paid to the three bullet points with clear modification of the ideas, integrating and interpreting details from the passage.

The best responses realised that Maria Rose Head had written the winning entry, and that Al had taken some time to realise this; that Maria's 'pain in the neck' was an excuse and/or referred to her husband. They interpreted Mr Head's actions variously as demonstrating an inability to appreciate other cultures, indicative of arrogance and/or recklessness, and deduced that he would remain in hospital for the rest of the stay. Mid-range responses made reasonable use of the passage, but tended to stick closely to the events and ideas in the passage, presenting them in the same order as in the passage, and often using some of the same words. A noticeable feature of such responses was close paraphrasing of Mr Head's obnoxious behaviour in the market and his rude behaviour at dinner that night.

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.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity, fluency and coherence of the response and how well it used language to capture Maria's voice. The vast majority of candidates were able to respond in the required form of an informal letter, making some effort to address their audience and purpose, structuring their response helpfully. Levels of formality varied, along with the tone of responses – some chose a reserved, calm and more forgiving voice for Maria than others, some adopted a style in line with that of the competition entry, some were chatty and/or more animated. Where decisions about style and tone had been made and maintained deliberately, they worked well and could be rewarded. Responses which contained inconsistencies of style, lifted frequently from the passage and/or took little account of an audience were less successful. Stronger responses understood the need to explore Maria's point of view and were able to pick up on a number of subtle prompts in the text (for example the fact that she is a writer who 'understands the spirit' of the hotel and her diplomacy regarding the staff and other guests) and to use these to help craft a voice that was convincing and revealed her implicit attitudes to events

**Advice to candidates on Question 1**:

- read the whole passage carefully
- think about how to use key details before you begin writing your answer
- give equal attention to ideas relevant to each of the three bullet points
- adapt material from the passage to make it an appropriate response to the specific task set
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- develop and extend your ideas by considering the perspective of the given persona
- answer clearly, in your own words, creating a suitable voice and tone for the persona of your response
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response
- re-read the passage to ensure that you have selected enough relevant detail for each of the bullet points.

**Question 2**

**Re-read the descriptions of:**

**(a) the winning entry in paragraph 4, beginning 'He agreed…'**
**(b) Al and Mr Head's visits to the market in paragraph 6, beginning 'On the second morning…'.**

**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.**

In response to **Question 2**, candidates were advised to include four appropriate examples for each part of the question and most answers contained a sufficient number of choices, though some contained incomplete examples without full images, and some choices missed key words. Responses to Question 2 are expected to take the form of continuous prose in order to allow candidates to explore their choices fully and consider how language examples are working in context. Using a grid or table format is not advised as this often results in duplication of material and forces responses to be expressed very briefly or in note form. Similarly, brief notes jotted under the choices as a sub-heading are unlikely to allow for full consideration of the subtleties and complexity of the language choice being discussed. Analysis in both halves of the question needs to be sufficiently developed and extended to allow candidates to unpick each word within a chosen phrase and consider how the language is contributing to and affecting the reader's understanding and reactions

The most successful responses to **Question 2** showed precise focus at word level and were engaged and assured, exploring and explaining their choices in careful detail. They selected precisely, including images, and answered both parts of the question equally well. The best responses identified the unifying features, such as the 'bewitching' idea that could then be traced through the use of 'entranced', 'conjuring' and 'charming mirage'. They gave meanings then explored the build-up of associations. This then helped with the interpretation of 'romantic' as an idealised view of a place holding mystery, the chance to go back in time, escapism into the past. There were some excellent and imaginative responses to 'beehive', not just in terms of swarming with people, buzzing with activity, but also the ideas of an organised community all working productively together. The best responses traced 'rainbow of produce' through from a range of colours in the food to concepts of healthy food that is exotic, emphasising its vibrancy and variety. Many saw that the unflattering comments on the market reflected more about Mr Head than the quality of the market, to convert basic explanations of the meanings of 'straggling market stalls' and 'tatty trinkets' to a significant reflection of a sneering, dismissive tone. Less successful responses tried to reconcile this as a different angle on the market and too often 'tatty' and 'straggling were explained as messy, dirty and unhygienic'. Some weaker responses still depended on the key words being repeated in their explanation; the most frequent examples being 'laced', 'ancient civilisations', and 'staged scenes'. There were some candidates who selected whole sentences, or selected phrases that are not in themselves, 'powerful', for example 'complaining loudly or 'unimpressed'. Less successful responses sometimes adopted a 'technique spotting' approach identifying literary techniques, such as the metaphor 'beehive' or alliteration in 'white-washed walls'. This approach often led to rather generic comments about the effects of the techniques rather than the words themselves which limited the response.

**Advice to candidates on Question 2:**

- make sure your choices are precise – do not copy out whole sentences
- make sure your choices are complete – do not offer only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase or image
- do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle
- avoid general comments such as 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there' or 'this is a very descriptive phrase'
- to explain effects, think of all that word might suggest to a reader – the feelings, connotations and associations of the language
- use your own words to explain your choices rather than repeat the words from the choice itself
- try to explain both how and why a particular word or image might have been used
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them
- if you are unsure about effects, begin by offering a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- do not just label literary devices you notice, consider how each example is working in context.

**Question 3**

**(a) Notes**
**According to Passage B, what is the importance of honeybees to humans and what does the writer of the letter believe to be threatening bees' well-being?**
**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.**

**(b) Summary**
**Now use your notes from Question 3(a) to write a summary of the importance of honeybees to humans and what is threatening bees' well-being, according to Passage B.**
**You must use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible.**

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. Candidates are reminded that 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. Most candidates understood that in a question testing their ability to 'select for specific purposes' they should not go beyond line 15, or include groups of ideas on each line. As an opinion piece the passage required students to read critically to determine the facts about honeybees which are being refuted or endorsed in the text. Weaker, less-focused responses often included the incorrect suggestion that GM crops and mobile phones threatened bees. Better responses were careful to be clear and unambiguous in the ideas they presented – for example avoiding the suggestion that bees are used in medicine.

Answers, though in note form, needed to be sufficiently clear and focused to identify the point in hand. The question had two strands: the importance of honeybees to humans, and what threatens their well-being, and the best responses organised their points to acknowledge the different strands. Candidates needed to ensure that their notes were phrased appropriately to focus on the question, for example, 'a loss of healthy food' in itself did not indicate how honeybees are useful to humans and needed 'without bees' or 'if bees were extinct' to make the point clearly. Also, if candidates chose to use an example to make a point, they needed to ensure that the example was accurate so 'over 30 per cent of crops rely on bee pollination' would earn a mark, whereas '30 per cent of crops…' would not. 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 'pollution' instead of 'pollination'.

The majority of candidates demonstrated an awareness of the appropriate style for a summary, with very few examples of wholesale copying, although occasionally some added in further speculation and detail, resulting in less concise answers. The most successful responses used the notes from **3(a)**, re-ordering and regrouping the relevant information with a clear focus on the question. The best answers had considered carefully both the content and organisation of their answer, writing in fluent sentences, within the prescribed

length and using their own words as far as possible. They avoided writing introductory statements and making comments, and concentrated on giving a factual objective summary.

**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 to identify the focus of the task and underline key words
- re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify precisely relevant content points
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to establish and select 15 distinct points
- list your points – one complete idea per numbered line – using as few words as possible
- plan your response in **3(b)** to re-organise and sequence content helpfully for your reader
- write informatively and do not comment on the content of the passage
- 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 words in **3(b)**
- do not add further numbered points in **3(a)** past the 15 required
- avoid repetition of points
- when checking and editing your answers to **Question 3(a)**, consider whether each point you are making could be easily and precisely understood by someone who has not read the passage.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

**Paper 0500/22**
**Reading Passages (Extended)**

## Key messages

Candidates did well, when they:

- read the passages carefully from beginning to end, paying attention to key detail
- read each question carefully, paying attention to the specific guidance offered
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- planned the structure and sequence of each answer, making each point once only in a response
- allowed time to address fully each section of each question
- avoided copying whole sentences or sections from either passage
- used their own words in **Questions 1** and **3b** and when exploring and explaining choices in **Question 2**
- ensured that ideas were fully explained and developed in **Question 1** and **Question 2**
- checked their responses carefully to correct errors of spelling and grammar affecting meaning
- used a range of appropriate, precise vocabulary.

## General comments

Candidates' responses to this paper generally indicated familiarity with the demands of each task and the need to 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. Candidates appeared to find 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 and all parts of the task were attempted. Good responses displayed a sound understanding of the ideas in Passage A by including a range of relevant ideas that were developed effectively and supported by well-integrated detail. Less successful responses often did not pick up on implicit ideas from the passage, for example that Miss Salmon had set off the fire alarm. These answers often displayed little modification or development of the material. A mechanical use of the passage demonstrates at best a reasonable level of understanding. Candidates are expected to adapt and modify the material in the passages for higher band marks: lifting or copying from the text is an indicator of less secure understanding and is to be avoided.

For **Question 2** candidates needed to offer appropriate choices of words and phrases from each of the two paragraphs and make specific, detailed comments about these choices. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to write detailed explanations of the effects of their choices in both parts of the question, demonstrating sound understanding of the writer's purpose. Good responses included a sufficient number of appropriate examples from the relevant paragraphs. The best answers included the clear explanations of effects and images that are required for marks in the top bands. Many responses contained some accurate explanations of meanings and the identification of linguistic devices, but only partially explained effects.
In **Question 3(a)** answers which gave a reasonable number of points attained a mark in double figures. Candidates do not have to use their own words in this first part of the task, but should use short, well focused notes, rather than whole sentences taken from the passage. In **Question 3(b)** some less successful responses contained lifted phrases and sentences from the passages rather than ideas clearly expressed in their own words. It is important that candidates use their own words as far as possible in this summary task as otherwise it suggests that they do not fully understand the wording of the original. It is important too that when the wording is altered and a fact rephrased, the meaning should not be blurred as a result.

Although Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to keep in mind that 20 per cent of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. Candidates need to consider the quality of their writing – planning and editing their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, imprecise meaning and weaknesses in structure. While writing is not specifically assessed for accuracy in this paper, candidates should be aware that unclear or awkward expression will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language and structure of the original passages. Leaving sufficient time to edit and correct responses is advisable. The majority of responses were within the recommended length guidelines and without the repetition that can come with excessive length.

## Comments on specific questions

### *Section A*

**Question 1**

**You are Miss Salmon. The evening of the false alarm you write a letter to a friend.**

**Write the letter.**

**In your letter you should:**
- **comment on the events of the day, what exactly happened and how you feel now**
- **explain why you behaved as you did**
- **suggest your possible courses of action now and what their consequences might be.**

**Base your letter 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 letter, 'Dear friend,**
**Something happened today that I need to tell someone about…'.**

**Write about 250 to 350 words.**

For this question candidates were required to modify the narrative account of the events in Passage A and write a letter to a friend explaining Miss Salmon's reactions to the events, the reasons they took place and offering some consideration of the possible outcomes. Most responses were written in an appropriate informal style with an audience in mind and most addressed all parts of the three bullet points. Many responses were engaging and some displayed an enthusiasm for the task, perhaps because candidates were familiar with some of the aspects of school life contained in the passage.

Some candidates had not realised that Miss Salmon herself had set off the fire alarm. Although there were references towards the end of the passage to the toffee hammer, her lucky escape while sneaking past the office and her need to do some 'serious thinking', some letters reflected the view of the Headmaster that the culprit was one of the students, missing opportunities to evidence close reading. There were other clues throughout the passage that her life at the school posed some difficulties that may have led to her irrational behaviour. Candidates need to read the whole of the passage more than once, before they begin the writing task, to ensure that they have understood the main points and also considered the significance of more implicit details. Thorough readings resulted in more accurate accounts of events, and were able to develop in line with the text rather than move away from the evidence – for example, Miss. Salmon did not run in panic and fear, as less well-focused letters stated, because she knew there was no fire. There was no reason for her to contemplate which student was guilty, as none of them were. In some responses it was evident that a large part of the letter had been written before the realisation that the narrator herself was responsible for the prank. In these responses, this resulted in some lack of cohesion as the final parts of the letter contradicted ideas and thoughts previously expressed.

In addressing the first bullet point, many responses contained a good number of key narrative points; references were made to the Headmaster's tirade, the importance of the visit by the governor and the secretary's attempts to retrieve the registers. Good responses conveyed Miss Salmon's thoughts clearly and convincingly. Many expressed the view that the Headmaster's behaviour was inappropriate and that his 'rant' at the students was counterproductive, as no-one was likely to confess. There was some sympathy expressed for the students who had to stand and listen to the Headmaster's accusations and threats, and also some observations were made about the less well behaved boys that dared to snigger. Some

commented that the incident would not impress the visiting governor or enhance the reputation of the school. These were all supported by relevant detail from the passage. Several letters expressed Miss Salmon's feelings of guilt, regret and shame at her actions. Less good responses relied heavily on the wording of the Headmaster's speech, and in some cases large parts of his address were used as quotations. It is important that the material is modified, as copying from the passage reduces the marks for reading and writing. In responses where candidates believed that a student was responsible for the fire alarm there were some thoughts expressed about who the culprit might be and speculation about how Miss Salmon could expose them or persuade them to confess. There were some misunderstandings of detail as a result of literal readings – for example, referring to the fire alarm being set off the previous evening and the appearance of rain clouds or storms.

In response to the second bullet point, most letters offered a range of explanations for Miss Salmon's behaviour. Some responses only used the material in paragraph seven and in some instances there was a reliance on the original wording and some copied phrases, for example, 'pangs of inadequacy' and 'agony of shame'. Better responses modified and developed these points, and used ideas from other parts of the passage. Some made references to her unmarked papers and rented room which might indicate that she was struggling with her workload and was also not as affluent as other members of the school. Some letters referred to her being accustomed to the sound of sniggers, awkward questions, and her questionable potential as a good teacher. There was also reference to the fear of her lesson being inspected by the school governor. The use of ideas and detail from the whole passage displayed a sound level of reading and understanding and resulted in a range of credible explanations and justifications for her actions.

Some letters attributed the false alarm to one of the students and offered possible reasons for their actions, rather than those of the teacher. While not evidencing competent reading, these often still referred to relevant ideas in the passage, for example, that the culprit could not live up to the high expectations of the school, or that they were friendless, bullied and terrified of facing the lesson. These were all potentially reasonable explanations and could often be credited as such. However, in some letters the misunderstanding about the culprit led to some fictitious explanations, for example, accidents and dares that were not tethered to the passage and could not be rewarded as evidence of Reading skills.

In addressing the final part of the question, most letters included a wide range of possible courses of action and their likely consequences. Some considered the outcomes of a confession, for example, Miss Salmon would lose her job and find it hard to pay her rent; also her reputation as a teacher would be damaged. Most responses also gave credible reasons for not taking certain options, stating that a confession and public apology would be too shameful and humiliating, but keeping quiet would lead to feelings of guilt as the pupils would still be under suspicion. The option of blaming one of the troublesome students, the 'pack leader', was also considered as a revenge for the misery he had inflicted. In good responses the dilemma facing the teacher was explained fully and her indecision and anxieties were conveyed clearly and convincingly. Some responses considered the positive outcome of a confession: that she might receive more support from her colleagues and become a more effective teacher. When candidates had not understood that the teacher was the culprit, the range of options offered was more limited. Several suggested that the 'guilty' person might be expelled or given counselling. These were both credible outcomes in general terms and were partially rewarded.

Good responses focused on all three bullet points and created a strong and convincing character for Miss Salmon. They contained a range of ideas that were well developed, closely related to the passage and supported with relevant details. They avoided repetition and displayed the ability to select material relevant to each part of the task.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity and fluency of the response and how well it used language to convey Miss Salmon's thoughts and feelings. Higher writing marks were awarded for a range of effective and interesting vocabulary. Good responses were well structured, displaying a clear sense of audience and using an appropriate register and language. Weaker responses relied on the wording of the passage and displayed a limited range of appropriate vocabulary and an inconsistency of style.

**Advice to candidates on Question 1**

- read the whole passage carefully
- think about how to use key details before you begin writing your answer
- give equal attention to ideas relevant to each of the three bullet points
- adapt material from the passage to make it an appropriate response to the specific task set
- plan your answer to ensure that the ideas you include are sequenced logically and avoid repetition
- develop and extend your ideas, for example, by considering the perspective of the given persona
- answer clearly, in your own words, creating a suitable voice and tone for the persona of your response
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response
- re-read the passage to ensure that you have selected enough relevant detail for each of the bullet points.

**Question 2**

**Re-read the descriptions of:**

**(a) the atmosphere and the headmaster's speech in paragraph 4 beginning 'A lull in the storm …'**
**(b) the school and the students in paragraph 5, beginning 'Miss Salmon thought it unlikely …'.**

**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.**

In response to **Question 2**, candidates were advised to include four appropriate examples for each part of the question and most answers contained a sufficient number of choices, though some contained incomplete examples without full images, and some choices missed key words. Responses to **Question 2** are expected to take the form of continuous prose in order to allow candidates to explore their choices fully and consider how language examples are working in context. Using a grid or table format is not advised as this often results in duplication of material and forces responses to be expressed very briefly or in note form. Similarly, brief notes jotted under the choices as a sub-heading are unlikely to allow for full consideration of the subtleties and complexity of the language choice being discussed. Analysis in both halves of the question needs to be sufficiently developed and extended to allow candidates to unpick each word within a chosen phrase and consider how the language is contributing to and affecting the reader's understanding and reactions. Less good responses only included one or two choices in each half, limiting the discussion possible. This is not sufficient to display an understanding of the writer's use of language and to secure marks in the higher bands. Likewise, selecting too many choices often resulted in superficial explanations that did not fully explore the effects intended by the writer.

In part **(a)** not all of the choices were appropriate. Credit is given for the ability to select unusual or evocative words that may have different layers of meaning or certain connotations, and in this question candidates were asked to focus on the atmosphere and the Headmaster's speech. In some responses fairly ordinary words were selected, for example, 'Who considers this amusing?' or 'This is not a laughing matter'. These were followed by quite basic explanations of meaning. In focusing on less interesting words and phrases candidates missed the opportunity to explain how the images of extreme weather created an atmosphere of danger and threat. Several responses explained how features of a storm were used as metaphors for the Headmaster's rage and fury, and many contained clear explanations of how the phrase 'rain cloud burst' suggested a sudden explosion of anger and the threat of violence. Not all responses displayed discrimination and understanding when describing the range of effects created by the Headmaster's speech and his actions. For example, the words anger and rage were often given as explanations for the phrases, 'turning with lightning speed', 'lull in the storm' and the word 'bellowed'. Few responses focused on the word 'lull' and how it might create a feeling of tension, few explained why the use of 'lightning' might suggest danger or threat and few explored the possible effects of 'bellowed'.

Few responses displayed an understanding of the sarcasm implicit in Miss Salmon's description of the speech as a 'magnificent monologue'. Although some very good responses included clear explanations of the meanings of the words, for which they were rewarded, hardly any commented on the pomposity or melodramatic delivery of his lecture. Similarly, many candidates were able to explain the meaning of the phrase 'perpetrator of this felony' though not all commented on the exaggerated language and the fact that it was inappropriate, and possibly humorous to the listener, to describe the culprit in such terms. Only a few responses explained the use of 'wanton' and instead gave rather simple explanations of 'criminal act'. Most explanations of the sentence, 'Like a discarded sweet wrapper rustled between acts the giggling fell away' referred to the insignificance of the laughter and its abandonment. There were opportunities to comment on the word 'acts' which suggests that a dramatic performance had been interrupted. The description of the speech was often interpreted literally and the nuances of Miss Salmon's words showing her disdain for it were not always understood. Good responses contained some insightful and precise explanations of images and effects. They also focused on the analysis of key words and explained how they contributed to the overall atmosphere.

In some responses alliteration and metaphor were identified but their effectiveness was not always fully explored. The naming of a literary device can only be rewarded when accompanied by an explanation of its effects.

Generally, there were fewer exact and complete choices in the second part of the task. Several responses explained the meaning of 'bright young students' but did not include an explanation of 'standing to attention' which underlined the outward impression of the high standards and discipline of the school. Similarly, several responses explained the use of 'shining faces dimmed' without considering the effects of 'assumed innocence', which suggests a level of pretence by the students. However, this pretence was explored in several responses with the phrase 'practised picture of compliance'. There was an understanding that the pupils rehearsed their appearance of obedience and that Miss Salmon's description hints at their ability to misbehave and deceive. Most responses included the phrases 'pristine white goals' and 'immaculately groomed', though not all gave separate explanations. Some commented that both descriptions convey the image of a well-kept playing field that reflected the high standards of the school. The lack of focus on individual words in both phrases often meant that explanations were only rewarded once, though there was the potential for two separate meanings and effects to be credited. There were some clear explanations of the word 'lurked' and 'his pack', usually when these choices were offered separately. When they were included in other phrases, for example, 'major criminals lurked' they were often overlooked and the focus for explanation was on 'major criminals'. It is important that explanations are focused on key words that have interesting connotations and not on words that may only have literal meanings.

Less good responses to this question did not include a range of precise and appropriate choices in both sections. Some repeated the original wording in their explanations, for example, 'groomed', and some included overlong examples which did not address the most significant words. The best responses made well-judged and precise selections, identified images, and analysed the writer's use of language with some imagination and clarity.

**Advice to candidates on Question 2:**

- make sure your choices are precise – do not copy out whole sentences
- make sure your choices are complete – do not offer only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase or image
- do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle
- avoid generalised, 'empty' comments such as 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there' or 'this is a very descriptive phrase'
- to explain effects, think of all that word might suggest to a reader – the feelings evoked by the connotations and associations of the language
- use your own words to explain your choices rather than repeat words from the choice itself
- try to explain both how and why a particular word or image might have been used
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or only give a general comment which applies to all of them
- if you are unsure about effects, begin by offering a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- do not just label literary devices you notice, consider how each example is working in context.

**Question 3**

**(a) Notes**

**In Passage B, what advice is given to help with the first year of teaching?**
**Write your answer using short notes.**

**You do not need to use your own words. Write one point per line.**

**Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer.**

**(b) Summary**

**Now use your notes from Question 3a to write a summary of the advice given in Passage B to help with the first year of teaching.**

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

To answer **Question 3a** 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. Candidates are reminded that 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. Most candidates understood that in a question testing their ability to 'select for specific purposes' they should not go beyond line 15, or include groups of ideas on each line. There were sixteen possible answers in the passage, which gave candidates some leeway, and most responses were able to identify 10 or more points. The passage seemed to be accessible to candidates and the responses displayed few misunderstandings.

It is important that points are made with sufficient precision and clarity to be rewarded. It is advisable to include enough information to ensure that the point has been made clearly. Some responses included the words 'form relationships' and 'ask for help'. These were not precise enough to be credited. Some weaker responses included quite general points, for example, stating the need to be well organised and well prepared. There were opportunities to select several specific ideas from the passage about how to organise oneself and prepare adequately. Some included the advice to 'stay positive' and also to 'cheer up'. These have a similar message for new teachers and only one could be rewarded. The advice to 'make adjustments' and 'be prepared to move on' were both part of the message about having an alternative if lessons do not go according to plan. Candidates need to be aware that where very similar ideas are included, they are only likely to be credited once as one point.

Candidates are not required to use their own words in this part of the question, though in better responses there was some evidence of own words which was beneficial when writing the summary in **3(b)**. Selecting and identifying relevant points in this first section meant that candidates had the opportunity to plan their summaries carefully to avoid repetition, and to organise their ideas effectively into a concise and focused prose response.

Most candidates were aware of the appropriate style and form for a summary: many **3(b)** responses were informative, and most were an appropriate length. Most summaries were reasonably clear and concise. In good responses there were attempts to group similar points together, for example, the benefits of forming good relationships, ensuring personal well-being, and advice for planning successful lessons. This re-organisation of ideas often resulted in greater fluency and concision. Less good responses were list-like and often written in the same order as the passage, or were rather stilted, with unconnected points expressed in short sentences. Some contained long introductions with general comments about teaching and little specific advice about tackling and surviving the first year.

Candidates are rewarded for writing the summary in their own words. Less good responses contained copied words and phrases which often resulted in a lack of concision and focus. Some contained statements copied from the passage that did not convey useful advice, for example, 'avoid that dreaded ten minutes at the end' and 'teaching is not a nine-to-five job'. Better responses instead explained that teachers need to prepare extra material and to work long hours in school. Good responses used alternative words for those in the passage, for example, 'diary' instead of 'journal' and 'have a plan B' rather than a 'back-up plan'. Summaries that contained attempts to use own words displayed a better level of understanding and a wider range of vocabulary than those reliant on the original wording. Less successful responses were not always focused and concise, containing overlong introductions and explanations that did not include any rewardable points.

**Advice to candidates on Question 3**

- read the question carefully to identify the focus of the task - underline key words
- 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 distinct points
- list your points – one complete idea per numbered line – using as few words as possible
- plan your response in 3b to organise and sequence content helpfully for your reader
- write informatively and do not comment on the content of the passage
- do not add details or examples to the content of the passage
- you can choose to use your own words in 3a and must use your own words in 3b
- do not add further numbered points in 3a past the 15 required
- avoid repetition of points
- when checking and editing your answers to **Question 3a**, consider whether each point you are making could be easily and precisely understood by someone who has not read the passage.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

**Paper 0500/23**
**Reading Passages (Extended)**

## Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read the passages carefully from beginning to end, paying attention to key detail
- read each question carefully, paying attention to the specific guidance offered
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- planned the structure and sequence of each answer, making each point once only in a response
- allowed time to address fully each section of each question
- avoided copying whole sentences or sections from either passage
- used their own words in **Questions 1** and **3b** and when exploring and explaining choices in **Question 2**
- ensured that ideas were fully explained and developed in **Question 1** and **Question 2**
- checked their responses carefully to correct errors of spelling and grammar affecting meaning
- used a range of appropriate, precise vocabulary.

## General comments

Candidates' responses to this paper largely indicated some familiarity with the demands of each task and the format of the paper, along with an awareness of the need to use material from the passages to answer the questions.

The majority of candidates attempted all parts of the three questions and their responses were an appropriate length. Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible and the majority were able to finish the paper within the time allowed.

Most **Question 1** responses were generally focused on the question and all parts of the task were attempted. Good responses displayed a sound understanding of the ideas in Passage A by including a range of relevant ideas that were developed effectively and supported by well-integrated detail. Less successful responses often did not pick up on implicit ideas from the passage and there was little modification or development of the material. A mechanical use of the passage demonstrates at best a reasonable level of understanding. Candidates are expected to adapt and modify the material in the passages for higher band marks, and lifting or copying from the text is an indicator of less secure understanding and is to be avoided.

For **Question 2** candidates need to offer appropriate choices of words and phrases from each of the two paragraphs and make specific, detailed comments about these choices. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to write detailed explanations of the effects of their choices in both parts of the question, demonstrating sound understanding of the writer's purpose. It is most important that connotations related to the chosen words are explored and explained carefully, with the effects suggested being well-related to the context. Most responses included a sufficient number of appropriate examples from the relevant paragraphs. Few answers included the clear explanations of effects and images that are required for marks in the top bands. General observations could not be credited without support from the text. Many responses contained some accurate explanations of meanings and the identification of linguistic devices, but only partially explained effects.

In **Question 3(a)** some candidates managed to attain a mark in double figures, finding a reasonable number of points. Candidates do not need to use their own words, but should use short, well focused notes, rather than whole sentences taken from the passage. In **Question 3(b)** some responses contained lifted phrases

and sentences from the passages rather than ideas clearly expressed in their own words. It is important that candidates use their own words as far as possible in this summary task as otherwise it suggests that they do not fully understand the wording of the original. When rephrasing, the original meaning must still be clear.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to keep in mind that 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 and imprecise meaning. While writing is not specifically assessed for accuracy in this paper, candidates should be aware that unclear or awkward expression will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language and structure of the passages. Leaving sufficient time to check and edit responses is advisable. The majority of responses were within the recommended length guidelines. There is no need to count words for any answer as valuable time can be lost in this way – an estimation based on the guidelines in each question is sufficient to avoid the repetition that can come with excessive length.

## Comments on specific questions

### *Section A*

**Question 1**

**You are a local journalist who was in the restaurant that evening and saw everything that happened. The next day you decide to write an article for the local newspaper.**

**Write the article.**

**In your article you should:**

- **report what you observed in the restaurant and how the incident was resolved**
- **explain the complaints of tourists and how far you think they are justified**
- **suggest how locals feel about tourists and how both sides could work to rebuild mutual respect.**

**Base your article 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 article with the headline, 'Our city - a playground for tourists?'**

**Write about 250 to 350 words.**

**Question 1** required candidates to modify the narrator's account of how a boy steals his wallet while he and his colleague are at a restaurant in a foreign city celebrating a successful business deal. A local journalist sees everything that happens and next day writes an article for the local newspaper. The response takes the form of this article and there are three bullet points to direct attention to useful ideas. Candidates who only wrote about the shocking state of the thief and how the issue with the two tourists was resolved, without addressing the second and third bullet points, missed opportunities to demonstrate understanding and access higher marks. Those that carefully focused, as directed, on finding the complaints of tourists and the ways to rebuild mutual respect were able to produce mainly focused and often well-structured articles. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and there were attempts to create a convincing voice for the local journalist.

The first section of the article reported the events at the restaurant – responses often developing ideas connected to the stark contrast between the well-fed tourists and the hungry child. In explaining the sequence of events candidates had the opportunity to show careful reading. The victim of the theft and his colleague Fenton reacted differently to the child; this idea was occasionally developed in answers that noted how one tourist showed more concern that the other. The violent response of the waiter in slapping the child, and the appearance and foreign speech of the tourists attracting attention were also used in some responses. 'How the incident was resolved' was omitted altogether in some answers, though others made more thoughtful suggestions such as inviting the boy to eat with the tourists, giving him money or taking him to a foster family. Some candidates became so involved with this part of their answer that they hardly referred to the next two bullet points. Candidates are reminded of the need for balanced answers, with full weight given to answering and developing all parts of the task.

The second bullet point required candidates to identify grounds for the tourists' complaints: a disinterested and hostile waiter, pickpockets and crime making the streets unsafe, vociferous and unmusical buskers and crowds of unscrupulous street traders and beggars all besieging the visitors with requests for money. Some candidates were able to develop these further in the article by saying locals were rude, making tourists feel unwelcome; the waiter preferred serving 'locals;' tourists thought that locals saw them as 'money bags;'; the city was dirty, unsafe and all the beautiful streets were obscured by beggars who would not leave them alone.

The third bullet point or section of the article was perhaps the most challenging as preceding ideas implied the perspective of the local population and how each complaint could be resolved to the satisfaction of both sides. Many candidates were able to offer at least a little development of one relevant idea. Ideas included that the local people needed income from tourists as they were relatively poor and their jobs, like those of waiters, depended on this extra money; tourists should be sensitive to the culture of a different society and not be brash and loudly 'take over' the city while showing off their wealth; mutual tolerance and respect needed to involve both sides with education and language skills being taught; services like those in restaurants should be improved and the city authorities should licence buskers and street traders; policing needed improvement and accommodation for the homeless and providing meals for street children would make the city a better place for all.

Good responses focused on all three bullet points and created a strong and convincing character for the journalist. They contained a range of ideas that were well developed and closely related to the passage. They avoided repetition and displayed the ability to select detailed material relevant to each part of the task. Most candidates appeared to engage with the passage, showing largely accurate reading of events.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity and fluency of the response and how well it used language to convey the attitude of the writer, for example in relation to the social problems raised by the incident. Higher writing marks were awarded for a range of effective and interesting vocabulary. Good responses were well-structured, displaying some sense of audience and using an appropriate register and language for a newspaper report. Weaker responses relied on the wording of the passage and displayed a limited range of appropriate vocabulary and an inconsistency of style or the article was written in 'the wrong voice' without modification.

**Advice to candidates on Question 1**:

- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- read the passage carefully and return to check key details as you plan your answer
- ensure that the ideas you include are sequenced logically and avoid repetition
- answer in your own words
- adapt material from the passage to the type of response you are writing
- re-read the passage to ensure that you have selected enough relevant detail for each of the bullet points
- extend your ideas from the perspective of the character speaking or writing, but be careful not go beyond ideas suggested in the passage
- create a suitable voice and tone for the response.

**Question 2**

**Re-read the descriptions of:**

**(a) the waiter's appearance and behaviour in paragraph 3, beginning 'Fenton and the waiter …'**
**(b) the boy in paragraph 7, beginning 'By now I was supporting the kid …'.**

**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.**

In response to **Question 2** candidates are advised to include four appropriate examples for each part of the question and most answers contained a sufficient number of choices. The question directs candidates to specific paragraphs and gives a precise focus for their selection of phrases.

Responses to **Question 2** are expected to take the form of continuous prose in order to allow candidates to explore their choices fully and consider how language examples are working in context. Using a grid or table format is not advised as this often results in duplication of material and forces responses to be expressed very briefly or in note form. Similarly, brief notes jotted under the choice as a sub-heading are unlikely to allow for full consideration of the subtleties and complexity of the language choice being discussed.

Analysis in both halves of the question needs to be sufficiently developed and extended, for example to allow candidates to unpick each word within a chosen phrase and consider how exactly the language is contributing to and affecting the reader's understanding and reactions. Less good responses often only included one or two choices in each half limiting the discussion possible. This is not sufficient to display an understanding of the writer's use of language and to secure marks in the higher bands. Likewise, selecting too many choices in each half often resulted in superficial explanations that did not fully explore and explain the effects intended by the writer. Occasionally, responses contained fewer relevant examples in part **(a)** limiting the evidence of understanding shown and resulting in lower overall marks for the question as a result than a more focused, balanced answer could have targeted.

Credit is given for the ability to select evocative or unusual words that may have different layers of meanings or certain connotations and, in this question, candidates were asked to comment on the waiter's appearance and behaviour in part **(a)** and the boy in part **(b)**.

In part (a) better responses contained clear explanations of how the words show the waiter's thinly veiled contempt and disinterest in serving the tourists such as: 'resented our presence,' 'nonchalant reluctance,' and 'ringmaster bored with his act.' The image of a circus ringmaster who no longer enjoyed his job was only explained occasionally; similarly; 'processed' our orders connoting mechanical, robotic compliance and 'vacantly watching' were very rarely commented on. 'Tired tea-light' was sometimes interpreted correctly as a symbol of the waiter and even the city; his appearance, hair 'slicked back with some kind of oil' was suggested as representing an undesirable character from a film.

Some answers missed the opportunity to show understanding by including long quotations containing more than one effective phrase so that not all were addressed. This occurred in both parts of **Question 2**. For example, 'he approached our table with the nonchalant reluctance of a ringmaster bored with his act;' and 'He relit a tired tea-light and processed our orders with casual disdain.' Answers needed to be more 'forensic' in approach, carefully selecting and examining small phrases in detail. Very general or unsupported comments did not display understanding and as such could not attract marks. Clear explanations of collective effects occasionally suggested a good overview, but only if there had been sufficient detailed exploration beforehand to arrive at that conclusion.

Potentially interesting language examples such as 'jaded trio' and 'sloped off' were not often selected, or selected but not correctly explained. Some candidates did though take the opportunity to explore and explain how 'dressed without distinguishing feature' reflected the attitude of the waiter, and the city itself, to serving tourists. In several responses the use of alliteration was identified in 'tired tea-light' without exploring its effectiveness. The naming of a literary device can only be rewarded when accompanied by an explanation of its use in the phrase.

By focusing on less interesting words and phrases in both parts of the question, candidates missed the opportunity to explain relevant effects of key words – for example, by selecting 'watching a girl cross the square, a pigeon circle the sky' and missing out 'vacantly'.

Most responses to part **(b)** offered a wide range of more relevant choices, but again losing the focus of the question was a common error. For example, explaining the phrases, 'the rotten, miserable sight of him made me feel ashamed,' or 'I was still living under the spell of the projected illusion,' moved the focus away from 'the boy' and onto the narrator. However, the majority of answers contained clear explanations of the shocking description of the boy and connected images of trash, decay and death found in the descriptions: 'discarded heap,' deflated membrane,' 'rotten,' and 'disintegrated carcass.' Meanings were frequently given and imagery sometimes discussed, showing understanding of the horror of a living child being described in this way.

Other phrases, 'skin and bones,' and 'sunken face,' were also explained most often, while 'wizened,' and 'gaunt' were not generally understood. Less good responses to this question did not include a range of precise and appropriate choices in both sections. Some repeated the original wording in their explanations or included overlong examples which did not address the key words. The best responses made judicious selections, identified images and analysed the writer's use of language with precision and clarity.

The following, drawn from candidates' responses this session, helps to highlight how some of the more successful answers attempted to address the task. This is not intended as a model answer and could have been improved.

The narrator effectively conveys the waiter's 'disdain' towards the tourists in his description of the waiter's appearance. The inclusion of the adjective 'dull' in the description of the waiter's clothing suggests an attitude of boredom, as if he is fed up of waiting on tourists. 'Dull' also creates a lack of liveliness, portraying how he no longer cares about entertaining. This theme is furthered by the simile 'with the nonchalant reluctance of a ring master bored with his act'. The comparison of the waiter to a 'ringmaster' emphasises how he has lost the desire to entertain and is fed up with his job. The word 'act' also implies that he is only putting on a show, he doesn't care about being polite to customers.

The waiter's behaviour also highlights how 'bored' he is as he 'stared off into the distance' watching a pigeon circle the sky'. This seems to portray that he wishes he were somewhere else.

'The word 'carcass' is used which conjures images of death and one assumes he is on the brink of death as he is so emaciated. Carcass is associated with the bones of a dead animal. It is used instead of 'corpse' which dehumanises the child, making him more disfigured and animal-like and therefore wild. The use of 'sunken face' shows that the boy is hollow and caving in on himself in a pitiful manner. 'Sunken' has connotations of a ship wreck as if all of his hope had drowned. ''Swelling up accusingly' is very effective and powerful with the child's face going from bony and gaunt to red and painful, the poor boy becoming even more disfigured by the injury. The swollen area is presumed red by the reader and draws ideas of anger as the colour and emotion are heavily connected. The bitterness the child can't express is coming out on his skin instead. 'Rotten' is also effective, connoting the idea that the child is already dead and decomposing, left to rot as no one cares about him.'

**Advice to candidates on Question 2:**

- pay close attention to the focus of each part of the question when choosing words or phrases
- make sure your choices are precise – do not copy out whole sentences
- avoid generalised, 'empty' comments such as 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there'
- do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle
- to explain effects, think of how the reader's understanding is enhanced by the use of language when reading the word or phrase, because of its connotations and associations
- when offering a phrase as a choice, discuss how each of the words within it is working
- try to explain both how and why a particular word or image might have been used
- use your own words when explaining rather than repeat the words from the choice itself
- if you are unsure about effects, begin by offering a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- do not simply label literary devices you notice, consider how each example is working in context.

**Question 3**

**(a) Notes According to Passage B, what makes a restaurant successful?**

**Write your answer using short notes.**

**You do not need to use your own words. Write one point per line.**

**Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer.**

**(b) Summary**

**Now use your notes from Question 3a to write a summary of what makes a restaurant successful, according to Passage B.**

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

Pleasingly, the majority of candidates had understood that in a question testing their ability to 'select for specific purpose' they needed to identify just 15 points in 3a and that further answers added on after the 15 would not be credited unless replacing a crossed-out answer earlier on. A few candidates however carried on beyond 15 or did not complete the grid, offering fewer than 15 responses. There were a total of 18 possible answers available from this one passage, which gave candidates looking for 15 some leeway, and many responses were able to identify 10 or more relevant points.

The need to select and identify distinct points meant that candidates had to read and plan their answers carefully both to avoid repetition and to organise their ideas sensibly. Most were able to identify a good number, with the better, sharply-focused answers typically scoring two thirds or more of the available content marks. Candidates are reminded that the question instructions ask for short notes, one per line. Long copied sections of text and/or lists of possible ideas on one line are unlikely to demonstrate the focus required to identify clearly the point to be credited.

It is important that points are made with sufficient precision and clarity to be rewarded. Some one-word answers were sufficient; in some cases, for example, 'inexpensive' or 'décor.' was enough to secure the mark. However, other ideas needed to include more information, for example, 'recognising responsibilities to employees' and 'be prepared to do any job.'

Candidates should check back through **3(a)** points when planning **3(b)**, ensuring that each point has been communicated accurately - imagining for example how clear each answer might be to anyone who had not read the text. Candidates need to remember that their notes in **Question 3(a)** are marked for Reading and are not simply shorthand planning for their response in **3(b)**. Each answer needs to demonstrate an unambiguous understanding of the content point in hand. Consequently, unspecified ideas such as 'the steamy gurgle of the coffee machine' or 'discipline' along with general references to 'money matters' and 'restaurants are businesses' were not detailed enough to be rewarded. Phrases copied from the passage without clear focus were also too imprecise to be credited, for example, 'they run out of money before they open.'

Candidates are not required to use their own words in this part of the question, though in better responses there was some evidence of own words, seen in clarifying points and when moving on to write the summary in 3(b). Selecting and identifying relevant ideas in this first section meant that candidates were able to plan their summaries carefully, avoiding repetition and organising them into concise and focused prose. There was frequent evidence that such planning had been done to good effect.

Most candidates were aware of the appropriate style and form for a summary and many part **(b)** responses were factual and informative, and of an appropriate length. The majority of summaries were reasonably focused and concise, although overlong explanations or repeating the idea in a different way did occur. An example of unnecessary explanation would be: 'Keep checking your finances and then get another person to do it so you don't run out of money before you start. The profit, pay and buying things has to be under control.' Giving opinions has no place in a summary as it results in less focused responses.

Candidates are rewarded for writing the summary in their own words. In less good responses, words and phrases were copied from the passage which sometimes resulted in a lack of concision and focus. Some included lifted phrases such as: 'be realistic about what you put in and take out of the business;' and 'don't overprice things; the public knows the cost.' Regular copying in this way led to a lower mark. However, better responses used suitable alternatives for words in the passage for example, 'Make your restaurant your own style without copying someone else,' and 'Taste the dishes with your chef so you know what the customers are getting,' and 'Get a cloth and wipe up!'

Summaries that contained attempts to use own words often displayed a better level of understanding and were able to demonstrate a wider range of vocabulary overall. Not all of the summaries were written with fluency, though in stronger answers candidates used varied and fluent sentence structures. Less good responses were list-like and often written in the same order as the passage, or were rather stilted, with points expressed in short sentences. Better responses used and reorganised the information in **3(a)** carefully, linking similar points and explaining sequences clearly.

**Advice to candidates on Question 3:**

- read the question carefully to identify the focus of the task - underline key words
- 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 distinct points
- list your points – one complete idea per numbered line – using as few words as possible
- plan your response in **3(b)** to organise and sequence content helpfully for your reader
- write informatively and do not comment on the content of the passage
- be careful to give only information that answers the question
- you can choose to use your own words in **3(a)** and must use your own words in **3(b)**
- do not add further numbered points in **3(a)** past the 15 required
- avoid repetition of points
- when checking and editing your answers to **Question 3(a)**, consider whether each point you are making could be easily and precisely understood by someone who has not read the passage.

# 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, adapted for the intended audience and genre
- 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 with precision.

## General comments

Most scripts showed a good grasp of what was expected in both the Directed writing and Composition. Responses were substantial and purposeful, on the whole, with relatively few brief or undeveloped answers. There was evidence in many scripts of a clear awareness of how marks were awarded in the different questions and writing genres and most followed the rubric.

Most responses showed an understanding of the topic in **Question 1** and made sensible use of the reading passage in their responses. Responses clearly engaged with the question and the reading material; they were able to identify the various reasons why Mr Schmit and his family moved to the countryside in the first place and comment on the subsequent reasons why he and his family chose to return to the city. Most responses in the middle mark range tended to reproduce the points made in it. Weaker answers drifted away from the material or listed some points simply.

In the Composition, better responses showed a clear understanding of the features of descriptive or narrative writing and in both genres there was developed and structured writing. Some weaker descriptive writing tended to slide into narrative or in some cases was entirely narrative in character; these responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good descriptive style, such as a focus on detail, and a more limited time span.

The best responses in both questions were characterised by the careful selection of precise vocabulary and sentence structures to create specific effects. The reader was often intrigued in the early stages of compositions and the writing was consciously shaped in both genres in order to engage and sustain the reader's interest. In weaker responses, an appropriate register and effective style was more difficult to achieve. In **Question 1**, for example, the required formal tone was sometimes. In this question and in the compositions, there was insufficient attention paid to basic punctuation in weaker answers. Capital letters were sometimes used rather indiscriminately, appearing frequently where not required but not used for proper nouns, in speech or at the beginnings of sentences. Semi-colons were much in evidence but only rarely used accurately.

**Comments on specific questions**

***Section 1: Directed Writing***

**Imagine you are a listener who has moved from the city to the countryside and found it beneficial. Write a letter to Mr Schmit, in response to the views given in the radio programme. In your letter you should:**

- **evaluate Mr Schmit's reasons for moving his family to the countryside**
- **explain why you think the move did not work.**

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

**Begin your letter, 'Dear Mr Schmit…'.**

**Write about 250 to 350 words.**
**(25 marks)**

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

Most responses adhered to the letter writing structure, using a clear introduction, and were able to bring their letters to a logical conclusion. They showed understanding of the basic requirements of a letter in response to a radio programme, and in better responses the radio interviewee's comments were scrutinised and evaluated purposefully. They also wrote fluently and used vocabulary to good effect. Less good answers, however, simply listed Mr Schmit's reasons for moving to the countryside in the first place and the drawbacks to country life which he did not account for; by doing so, they did not adopt the critical stance which is required for marks in the higher bands. Weaker responses focused on only a few points and often produced a response about the advantages and disadvantages of living in the countryside versus the city in general, rather than covering the range of points made in the article.

**The marks for reading**

Good responses followed the bullet points but also adopted the evaluative stance required for marks above Band 3. Better responses identified and explored the subtleties of the passage, for example the fact that it takes time for established communities to accept newcomers and the need for compromise, which the family didn't show. They were able to appreciate that Mr. Schmit was unwilling to live on less income, his older children were addicted to gadgets, they were inflexible and absorbed by consumerism together with the attractions and materialism of city life. Varying degrees of criticism were levelled at Mr Schmit for his lack of preparedness and his naïve and unrealistic view of both a shift of location at this stage in the family's life and what the countryside had to offer. Perceptive responses compared the benefits and disadvantages for one age group with another and how this might affect any overall decision for the family. The best responses assimilated the details of the passage confidently throughout into a whole new piece: the family had moved just a year ago; Mr Schmit was seemingly desperate to leave, the difference in the younger and teenage children's views of what the countryside had to offer; the notion of community; long journeys and narrow roads; school life; salary and career.

Furthermore, the best responses were able to see some of the contradictions in what Mr Schmit said about the people in the countryside. If they are a 'real community' and 'much friendlier', then the Schmits needed to look at themselves to find the explanation for the move not being a success. Strong responses argued that the countryside has plenty to offer and, if choosing to move there, you shouldn't expect the conveniences of the city. These responses were able to pick out some of the underlying attitudes that caused Mr Schmit and his family to be unhappy, revealed by the language Mr Schmit used; such as calling the salaries 'paltry'; his children were rude, 'weren't afraid' i.e. they were arrogant and superior; villagers 'had never known any other life' i.e. the Schmits were patronising; 'tedious and oppressive' – the children were spoilt and indulged.

This kind of evaluative approach to the material in the passage was required for marks in Band 2 and above. A mark of 7 was given where there were glimpses of evaluation of some of the points but a more consistently critical stance was required for higher marks. Where responses reproduced the points made in the passage, Examiners could not award marks above Band 3.

Mid-range responses and above, in varying degrees of detail, often praised Mr Schmit for his selflessness in thinking about the environment and putting his family first. Others said that he was selfish, not asking the family before moving. He was naïve or negligent in not researching properly, or he was a hypocrite for buying a car. Equally some expressed sympathy for the children, while others said they were over indulged and should have tried harder to integrate with the local community. Many pointed out that if you start criticising things as soon as you arrive, you can expect a hostile reaction. It was common to comment that Schmit should have forced his children to try harder and that both he and they gave up far too quickly.

Responses in this middle range tended to list specific reasons, such as the clean air or the peace and tranquillity as reasons for the move, and his children's grumbling about facilities or his long commute to work as reasons why the move did not work. Where there was some commentary on these issues, these remarks were not really evaluative and sometimes offered solutions rather than probing the passage itself. For example, responses at this level often criticised Mr Schmit for not consulting his children before they moved, an assumption which could not be derived from the passage. Many also suggested that he should have moved to a village closer to the city, and although this was a sensible solution it did not show the kind of grasp of inference and implicit meaning required for marks in the higher band. While correctly addressing the task, some responses disagreed with what Schmit had to say and challenged him over facts by saying that there are lots of facilities in the country, or that well paid jobs are to be found if you look hard for them. A stronger and more convincing line of argument was taken by candidates who acknowledged these shortcomings but said that moving to the countryside is a matter of balancing the pros and cons. Examiners could award a mark of 6 where there was straightforward but wide-ranging coverage of the points in the passage but responses with more limited selection could be given 5 marks.

Weaker responses failed to acknowledge that the Schmits were no longer residing in the countryside. This also led to tense errors in their writing. A fairly common weakness was that candidates agreed with Mr Schmit relocating back to the city after a brief spell in the countryside; thus, their responses didn't challenge his decision, but wrote quite strongly in support of it, stressing the limitations of life in the country, rather than bringing out the advantages. Some weaker responses made impractical suggestions which showed a limited understanding of the passage such as that Mr Schmit should have walked to work.

**The marks for writing**

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

**Style and audience**

Most, across the mark range, wrote an introductory paragraph making clear the purpose of their letter.

Successful responses adopted an appropriate tone of voice in their response and structured their answers according to the requirements of a letter. Some, however, did not end the letter appropriately, or even at all. Some responses adopted a plain voice with unambitious vocabulary whereas others appeared rude and rather aggressive towards Mr Schmit for his lack of foresight and naivety.

Most candidates addressed Mr Schmit in their responses and continued to do so throughout. Higher band responses displayed an excellent balance between addressing Mr Schmit and showing their true opinions about his somewhat hasty and ill informed decisions, whilst keeping an appropriate and respectful tone of voice. This was achieved through the use of sophisticated vocabulary and the embedding of clauses which directly addressed Mr Schmit. Weaker responses slipped into discussing Mr Schmit in the letter or became confused with who they were actually addressing; some wrote as Mr Schmit himself.

**Structure**

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for writing, handled the material confidently and presented their arguments as to why the move did not work, cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a response which was clearly derived from the ideas in the passage but was not dependent on its structure and sequence. Some stronger responses did not base their structure around the bullet points. At the highest level, an overview of the issues involved was given rather than a list of reasons for moving from the city and then returning to it. Some fluent responses with effective sentences did not give full attention to sequencing, so ideas within and between paragraphs were not linked as smoothly as they could have been. Moreover, there was some tendency, even among stronger responses, to neglect the use of paragraphs. Many middle band responses used discursive markers which provided effective structure. Some responses were structured according to the bullet points, occasionally devoting one long paragraph to each. Weaker

responses lacked a clear introduction and conclusion to the letter and ideas were presented in a jumbled way, often without paragraphs. Responses given marks below Band 3 were characterised by brief or no introductions and a simple list of some of the interviewee's points in sequence.

**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 7, 8 or 9 were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Responses given marks in Band 4 sometimes showed some clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation errors which precluded Examiners from awarding Band 3 marks and in addition, there was sometimes a simplicity of language and style. Sentence separation errors also appeared at this level and the frequency of errors became self-penalising, as did insecure grammar and awkward phrasing.

There was some overuse of informality, for example 'like' instead of 'as if', or 'such as' and also 'that' or 'which' instead of 'who'. The joining of separate words, for example 'aswell', 'infront', 'atall' and particularly 'alot' was prevalent.

Advice to candidates:

- try to develop ideas from the passage concisely, using inferences that are suggested in it, but without drifting beyond it
- be aware of the genre you are using for your answer. Think carefully about the right style for a letter or an article
- use paragraphs to structure responses
- check your writing for basic punctuation errors that will inevitably reduce your mark.

***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 Imagine you discover a box filled with objects you collected as a small child. Describe some of the objects and your thoughts and feelings as you look at them.**

**(25 marks)**

**OR**

**3 Imagine you are waiting in a café for a friend who is very late. Describe your surroundings and your thoughts and feelings as you wait.**

**(25 marks)**

The second question was the most popular of the two options.

The first question provided a great variety of responses across the range. The best responses not only demonstrated linguistic and stylistic skills but used a variety of devices to create atmosphere. Complex atmospheres relating to thoughts and feelings experienced were developed.

This question was often handled with considerable sensitivity and the responses felt real. Good responses were able to evoke mood and atmosphere, often accompanied by a sense of lost innocence. Responses at this level often used the outside of the box, focussing on a detailed description of dust covering it, then progressing to the items in the box as a starting point to describe experiences they had had in the past or the people that they associated with various items. Some more successful responses blended the different elements of the box with feelings and details of the contents as well as descriptions of the actual box and its

placement which was often buried in a dark closet or tucked away in an attic. There were some successful extended metaphors involving Pandora's Box, and 'the container of my childhood'.

Some middle band answers described the objects effectively without much exploration of the memories they inspired, or vice versa.

Some lower Band responses added a sense of danger, often causing them to drift into a narrative approach. Lower Band responses tended to list old toys and other items in a routine and perfunctory way which didn't allow for detail, creativity or development. Lower Band responses often had a fairly long narrative build up to the finding of the box which limited the description of the contents. A common issue for some mid and lower Band responses was that in an attempt to convey immediacy these began by employing the present tense but then switched to the past.

In the main, candidates seem to be at ease with structure as they progressed through 'extracting the items from their box' methodically.

The second question also produced responses across the range of marks and encouraged close observation of detail. Baristas, the smell of strong coffee and the smell of bread and/or croissants were all popularly described. Many succeeded in building an atmosphere of tension around waiting. Some higher Band responses linked this to a pathetic fallacy of bad weather.

Responses were often well crafted and evocative descriptions of the writer's surroundings, creating a powerful atmosphere. Some successful responses concentrated on the interior of the café and there was an attempt to capture the mood realistically and observantly. Other strong responses integrated the 'thoughts and feelings' aspect of the task with description of the surroundings, including details of specific people or groups of people in the scene. Responses which focused solely on physical details, such as the décor of the café or the smells and taste of the food, were not as effective and lacked range. This was also the case for those answers which focused solely on the thoughts and feeling of the narrator, as descriptions of anger and frustration, for example, could become rather repetitive and lacked variety.

Some middle and lower band responses often described the café as a dreadful place to be, exaggeratedly emphasising the culinary nightmare of the experience, made worse by the grotesque people who worked in, and the misfits who patronised the establishment. This did not feel realistic and spoilt the overall effect.

Lower Band responses sometimes included descriptions of insignificant objects, for example, wrist watches, shoes and hairstyles, which didn't add to the effect. Occasionally, in an effort to achieve effect, responses included a sudden shift: the weather changed dramatically; the door opened with a 'high pitched thud' which disturbed cohesion. These weaker responses tended to focus purely on the frustration of waiting and clocked each passing minute.

Some responses included formulaic use of detail from each of the five senses which led to the details and images being presented in a disjointed way. This approach can weaken the structure and overall picture formed in even the strongest of responses.

Marks for Style and Accuracy were often lower than those for Content and Structure. Better responses chose precise and varied vocabulary and controlled complex sentences with secure punctuation within and between sentences. In weaker responses, tenses were used insecurely, and incomplete or poorly separated sentences adversely affected candidates' marks. Although there were fewer examples than previously of strings of incomplete, verbless sentences, this was often because there was more narrative than descriptive content in the weaker responses.

Some responses wrote descriptively through narrated events and, as a result, could access the higher marks, whereas weaker responses used narrative alone.

Advice to candidates:

- avoid narrative and remember to provide descriptive detail
- try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content
- it is good practice to write in the present tense, but do not change tense once you have started your writing
- write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.

**OR**

**Narrative Writing**

**4 Write a story entitled, 'The New Beginning.'**

**(25 marks)**

**OR**

**5 'This was too exciting a temptation to resist.' Write a story in which these words appear.**

**(25 marks)**

The first question was the most popular of the two options.

There was quite a range of subjects in response to **Question 4**. Responses took both a literal or metaphorical approach, the latter producing some of the most engaging responses.

Moving house or starting a new school were popular themes. Another popular theme was the idea of making a fresh start after a life of crime or immorality, escaping from some kind of abusive relationship or some form of personal growth or new awakening which ensured a new beginning. Some successful pieces gave moving narratives about escaping poverty and hardship via education.

Higher band responses often introduced a more dramatic scenario which represented a turning point for the narrator, allowing them to create suspense and a sense of climax to a greater extent. In contrast, one of the most successful responses was a complex and sophisticated character study – a rumination on the nature of freedom of both the body and the mind.

Middle band responses tended to take a rather autobiographical approach, beginning with the childhood of the narrator and describing events in their life in a chronological fashion, up until the point where their life had reached a turning point. These were effective on some occasions through attention to character and setting. Others relied on over-use of dialogue which was less successful. Weaker responses which focused on a straightforward story were often able to control this approach effectively. Such responses often tended to record a long sequence of biographical details about what had gone wrong in the life of the main character, leading to rather a poor structure.

Some lower band responses used Section A as inspiration, choosing to focus on the idea of moving and therefore having a new beginning. These responses were often straightforward or clichéd and relied heavily on action instead of the development of character or setting.

**Question 5** produced a wide range of often adventurously written responses. Most chose to focus their plots on some form of crime or being tempted into committing something serious or dangerous, for example a major robbery or a murder.

The most successful responses used subtle twists and turns in the narrative which produced complex and sophisticated writing. Higher band responses explored the idea of giving in to temptation, and the potential effects of this; for example, the temptation to disobey parental rules and subsequent consequences; another successful response took a science fiction approach in which the central character acquired an object which allowed its owner to move seamlessly between the future and present, until the temptation had 'festered and grown into an overwhelming monster' leaving the writer trapped in limbo between the living and the dead. These more successful responses showed planning and strategically inserted the question phrase seamlessly as a pivotal point in the story.

Middle Band responses often focussed on simple events, for example being tempted to steal a cookie or a challenge given by friends – ranging from bungee jumping, visiting a forbidden place or completing some misdemeanour at school; these were event driven with only brief development and often had a predictable ending that 'it was all a dream'.

Lower band responses tended to focus on totally unrealistic events such as being tempted to live on Mars or to steal unrealistic items. These lower band responses used the question phrase randomly within the narrative, often producing less cohesive plots as a result. Often, weaker responses involved complicated 'temptations' and lapsed into plots which were too unwieldy to convey events convincingly.

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. 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. Speech was over-used only in weaker responses but there were many scripts where the punctuation of direct speech was insecure, even when the story itself was quite well-structured. Again, basic punctuation errors with capital letters, the spelling of simple words and misused homophones appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes so frequent as to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy.

Advice to candidates:

- remember that stories need more than events to interest the reader
- plan the ending before you begin so that you can shape your story appropriately
- characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader
- originality is important. Try to think of unusual approaches to your topic, but keep the details credible
- check your writing for errors, especially missing full stops.

# 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 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 the great majority of responses a secure understanding was shown of what was expected in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. Most responses, regardless of achievement, were developed and there were relatively few very brief scripts. There were also very few scripts where more than one composition question had been attempted.

Most responses showed a committed engagement with the topic in **Question 1**, often with a sound grasp and understanding of the issues addressed in the passage. The majority of candidates approached the topic in their own language rather than lifting or copying the words in the passage. Better answers here also tended to structure their responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the passage to support a cohesive argument of their own. Weaker responses tended to reiterate the ideas in the passage, often in the same sequence, rather than selecting and regrouping points. Some made good use of the two bullet points in the question to help structure the response. Occasionally, insufficient use was made of the reading material, and responses drifted into a generalised discussion concerning politeness and good manners. These responses tended to focus less on the points raised in the magazine article than on their own personal thoughts and experiences, missing opportunities to evaluate the ideas in the passage.

Better responses paid attention to the register, audience and style required for a letter to a writer who is a retired teacher and dealing with material that had appeared in an international magazine. These were persuasive in purpose, using the passage with subtlety to show an understanding of the argument, rather than listing the points. Some in the middle range of marks showed an insecure register, sometimes lapsing into a more colloquial style less appropriate for the audience. Valedictions were sometimes forgotten, or were inappropriate in weaker responses, a feature symptomatic of an insecure grasp of audience and purpose.

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. The best narrative writing engaged the reader with well-drawn and interesting characters and scenarios which were engaging and credible. 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. Composition responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in specific genres. 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 in this series. Many descriptions would have been improved by the inclusion of well-chosen detail and the narrator's reactions in order to recreate the scene in the reader's imagination.

## Comments on specific questions

### *Section A*

**Question 1**

**Write a letter to Paul Lifschultz, giving your views on what you have read in the article. In your letter you should:**

- **identify and evaluate the arguments in the article**
- **explain how far you agree with Paul Lifschultz's attitude.**

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

**Begin your letter, 'Dear Mr Lifschultz…'**

**[25 marks]**

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

High marks were awarded where a perceptive and evaluative argument was made concerning Lifschultz's attitude concerning courtesy, politeness and manners. Higher marks were awarded when the letter was both accurate and appropriate in style. Better responses assimilated and integrated the material into their own focused argument in a convincing manner. These responses had a clear understanding of the range of points delivered in the reading material, developed these points, and evaluated the overall argument. Most responses reproduced the material effectively and demonstrated an understanding of the different ideas delivered in the magazine article. Examiners awarded the highest marks where a clear line of argument was developed, using the material to support the point of view, and leading to a consistent and convincing conclusion.

Responses given marks in the middle range tended to be more focused on expressing a clear understanding of the different incidents and perhaps offering other relevant examples and some simple evaluation. The benefits, or otherwise, of good manners and politeness were understood and written about, but the exploration and evaluation of the material was less clearly the main focus. Some development of the material was offered, and a conclusion was usually reached.

Weaker responses showed some understanding of the range of incidents and examples as delivered in the passage. At this level, the range of ideas was narrower and candidates often relied more on the wording of the passage, often offering repeated direct quotation from the magazine article.

**Marks for reading**

The best responses adopted a consistently evaluative stance and read effectively between the lines of the passage to show a more sophisticated understanding of the argument in the article and Lifschultz's overall attitude. These responses had an authoritative grasp of the material, and used it to support their own effectively developed viewpoint. Opinions both for and against the necessity of having good manners, courtesy and politeness in today's society were awarded Band 1. In these answers, a clearly explored and evaluated conclusion was reached and expressed in a style which assimilated the reading material.

Marks in Band 2 were given where the ideas were evaluated to some degree. A mark of 7 was awarded for responses where some thoughtful inferences were made from the passage and the ideas in the passage were successfully developed. At this level, responses tended to include a good range of examples for the material, together with some developed comments about them to show a grasp of the passage's subtler points. For example, some mention was made of the fact that society has changed and moved on from the

days being written about by the retired teacher. There were different ideas to develop to explain the reasons behind the shop assistants' attitude toward the customer. These inferred ideas, even where other, more surface qualities were reproduced, were often enough for Examiners to award a mark of 7, but a more sustained understanding of the ideas which underpinned the passage was needed for a higher mark.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 3 where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the passage but without the more implicit meanings mentioned above. Responses at this level showed a sound understanding of the specific points made in the passage. Responses tended to list the qualities of politeness and good manners, and did not always offer an opinion on Lifschultz's attitude. The range of points and clarity of understanding were the discriminating factors in this Band.

Weaker responses showed some misunderstanding, drifted away from the passage or addressed the material thinly. Some at this level went through the material with little reference to the ideas discussed in the interview, or offered examples from the passage without offering an appropriate register or personal viewpoint. Where a mark of 4 was awarded, some firmer links with the passage and a wider range of points were needed, whereas 3 was generally given for very thin or brief responses. Marks below 3 were given when the task was not understood or only a few lines were written.

**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 relatively formal tone was appropriate for a letter to a retired teacher writing an article for an international magazine and most responses were written in an appropriate register, even where the writing was technically weak. Some weaker responses were written in a much more colloquial style, and these were not always credible as letters addressed to a professional concerning this subject matter. There was also a tendency to make assertions without effectively using the reading material to support them.

In the middle to lower mark range, the style was often appropriate, although there were sometimes lapses in candidates' awareness of the intended audience, and although most started in an appropriate way, valedictions were frequently forgotten.

**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 letter 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 opinions.

Responses given 7, 8 or 9 for writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the article in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed. These 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 tackle the second bullet point productively which led to some repetition.

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 passage with less careful selection of ideas about the arguments.

**Accuracy**

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in Band 1. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. Precision in the control of a subtle and ambitious vocabulary resulted in some very high marks in this component.

Responses given 7, 8 or 9 were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Although the style was usually appropriate and the level of formal language was sustained, a range of quite basic spelling and punctuation errors was evident. The failure to use a capital letter for the personal pronoun 'I' was a frequent error, as was the use of capital letters

where they were not needed, even where there was otherwise general accuracy in the writing. 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 frequently in the passage, such as 'courtesy', 'politeness', 'discourteous' and 'customer', or words essential for letter-writing such as 'sincerely' and 'faithfully'.

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 errors which meant that Examiners could not award in Band 3, where mostly correctly structured sentences are required.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Think about the underlying attitudes in the passage as well as the specific points being made.
- 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 (or reader of your article) would expect.
- Check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing full stops, missing or wrongly used capital letters or key words mis-spelt.

***Section 2*: Composition**

**Descriptive Writing**

**Question 2**

**Imagine you are watching a spectacular sunset with friends or family. Describe what you see and hear, and your thoughts and feelings as you watch.**

**[25 marks]**

**OR**

**Question 3**

**During a walk through open country, you stop for a few moments. Describe what you see and hear, and the effect it has on your thoughts and feelings.**

**[25 marks]**

25 marks were available for this question, of which 13 were for Content and Structure and 12 for Style and Accuracy.

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range. In the first question, many different locations where the sunset could be observed were written about. The question led to some engaging responses dealing with thoughts and feelings. In the second question, there were some vivid descriptions of different landscapes and environments. As in previous series, some evidence of inexperience in tackling descriptive writing tasks was seen by Examiners in responses which became narratives or which contained limited descriptive detail as well as rather mundane or repetitive details.

For the first question, the best responses often included the feelings of the narrator as a cohesive device for the piece as a whole, starting with a range of emotions and feelings concerning the anticipated sunset. Some effective description of the chosen location, either positive or negative, was used and sustained in quite sophisticated images throughout some responses.

Responses given marks in the middle range were more straightforward in their approach to the task, perhaps repetitively dealing with the idea of waiting and anticipation, without effectively developing a range of thoughts and feelings. There was sometimes a tendency to use the senses in a rather formulaic way to help structure the response, with comments on what was seen and heard, touched and smelt being somewhat

mechanically covered. Some responses included extended details of locations without sufficient attention to thoughts and feelings.

Examiners gave marks below Band 3 where the writing was more typically narrative than descriptive in focus. Such responses were often led by dialogue rather than description of the surroundings or the thoughts and feelings. While a narrative frame is often useful to give descriptions cohesion, there was at this level some insecurity about what constitutes effective descriptive writing.

There were a considerable number of responses that had a very similar approach and range of vocabulary. The sunset was regularly compared to 'an oil painting on nature's canvas' usually painted by Picasso, or sometimes Monet. This was seen too many times. Ambitious but appropriate vocabulary is better than a pre-prepared list that has to be included no matter what. It was noted that the following words were used with surprising frequency: 'limerance'; 'vespertine', ensorcelling'; 'ataraxia'; 'cynosure'. An ambitious but more regular vocabulary is likely to be more successfully used.

The second question also elicited responses across the mark range. The open country of the title was reached from many different locations. A number of responses contained a developed comparison between the country and the city. A variety of focus was offered, zooming between the various things encountered in the open country. There was some rather formulaic use of the senses, very often with attempts to describe the smells of the countryside. While there was some descriptive detail, it was often a little predictable or clichéd. Responses given marks below Band 3 were usually narrative in intent and with limited descriptive focus. Perhaps candidates' marks could have been improved at this level by a better understanding of the differences between narrative and descriptive writing.

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, as well as varied sentence lengths, were employed to create specific effects. 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 the timespan of your writing short.
- 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 with the title, 'Home At Last'.**

**[25 Marks]**

**OR**

**Question 5**

**Write a story which involves a meeting between enemies.**

**[25 marks]**

The first narrative question was usually well-structured, and the title allowed for a number of ways to be 'Home At Last'. Soldiers returning home and students coming home after studying abroad were popular ideas. Some responses offered a metaphorical approach, with the main character discovering their true 'home' within themselves. As in most narrative writing, the success of the story depended as much on the degree to which the characters were well-realised, believable portrayals as on the sequence of events in the plot. Middle range stories offered a clear and engaging account of the topic, with some effective detail and a range of subsequent events. One feature noticed by Examiners was a rushed ending after reasonably

effective beginnings and the creation of quite credible characters. This weakness often kept marks in Band 3 where there were some features of Band 2 at the start and highlights the need for candidates to have the ending in mind from the beginning. Some narratives were also too reliant on speech in places. Dialogue was used to tell the story more than to highlight aspects of characters and relationships, weakening the overall impact and often also revealing weaknesses in speech punctuation.

Weaker responses tended to be series of events rather than shaped narratives which showed due regard for the needs of the reader. Even where the plot itself was credible and had some shape and sense of purpose, a mark of 6 was often given where there was insufficient preparation and characterisation was weak.

For the second narrative question, the variety of topics covered was very wide. Settings within schools were popular, as well as gangland locations. There were a number of medieval battle scenes, often containing quite graphic encounters. The best responses were carefully managed and created a believable and effective denouement. Better responses focused attention on characterisation and setting before this moment was revealed. Fairly straightforward scenarios were often lifted by careful scene-setting and characterisation into effective stories which could be given marks in Band 1. Indeed, these kinds of narratives were generally more effective than stories with a wider scope or more extreme storylines. Average and weaker responses were characterised by less effective, more contrived stories which seemed to be developed in an unconvincing way. Responses given marks in Band 4 were particularly dominated by events, some of them rather unlikely, while Band 5 marks usually reflected rather brief accounts with very little to engage the reader in terms of characters and setting. There were a number of narratives dominated by dialogue, which is usually self-penalising in terms of development as well as accuracy.

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. 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. 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 misspelling 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. 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.
- Consider more creative interpretations of titles.
- 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 0500/33**
**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
- 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 of them in both the Directed Writing and Composition sections of the paper. There were very few which were unacceptably brief or undeveloped, and rubric infringements where more than the required number of questions were attempted were rare. In a very small number of scripts, one question from each genre in the Composition section was answered.

At all levels of achievement, clear understanding of the reading material and the task in **Question 1** was shown, and strong engagement with the topic demonstrated: appropriate attention to the style and format of an article was paid. The great majority approached the topic in their own words, with 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 seemed not readily available. Many excellent answers which interrogated the views expressed by the writer of the newspaper report and the people featured in it showed a firm grasp of the issues and a sophisticated awareness of the requirements of, and the pressure upon, pupils and staff in secondary education faced with radical changes. Some strong responses enthusiastically supported the proposed restructuring of classes in a vertical grouping system, but were still able to describe them in a suitably evaluative manner. At all levels of achievement, the issue of the proposed social, rather than academic, benefits of such a system was inclined to dominate the appraisal, often at the cost of more comprehensive coverage of the material. The tendency of the newspaper report to overlook the possible disadvantages of vertical grouping and its failure to provide more than minimal evidence of its success in large senior schools was often insufficiently examined and sometimes completely ignored: more attention to these might have resulted in more fruitfully critical evaluation of the system and its suitability for the candidate's own school.

The best responses combined an assured grasp of the content and attitudes of the material with an independence of thought reflected in the structure of their writing: rather than a mechanical consideration of the points in the same sequence as the original, they were evaluative of the whole thrust of the report from the outset, selecting and commenting on its details to support their views: writing was often authoritative and trenchant, and sometimes witty. In the middle Band, responses showed simple agreement with the views of the featured school principal, developing them with personal anecdote which recounted their own experience and expectations of school life, or in unquestioning acceptance of the limited supporting evidence offered. Here, the writing was often of a fluency and accuracy typical of higher Bands, and these scripts sometimes demonstrated in their Section 2 compositions an originality of thought and invention absent in the handling of the reading material. A small but not insignificant number reiterated and agreed with the views of the

proponents of the new system and the reservations touched upon but dismissed in the report, without challenge or evaluation.

In Section 2, there was usually a clear awareness of the differing requirements of the two genres, which were attempted in fairly equal numbers, and there was much writing of a high standard 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. Although **Question 2** evoked some excellent descriptive pieces with evidence of conscious crafting for effect, a relatively large number of responses drifted into narrative. Some narrative framework for cohesion was often apparent in responses to **Question 3**, but was usually appropriate and did not detract from the essentially descriptive nature of better responses. Weaker responses to both questions in the descriptive genre were typically dominated by simple, sequential narrative, mechanical reference to the senses, and limited vocabulary. Strong responses to Questions 4 and 5 frequently engaged the reader's interest from the beginning, and also provided a satisfactory and believable resolution to the story. In the middle Bands, often engaging and well-written stories were let down by weak, abrupt or unconvincing endings.

Weaker responses in both Section 1 and Section 2 sometimes struggled to find the appropriate register and tone, and were marred by the frequency of basic errors in punctuation and syntax. Weak sentence separation and uncertain control of tense were evident at varying levels of achievement, and there were a small but significant number of compositions which were un-paragraphed, even in the setting out of dialogue.

## Comments on specific questions

### *Section 1*

### Directed Writing

### Question 1

Imagine that your school has plans to introduce vertical grouping. Write an article for your school magazine giving your views on the topic, based on the article. You should

- explain and evaluate the ideas expressed in the article about vertical grouping
- give your own views about how you think it would affect students of different ages.

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

Write about 250 to 300 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)

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 content of the passage.

High marks were awarded where the views expressed in the article were subjected to rigorous examination and there was an overview of the subject of vertical or family grouping. At this level the style of the response was appropriate and displayed a high level of accuracy, and points from the article were selected to support the candidate's views in a cohesive and balanced argument. A format appropriate to an article was followed and the mode of address was consistently appropriate; the underlying assumptions and implications of the contributors' positions were recognised, and more contentious claims scrutinised and challenged. Marks in Band 3 were awarded when candidates showed reasonable understanding of the issues, and subjected some points to more extended discussion and development. Responses here were typified by often enthusiastic support for the structural change, with a little recognition of possible disadvantages for some pupils or staff. More thoughtful responses made some attempt to question the desirability of such a radical change to school life and its implications, especially where no precipitating crisis existed. Weaker responses tended to work through the article, agreeing and disagreeing, often resulting in contradictory assertions which reduced cohesion in the overall argument. Here, there was often confusion about the identity of Mrs Perez, or which school the proposals were intended for. The weakest responses focused on one or two

points only, showing limited understanding of others, or offered lengthy anecdotes of limited relevance to the material.

**The marks for reading**

The best responses were evaluative throughout, demonstrating the ability to assess objectively the views expressed in the article and adopt a wider view, rather than focusing only upon those which claimed indisputable benefits for students and institutions alike. These respondents gave a concise explanation of the concept of vertical or family grouping, appropriate to the intended readership of the article, and summarised Mrs Perez' claims for the system, avoiding laboured reiteration and assimilating them into a cogent argument of their own. While most responses awarded marks in Band 1 demonstrated effective reading between the lines to produce a clearly evaluative and balanced argument, which recognised the merits of vertical grouping for both younger and older pupils while inferring its disadvantages and weaknesses, some responses of great maturity considered the implications of this development for the greater intergenerational cohesion of society as a whole: 'Students graduating from schools where this system was used will be more mature, tolerant and caring for those younger or weaker than themselves, while also understanding the difficulties and concerns of their parents and teachers.'

At this level there were also some very assured and perceptive responses which closely scrutinised the purported benefits of the system and developed a critique strongly rooted in the text. Here, the uneven nature of these benefits was considered: that younger pupils would be cared for, challenged and supported very possibly at the expense of the academic development of older students unwillingly cast in caring positions; that the skills learnt in this way might prepare a student for a career in teaching but not those whose destiny lay elsewhere: 'Ahmed might well be accepted in a teacher training college but my application for the course in astrophysics won't be helped by me being a nicer, more tolerant person than the next one.' A small number of more perceptive responses challenged the motivation of the proposed change to the system in their school: that it had been the only way to save a school threatened with closure and therefore should not be considered where no such pressure applied. 'Our college has had great results for years, and we have a happy student body. Why should we risk all that for a system which was brought in as a last-ditch attempt to save a school in big trouble – that's not an educational reason!' Again, only a small minority of responses interrogated the fact that once the threat of closure had passed for Green College, the age-range in its vertically-grouped classes had been reduced – an admission of limitation to the much-vaunted benefits which would have provided material for fruitful evaluation. Rather more responses questioned the value of Mrs Perez' claim that 'there are plenty of good models in primary schools all over the world.' This was no reason to apply the system in the hugely different circumstances of a large urban secondary school. Almost all responses referenced the testimony of Emilia, which provided most of the support for the system, although few noted, even at the top level, that one academic and social success was hardly material support for such radical change. Much was made – at all levels – of Emilia's claims that vertical grouping eliminated the threat of bullying, 'We feel protective of the younger ones.' Several higher-level responses successfully challenged this idea: 'If a shy younger pupil is placed in a classroom of older ones it can be a scary experience. After all the Year 7s are known to avoid us for a good reason: we're bigger, larger, faster. If it is impossible to avoid older students, what then? Similarly, older students may tire of the younger ones' persistent questions, causing them to lash out….' Other possibly undesirable outcomes were successfully inferred: a reduction in respect for adults if they were seen to be struggling academically in comparison to children in the same class; the exposure of young children to inappropriate conversational topics, language and behaviour from older teenagers, and even the attentions of paedophile adults exploiting the opportunity of physical proximity to young children. Responses awarded marks in Band 1, and to a lesser extent in Band 2, were able to compare what was offered by vertical grouping with the pressures and perceived advantages in their own education to develop their evaluative stance: here the benefits of closely-targeted courses and the tried and tested teaching methods of experienced professional staff were used as the basis for scrutinising the vaunted claims of vertical grouping in an often impressively mature and sophisticated way. Even candidates awarded marks in Band 1, however, rarely discussed in any great depth the rather briefly-referenced extra, separate tuition which was provided by Green College for 'exam students.' Opportunities for rigorous interrogation were often missed here but one response demanded, 'Why should I have to go to extra Math and Physics classes after school, time I need for sport and music lessons, when all that should be provided in class time?' Responses awarded the top mark required assimilation of the material, without its mechanical reproduction, in an authoritative, cogently argued and perceptive manner, and high-level inference.

Marks in Band 2 were awarded when there was more than unquestioning acceptance or simple disagreement with the views in the article, however well developed or supported; here, at least some claims were held up to scrutiny. Candidates often began by reproducing and agreeing with the claims for vertical grouping as presented by the writer and the featured principal, but went on to offer a more balanced

evaluation of the vaunted benefits in the light of their own experience. They were able to acknowledge the presence in their own schools of poor intergenerational relationships and their implications for pupils' education, both social and academic, and for the health of society, but were able to question the practicalities of teaching widely divergent groups in the same classroom. 'We don't really know any of the younger kids so we can't help or support them, but I can't imagine myself waiting for them to catch up while the teacher spends all her time trying to explain things to them!' Others were genuinely enthusiastic at the prospect of securing their own learning by having to explain a concept to a younger member of the class, or because of the perceived development of their own maturity which would stand them in good stead in many aspects of adult life.

When responses demonstrated substantial coverage of the material with some degree of evaluation, a mark of 8 could be awarded. When coverage was reasonable and evaluative in its approach, or where one or two points showed evaluation, albeit limited, a mark of 7 was given.

Marks in Band 3 were awarded where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the reading material but less recognition of implicit meanings or unsupported assertion. These responses were often typified by unqualified and unquestioning approval of the proposed restructuring of classes. A mark of 6 could be given where the candidate reproduced key points with some appropriate, often anecdotal, development. At this level, responses often concentrated their efforts on the points raised in the third paragraph of the article, and with Emilia's account of her experience in the fourth paragraph. There were some very substantial responses, covering every point in the material and developing them with a little discussion, awarded a mark of 6 and not 7 because evaluation was absent, although clear understanding of the views in the article was repeatedly demonstrated. Where there was clear understanding of the main thrust of the article but only a limited number of points discussed, a mark of 5 was given. In Band 3 responses there was a great deal of re-wording of the arguments in the text without further meaningful development. While straightforward 'lifting' of material was rare, close and often fluent paraphrase was not. The final sentence of the second paragraph was very often reproduced almost verbatim.

Examiners sometimes gave marks below Band 3 where there was some misunderstanding, although this was quite rare: for instance, responses sometimes confused Mrs Perez with their own Principal, or thought that vertical grouping had not yet been introduced at Green College. Other responses simply paraphrased Mrs Perez's views without any development, selection or evaluation. A few responses which were awarded relatively high marks for writing were only given reading marks in Band 4 because they consisted mainly of assertions about the values of tolerance and responsibility in education, with little reference to their purported relationship with vertical grouping. Some responses were valid and relevant to the task and the article but made only a few points: these were awarded a mark of 4; where coverage was very thin a mark of 3 was more appropriate. Marks below this were applied when very little had been written and connection with the text and task was only tangential.

**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**

Only a small minority of responses adopted the sort of intimate, colloquial, direct style which was perfectly valid and appropriate in the writing of an article for the school magazine by a student. Most used a formal register and direct address. The best responses demonstrated authority and confidence. The great majority wrote in their own voice, or at least in first person: very occasionally the writer adopted the persona of a concerned parent or member of staff. The most accomplished, evaluative responses demonstrated their stance from the start, immediately signalling the direction their argument would take.

In the middle to lower mark range, responses were usually appropriate in tone and form, but they often followed and reproduced the wording of the passage quite closely; while there was very little wholesale 'lifting' of clauses or sentences from the material, some words and phrases appeared repeatedly in responses, sometimes unadapted to the writer's own style and syntax. Many responses at this level expressed approval of vertical grouping, followed by disapproval of some of its consequences, without developing a clear stance. Weaker responses sometimes forgot that an article was being written, or who the intended audience was, and simply described the experience of Green College and the views of its Principal.

**Structure**

The most successful candidates framed their arguments in a coherent, cohesive response, prioritising their points in a fluent and authoritative manner independent of the order and structure of the passage. They supported their ideas with cogent detail, often showing a sophisticated, wide-ranging awareness of the educational and societal implications of the topic. Responses in Band 2 were clear in their stance, and often supported their argument with carefully selected points leading to a lucid conclusion and exhortation of the intended audience.

In the middle range, there was often an attempt to order the response to support the thesis, but a majority followed the sequence of the article in a predictable or even laboured manner, sometimes at the expense of their argument. Marks at the lower end of Band 3 were awarded when points were simply reproduced either in the order of the passage followed by a brief paragraph or concluding sentence which stated their own view in a simple manner, or the intended audience was invited to make up its own mind. At this level too, responses sometimes showed a clear familiarity with the material but covered only a limited range without developing a distinct argument or point of view. Responses given marks below Band 3 used the material very thinly, were sometimes only partly relevant to the task or comprised only a couple of confused or contradictory remarks or largely lifted or paraphrased material.

**Accuracy**

Responses in Band 1 combined a fluent and authoritative style, typified by appropriate, precisely employed vocabulary and a wide range of sentence structures, with a very high level of technical accuracy. A significant number of responses gained high marks for this element. Others would have merited a mark in Band 1 on the strength of their authoritative tone and sophisticated vocabulary, but demonstrated errors of sentence separation, which undermine the force of the argument, and are always penalised for inaccuracy. Responses in Band 2 were often clearly and quite fluently written within a secure structure, but their vocabulary sometimes lacked ambition or was overly elaborate and imprecisely employed. Responses awarded marks for writing in Band 3 were usually plain, reasonably clear and competent within a basic structure. Vocabulary here was usually adequate. What was evident was the frequent and widespread incidence of errors of sentence separation, the major fault at the lower end in this Band. This, 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. Here phrases such as, 'Well I think...' were seen. The words 'principal', 'tuition', 'university', and 'achievement' were frequently mis-spelt. The sense of audience was often rather insecure. There were very frequent basic errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar; however, it was not only the weakest responses that used capital letters randomly and inaccurately. 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 occasionally blurred by the levels of error, although only a small, if still significant, proportion of the responses fell into this lowest level.

**Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:**

- consider the underlying attitudes of the writer or contributors in the passage as well as those explicitly expressed, and how those affect their opinions
- try to identify the key arguments in the passage
- aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well as some depth in evaluating them
- be prepared to scrutinise carefully and challenge the views expressed in the passage
- be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly
- think carefully about the correct style for a letter, an article or a speech
- check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing full stops and capital letters
- check your spelling, especially of key words from the passage.

***Section 2***

**Composition**

**Descriptive Writing**

**2** Describe the last-minute preparation and the moment before revealing a surprise party for a friend or relative and their reaction when it is revealed.

(25 marks)

OR

**3** Imagine that you are stuck in a lift or elevator for a few minutes. Describe the other people in the lift/elevator and their reactions, and your own.

(25 marks)

While at all levels of achievement responses showed some development of context for the required scene, weaker responses, especially to **Question 2**, sometimes developed their writing too far along the path of narrative, thus forgetting the requirements and intent 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 in the designated situation. In the middle range, some responses were more narrative in manner than is usually desirable for this genre, but included such vivid detail that the engaging atmosphere which is its first requirement for success was satisfactorily created. Here, the Examiners were able to award marks in the middle Band.

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. Although there was still some evidence of the over-use of elaborate and multi-syllabic words in sentences including proliferating adjectives, this seemed less apparent than in previous series.

**Question 2's** scenario of the last minute before revealing a surprise party produced a wide variety of contexts and occasions: baby showers, birthdays of various relatives and friends, welcome home parties. The best responses focused closely on the 'last-minute preparations' and 'the moment', avoiding narrative almost completely but for the densely-packed final seconds before the guest arrived. Although a certain linearity was inevitable, some weaker responses included lengthy narrative preambles, and continued the story of the party to its (sometimes long drawn out) conclusion. Among responses awarded marks in Band 1 for Content and Structure were some original pieces which effectively engaged the reader in the excitement and urgency of the preparations, the uncertainty of the guest's timely arrival, and the shared trepidation concerning his or her likely reaction, in a way which would have enhanced a narrative, but was richly descriptive, and often in the present tense. These often evoked the minutiae and anxiety of such preparations most effectively: 'Sweat beads on my clammy hands as the bow unravels for the umpteenth time; the clock is mocking my clumsy efforts. I curse as the ribbon slices a gash in my hand as I pull it too tight but the knot holds and I spring from my squatting position, my muscles screaming in agony.' Also at this level the hushed moments as the guest approached the door were most effectively described: 'The lights clicked off simultaneously and the noise stopped as abruptly as if the pause button had been hit. And held. Silence. The clock seemed to catch its breath before returning to its normal pace, and then small whispers and shushes began. The excitement, like a wriggling puppy, couldn't be contained.'

Responses given marks in the middle band approached the task straightforwardly, with varying degrees of accomplishment: these often had a more overtly-narrative framework, and sometimes a tendency to exaggerate. There were at this level many satisfactory pieces which demonstrated a grasp of the intent and requirements of the genre; some were interesting and original. Others remained focused until part way through when they lost sight of the task: perhaps a disagreement between party guests slid into a lengthy narrative or irrelevant 'back story'. Responses awarded marks in Band 2 and Band 3 often successfully avoided excessive narrative, and created realistic pictures, but produced less well-developed or precise images, insufficiently differentiating, for example, between the activities of those preparing the party: 'everybody' was 'rushing around'; 'everybody' was shouting and excited. Excitement and tension were asserted rather than created. Here too sometimes was a failure to discriminate: the wallpaper or soft furnishings were described in as much detail as the attempts to ice the birthday cake, although they had no bearing on the preparations for the party.

At the lower end of this Band and below it responses were driven by narrative or filled with jumbled and chaotic images, lists of food items and decorations or headlong accounts of events. Sometimes, pieces which successfully eschewed narrative were nonetheless so formulaic – 'I can see'; 'I can smell...' that they quite failed to engage the reader. Examiners awarded marks below Band 3 where responses were almost entirely narrative in focus rather than descriptive, or where details were scarce or ineffective, and only a chronological series of barely differentiated events was supplied. Responses awarded marks below Band 4 usually lacked coherence or awareness of what constitutes descriptive writing.

The second option in this genre was the most popular of all the Composition questions, accounting for a third of responses overall. A narrative framework was less frequently apparent than in the first option, and where it was employed, only rarely became a developed story: relatively few candidates lost sight of the task in hand. A significant number of responses were awarded marks at, or near the top of Band 1 for Content and Structure: these almost always eschewed narrative preamble, and observed the requirement in the question to describe being stuck in a lift for only 'a few minutes'. They pitched immediately into the situation: 'The first sign that something was wrong was a high-pitched screeching that scratched at my ears, then the thud that shook my bones and knocked me off my feet. A moment's silence then the lights went out; we were alone.'; 'The cables whirred in the elevator shaft as we glided smoothly upward. Bang! I was thrown from my feet and plunged into darkness.' Some very effective responses were able to develop characterisation rapidly and with a light touch, enhancing the atmosphere in the trapped lift, and sometimes bringing very disparate characters into unlikely proximity; one response paired an expensively-suited executive of prodigious size with the terrified and diminutive janitor from his company, who spent the time trapped in the elevator trying to avoid touching his boss with a large and evil-smelling mop. The most successful responses restricted the number of people trapped to a very few, with an often self-effacing observer writing in the first person. Others at this level created striking visual effects with the flashlights from mobile phones or the red emergency lighting illuminating people's faces: 'The small flashing red light, blinking periodically on the elevator control panel bathed us in its sinister glow before enveloping us in darkness once more. Every few seconds it created menacing shadows across the features of the other occupants, contrasting with their disorientated and fearful expressions.' In Band 2 and the upper end of Band 3, responses were typified by believable detail and an avoidance of narrative, although there were frequently appearing familiar tropes: the stressed business man or woman, the crying baby, the offensively unwashed person, the young couple taking the opportunity to kiss in the dark. There were many anxious mothers, although one response portrayed a mother and child with more originality, showing the mother hiccupping with anxiety while her little boy remained calmly absorbed in his Rubik Cube. Some overcrowded the elevator with occupants, reducing the likelihood of focused description; at the lower end of Band 3 and below responses sometimes filled the lift with screaming, shouting and fainting people in indiscriminate exaggeration which failed to convince. Where the suggested 'few minutes' was forgotten, and rescuers failed to appear for an extended period, well-developed and described relationships sometimes evolved, but more often the response slid into narrative, sometimes in lengthy flashback. The least effective responses were sometimes little more than an inventory of the clothes and accessories of the elevator's occupants, or simple narrative accounts of events with little narrative detail or evocation of feeling or atmosphere. At all levels of achievement the arrival of the rescuers or the sudden restarting of the elevator provided a suitable ending.

Marks in the top Band for Style and Accuracy were awarded to those responses which not only employed 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 seemed limited to unelaborated accounts of experience, especially in response to the first question. Consecutive sentences beginning with 'I' (often lower case) typified these responses.

The most frequent issue in awarding Style and Accuracy marks for descriptive writing was the very large number of candidates who produced sentence after sentence without a main or finite verb. Even where there were other qualities which went some way to compensate for this error, Examiners found it very difficult to award a mark higher than Band 4 where it persisted throughout the response. Thus, candidates who were awarded writing marks in Band 2 or 3 for **Question 1** often earned much lower marks for this element of their compositions. Uncertain control of tense characterised many responses, especially to **Question 3** where an initial context or explanation was provided for the writer's presence in the lift, then referred to in the body of the composition. A lack of effective paragraphing, and errors of sentence separation, 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.

**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, in both the scenarios and the images you create
- make deliberate choices in your vocabulary to create atmosphere
- write complete sentences with proper verbs: the same rules of grammar apply to all types of writing
- remember that the majority of available marks are awarded for Style and Accuracy
- check your work for errors of tense and agreement.

**Narrative Writing**

**4** Write a story which involves a visit to relatives.

(25 marks)

OR

**5** 'That was one piece of advice I should have ignored.' Write a story which ends with these words.

(25 marks)

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 eliciting some lively, intriguing and often moving narratives. Both titles also seemed to invite and encourage the inclusion of character, setting and descriptive detail, so that atmosphere was created which enhanced the narratives. The difficulty evident in many responses of creating satisfactory conclusions to the stories was often apparent, underlining the need to have the end of the story in mind while writing. It was in responses to this genre that damagingly precipitate endings, apparently where the guidelines for length were treated as compulsory limits, were most apparent: there were even a few examples of final paragraphs being scored out so that the response would comply with the recommended word count.

Responses to the first of the narrative options presented stories about a wide range of reasons for visits to relatives: deaths in the family, weddings and birthdays, festivals of all kinds, summer holidays, and in some cases which produced the most entertaining and dramatic stories, 'duty' visits to estranged or unloved members of the family. At all levels of achievement accounts of the journeys involved, tedious or dramatic, were featured, sometimes dominating the response at the expense of more engaging material, but elsewhere so vividly depicted that the actual meeting with relatives proved anti-climactic. Elsewhere the journey or travel arrangements were only briefly referenced, and the plot began with the arrival at the home of the relatives, in variously dramatic and often very effectively-told encounters. Sometimes the writing conveyed insights into familial and cultural customs which enhanced the narrative. A considerable number of responses to this question were more typical in content and style of autobiographical writing: some were simple sequential accounts of ordinary family 'get-togethers'; others of striking verisimilitude recounted stories of exile and migration, but these often contained few or none of the features of narrative fiction the

genre requires: cogent detail of character and setting, tension, climax and resolution. Weaker responses sometimes lacked the barest details about the characters: they were not named, or identified beyond the descriptors 'my cousin', 'my grandma', 'my auntie'. Here also there was often no identification of place or any detail of setting.

The strongest responses which were awarded marks at the top of Band 1 engaged the reader immediately in the action of the narrative, the evoked relationships and the rich characterisation of the family members involved. One response portrayed the aftermath of an uncle's death in Iraq, and expertly created the family situation before launching into the drama of the meeting itself: 'After the loss of her beloved husband my aunt was sending Stuart to live with us in our Iowa township. He had always been the most troublesome of Kathy's children and now she needed respite from his insensitive remarks.' In another the journey to visit understandably estranged grandparents was depicted so effectively that the tension of the dreaded encounter immediately convinced the reader: 'The windscreen wipers struggled against the incessant downpour as Dad cursed under his breath. The atmosphere inside the car was as glacial as the prairie weather we'd hoped never again to experience.' There were engaging accounts awarded marks of 9 or 10 for Content and Structure; these were enlivened by narrative and descriptive detail, and often convincing settings and characters. In the middle Band Examiners awarded marks of 7 or 8 where stories were straightforward and cohesive, if often let down by weak, inconclusive or arbitrary endings. At the lower end of this Band excitement and enjoyment were more often asserted than demonstrated or created, even in circumstances where there was the inherent drama of great contrast such as a trip from Kingston, Jamaica to Toronto: 'I spent two weeks in Canada but the only thing I could complain about was the cold. The snow felt like sand and the food was similar to what I eat in Jamaica. However, the experience was very exciting.' The weakest responses were those which were simple, often apparently personal reports of experience which featured none of the desired qualities of narrative writing.

The second option in this genre was marginally more popular, and produced some very effective responses offering highly engaging and dramatic narratives. Stories of every kind featured, although tales of romance and romantic rivalry, sporting and academic challenge, crime and adventure dominated. In the manner suggested by the given concluding sentence the vast majority were first-person narratives, but were much less likely to slide into autobiographical writing than those in response to **Question 4**. Although the question required the given sentence to provide the conclusion, it was found elsewhere in the story in a number of responses, and often better employed: weaker responses often 'simply tacked' the sentence at the end with little real connection with what had gone before. In a small number of cases the sentence was not used at all, although the story usually featured advice given and ignored. In all these cases Examiners applied the Mark Scheme to reward the skills and qualities demonstrated by the response without specific penalty.

Responses awarded high marks for Content and Structure again demonstrated skill in the elements of fiction, especially convincing characterisation and plot. At the top of Band 1 there were ingenious, entirely convincing narratives which immediately engaged the reader. Personas – including the fantastic, the animal and the criminal – were often adopted and settings were created with cogent detail. One very good response expertly established the character of the victim of a terrifying plot by his private-school peers: 'I had always been an uneasy kid, and it was difficult for a shifty-eyed loner to fit in with classmates who were almost exclusively extroverted and judgemental.'

In the middle ranges there were many quite engaging stories, sometimes told effectively in flashback, although here the given sentence often provided the only conclusion and was not always convincing given the foregoing story. At the lower end of the middle range there were also some over-cluttered crime stories, and some in the fantasy genre which rarely convinced in plot or characterisation. Sometimes an unconvincing narrative could be rescued by descriptive skill. Some otherwise quite well-told stories were weakened by gaps in the plot which caused confusion and forced re-reading.

Below Band 3 responses were only partly relevant to the task or were a series of mundane events or were very brief or aimless, offering little to engage the reader.

Examiners were able to award high marks for Style and Accuracy to responses whose vocabulary and sentence structures were varied and effective, and whose writing was free of repeated error. In the top Bands syntax and sentence structure were often effectively manipulated for effect, especially in the creation of narrative tension. In this genre, dialogue is a particularly important aspect of effective narrative and a failure to punctuate and paragraph it correctly sometimes proved a pitfall for otherwise fluent and accurate writers. In both options in the Narrative Writing, the common error of poor tense control was often apparent. Sometimes tenses changed within a sentence, creating absurd effects. These inappropriate tense changes caused confusion and impeded the narrative thrust, inevitably reducing marks. In the middle Band, where there were a few basic errors of spelling and punctuation and plain, unvaried, vocabulary, Examiners could

award a mark of 7 or 8: 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 affected by errors in sentence separation, weak punctuation, and faults in tense control and agreement. The frequent misuse or omission of capital letters 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 often use your own interpretation of the titles
- make your story believable by creating realistic characters and settings
- ensure that any dialogue is correctly punctuated and paragraphed
- remember that the suggested number of words is a guide, and not a limit
- 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, and unexplained tense changes.

# 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 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
- proof read their work carefully, as marks are deducted for typing errors.

## General comments

This year's entry for the coursework component was the largest in its history and over a hundred Moderators assessed the samples.

There were many examples of Centres who fully understood the educational opportunities afforded by coursework. This was reflected in their choice of interesting and challenging assignments, the general advice given to candidates at the end of each draft and on the final versions, and the encouragement of original thought by the candidates.

Most Centres put a great deal of effort into their folder work. Some however, showed little imagination in the assignments that they set and were often content to use tasks and texts that they had found in textbooks or had used in previous sessions. This safety first factor affected interest in the content of the work and the enthusiasm of candidates to express and develop their own ideas.

Many points made and explained in detail in previous editions of this report had either not been read or incorporated into the planning and administration of the coursework.

One of these concerned advice given about the reading test in Assignment 3 where there was an increase by Centres awarding Band 1 marks to candidates who had showed little evidence of reading for detail, writing an overview of the writer's attitude or developing a sound set of evaluations. There was an increase in the number of candidates who used the text as a stimulus and addressed the topic instead of analysing the text. Centres who understood the nature of the exercise did well.

There was a tendency for Centres to ignore a considerable amount of error particularly of sentence separation. Candidates often wrote in short sentences and wrongly divided their sentences with commas. Many candidates over-used semi colons.

Centres often did not record changes made to the marks at internal moderation and in some cases there was no evidence that internal moderation had taken place. These changes should be made on the CASF(WMS) form where there should be clear evidence that every set has been sufficiently sub-sampled. Some moderators reported problems with a lack of consistency in the marking. This may have been caused by a lack of internal moderation or inaccurate weighting of the four main objectives of content, structure, style and accuracy.

In many cases teachers indicated specific errors in drafts and corrected some or all of them. This is strictly not allowed but teachers should give general advice at the bottom of the draft. They should not write in the margins or in the body of the text. In some cases two or more teachers from a Centre were involved in this practice and sometimes the mark given to the candidate was increased with little effort on the part of the candidate. Where this was judged a malpractice, scripts were sent to the Regulations Team in Cambridge to decide any further action.

**Good Practice**

- Candidates were given flexibility in choosing topics and titles that interested them and were of sufficient challenge with regard to their ability.
- They were encouraged to write in their own register and to express their own opinions and not to repeat standard opinions found elsewhere, for example on the internet.
- For Assignment 3 they were encouraged to make their own choice of ideas and opinions from the text and to evaluate the writer's use of them, for example evaluating inconsistencies and bias. They were also encouraged to give an overview of the article as a whole including the writer's attitude.
- As a result of general advice given on the draft, they indicated changes using a different coloured ink, editing, revising and correcting in order to improve the work.

**Bad Practice**

- Candidates were given little choice and often a whole set would be given the same task to complete, so that the exercise became more like an examination than coursework.
- Some assignments appeared to be 'off the peg', probably from text books and often previously used by the Centre.
- The content of some assignments was often very similar indicating undue help from a textbook or ideas given out in class.
- Drafts were often plain, having no general advice or guidance.

**Task setting**

Several points have already been made about task setting. The best practice was to set tasks that coincided with candidates' imagination and their interests.

Tasks set for Assignment 1 were generally more varied than in previous years, but there were still some that, because of their nature, did not score so highly as a well-argued issue of concern.

For Assignment 2, Centres should take care that candidates write narratives that are credible and within their imaginative experience. They should also make sure that narratives give an indication of maturity, given the age of the candidate.

For Assignment 3, the text(s) chosen must have a sufficient number of ideas and opinions that candidates can evaluate and comment on to some purpose. Some Centres gave considerable choice, even down to every candidate having a different text, and all of them were appropriate. Other Centres gave out one text only which had few ideas and opinions of any depth or value, and thus gave their candidates little chance of scoring high reading marks.

**Assessment of coursework**

**Writing**

Candidates assessed in Band 1 are expected to demonstrate almost perfect accuracy. Coursework offers excellent opportunities for candidates to draft and to check their work for errors. They have time to proof read their responses and are allowed to use electronic devices to help them with spelling and to identify stylistic shortcomings.

Some Centres were extremely strict about accuracy. This was largely because they had spent time and care teaching it and expected candidates to put their teaching into action.

Other Centres did not seem to notice the incidence of error. Sometimes there was a comment at the end of a piece of work to the effect that there were few errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar, when a more careful analysis showed that they were common throughout the work.

The commonest error was that of sentence separation.

Some candidates ran into problems over the use of present and past tense in Assignment 2, making repeated changes throughout the writing.

The frequent use of dashes (often appearing as hyphens in typed scripts) is not recommended. Full stops and commas are often more useful and the use of brackets should be considered. Exclamation marks were used injudiciously and question marks were put at the end of statements, particularly those beginning with the word 'surely'.

Teachers were asked to annotate errors in final submitted pieces, and often this was done sporadically but not exhaustively so that Moderators had little idea how marks had been awarded. Many scripts had no annotation of errors at all, which is some cases led Moderators to believe that accuracy had been disregarded.

The assessment of style was generally more secure. Candidates adopted a variety of registers and most of these were consistent and appropriate (although there were examples of bad language that should not have occurred). Most candidates gave evidence of a range of vocabulary in their second piece. Assessors did not always distinguish between candidates who used the right word to express a variety of details and ideas and those who tried to be too clever and used words that made meanings less clear or which were not quite the right usage. There were a number of examples of inappropriate imagery, usually from the world of animals, not applicable to the detail that was described. Sentence structure varied greatly from candidate to candidate.

On the whole, content was correctly assessed and most candidates scoring high marks attempted more difficult tasks. Exceptions to this included tourist guides, some leaflets, film reviews, some versions of 'Don't get me started', biographies of pop stars, and 'A life in the day…' These examples of safe tasks, which tended to produce standard responses, did not always test candidates above Band 3 and the bottom of Band 2.

Structure was generally good and was correctly assessed. Exceptions to this were in Assignment 1 if there was no pattern in the order of paragraphs and if the sequence within paragraphs was insecure. In Assignment 2 the order was nearly always good with some attempt to entertain by various devices, for example twists near and at the end of a story, or the use of two narrators, and the usual flashbacks and time lapses. Some stories were however, no more than collections of events with unconvincing endings. This was also true of some descriptions which were collections of images with little shape. However, most descriptions had some sense of changing time or perception. The most difficult Assignment 2 tasks to structure were monologues which were prone to repetition of moods and ideas. In Assignment 3, not all responses were structured and while a selection of ideas and opinions was made from the text, there was not always a sense of order or progression.

**Assessment of reading**

Marks for reading were for candidates who could give an overview of the whole text and the writer's attitude, giving evidence of a grasp of the text as a whole, and who could select relevant ideas and opinions and make significant and quality evaluations and comments about them. The best candidates tied in their individual selections to the overview which could be at the beginning of the response or could form the basis of the whole assignment.

Centres that had thought this out carefully scored high marks, but many responses were over marked because:

- candidates addressed the topic and not the text (so there was little evidence of reading)
- they made little reference to complete ideas and opinions
- they summarised the text
- the quality of their responses was not sufficient, with little development or even logicality, sometimes straying from the selected idea to write about something else
- the text had no depth and few ideas and opinions with which to engage.

Where centres over-marked they often neglected to consider that this assignment was a test of reading which required understanding of both explicit meaning and of underlying attitudes.

**Administration by Centres**

**Summary of the contents of the folder**

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

The folders required by CIE were correctly sent to Cambridge, as set out in 1 and 2. Some Centres still presented them in plastic bags, which were time consuming and awkward to handle. There were a few examples of work that was not securely fixed together, and this gave rise to a possibility of the loss of an important piece of paper. Most Centres kindly put the folders in descending order of merit.

3 and 4 were included, but not all Centres submitted a complete CASF for the whole entry. This was needed to check the addition of marks and to ensure that they had been correctly transferred to the mark sheet. Moderators discovered a large number of errors. Where marks had been changed at internal moderation, these changes were normally made clearly on the folders, but this was not always the case.

5 and 6 were normally included, although there were some rare occasions where a text was missing. Moderators had to read the texts before they could fairly judge the quality of the candidate's response.

**Annotation**

A comment has already been made about the lack of annotation of error on the final versions of assignments. Otherwise there was plenty of useful comment at the ends of pieces of work and in the margins, although some of the comments were for very ephemeral features that were not always typical of the whole work. There was a tendency to over praise work rather than to point out weaknesses, and this sometimes resulted in over marking.

**Drafts**

The function of the draft is to give the candidate an opportunity to improve work through editing (eg words and phrases), revising (eg sections) and correcting. Ways in which this can be done are included in the general advice to be written at the end of the draft.

There were Centres where candidates were encouraged to do their own re-drafting. Centres are reminded that must not indicate errors by highlighting, circling or commenting in the margin. Coursework must be a candidate's own, unaided work.

**Internal moderation**

It was sometimes difficult to find evidence that this had taken place formally. Some form of internal moderation is essential in all Centres with more than one set of candidates. The best way is to choose two teachers who cross moderate their own sets and who then apply their agreed standards by sub sampling the other sets. Where a pattern of leniency of severity is found, the set teacher is invited to submit a new set of marks, or the whole or part of that set can be scaled. All changes should appear in the right hand column of the CASF form. This was rarely done, which meant that the Moderator was unable to carry out an important check. Some Centres clearly carried out internal moderation and annotated the folders with new marks, although this was sometimes confined to agreement. There were examples of inconsistent marking (as indicated above).

**Authenticity**

As usual there were examples of copying from websites and Moderators reported these and sent evidence to the Regulations team at Cambridge. Centres are reminded that, knowing their candidates, it is easy to be suspicious about an assignment that is clearly out of keeping with the normal standard of a candidate's work. Where a plagiarised response is found, it should be removed from the folder and either replaced by original work or the final mark should be adjusted for a missing piece.

**Assignment 1**

There were many examples of well-argued, persuasive writing. The work was often original and there was evidence of personal conviction in presenting a topic. At its best, the register was well adapted to a supposed audience and not too formal, so that the intensity of the writing was communicated well. Again, at its best, this writing was orderly and the sequence of each part of the argument was secure, so that the reader had no problems in following the work.

There were also examples of writing that was competent but less effective because the topics were too well worn. The cases for and against the death penalty were so similar that one suspected that they emanated from a published source. Some were far too similar to the arguments in the over used Flamehorse article. There were similarities in the cases for euthanasia and abortion and it was only rarely that one of these topics caused a candidate to write with any freshness or originality. Many candidates wrote about the dangers of social media with little enthusiasm, and defences of video games had little life in them.

Despite warnings in previous reports, 'Don't get me started…' and 'Room 101' still made frequent appearances. Some candidates wrote well when they chose a topic that they could argue effectively and which challenged them appropriately. Others chose unchallenging topics for which little credit could be claimed. For 'Room 101', candidates were much better when they chose only one topic. Where there were more, no skills of overall structure were apparent. Some of the topics chosen by less strong candidates were the same as those seen in other scripts from other Centres, and it seemed that they were copied from a primary source.

Most film reviews were disappointing. They contained copious compliments to actors, producers and musicians that were often very similar within a Centre. Part of the writing was taken up with an account of the story line, which was not challenging. There was then a section about the acting which was often superficial and something about the special effects and the music. Many of these reviews gave the impression of going through a plan copied from elsewhere and occasionally the writing style did not appear very original.

These, and other types of topic listed previously in this report, were best avoided except by weaker candidates. In some Centres, every candidate appeared to have been given the possibility of choosing a personal topic, and this was generally most satisfactory. The following list illustrates originality in choosing one's own topic for Assignment 1. On such occasions, candidates were left to their own devices in order to plan and complete the work.

*Florence Nightingale – misogynist*
*The real meaning of Christmas*
*Is sugar the new cocaine?*
*Gender and football*
*I am Indian*
*Being a fan matters*
*Funerals – a dying industry*
*The challenge of being fatherless*
*Extreme haircuts*
*A generation more plastic than their Barbie dolls*
*Robot invasion*
*Free libraries*
*Selfish selfies*

**Assignment 2**

Much of the narrative writing was original and very engaging to the reader. One Centre worked round the central idea of 'The bus stop' and clearly needed no help from a teacher to build their stories round a selection of sometimes sad characters who were at the bus stop for different reasons and at crucial moments in their lives.

All the best stories were first and foremost credible. This meant avoiding unreal events and situations but it also meant using the type of language that communicated things and people as they really were. The inclusion of striking dialogue with a function in the plot was also important. Stories also had to reflect the maturity of a sixteen year old. Although there were rare examples of a successful zombie story, most were trains of incredible events. There were a number of accounts of air crashes. It was not credible that the writer of a story should die in the last line and where there was a sole survivor, there was often more incredulity.

A number of Moderators pointed out that some topics were outside the imaginative world of the candidates. This was true of some of the accounts of 9/11, although there were occasional good twists to the story. It was also true of the First World War stories and the very derivative Omaha Landing topic that was best avoided.

Also best avoided were narratives based on video games because they were lists of mostly violent events.

Some of the best writing was from a candidate's own experience and there were also some good and many competent descriptions. Writing that reflected positive features of life, particularly where there was a little humour or irony was better than writing about endless misery. It was also much better to write with a specific title in mind.

Here again are some titles that worked:

*Noises*
*The Catch (a story about a cat)*
*Fashion show*
*School assembly*
*The end of the road*
*Song of the grave digger*
*A family meal*
*A Zanzibar market*
*24 minutes to disaster (an original countdown narrative)*
*Climbing a construction crane*
*A funeral and a wedding*
*Prospero's prologue (a clever take on 'The Tempest')*
*Famous for the day*

**Assignment 3**

There were some original choices of texts for Assignment 3, but there were also some bad ones that disadvantaged candidates.

Multiple texts and texts longer than two sides of A4 paper caused candidates to make use of only a section of the reading and not grasping the text as a whole. Some very clever candidates could do this, but they were a rarity.

Some texts had very few ideas and opinions with which candidates could engage. Examples of this were 'I saw a killer die' which elicited very little creditable response and which was a questionable piece to set candidates in any case. A small section from 'Warhorse' was reflective narrative and again had little for candidates to work with. 'Educating Essex', a throwback to an ancient TV programme, had a few rather weak anecdotal events which hardly constituted ideas and which provoked almost the same responses from the candidates who attempted it. 'Educating Yorkshire', a more suitable article which started as a review but turned into a general, illogical attack on teenagers, proved too difficult for most candidates who could not appreciate the difference between the events of the programme which were reported and the use made of the review by the writer. Finally the tragic article about Tony Nicklinson had nothing to work with except the words of the sufferer himself: this made candidates write about the issue and introduce ideas such as the responsibilities of doctors and Biblical references which were not alluded to in the article.

It was a shame that teachers did not attempt to find more up to date articles. Many relied on writing by Katie Hopkins and Jeremy Clarkson and it was surprising that more use was not made of a large number of other controversial journalists writing on up to date topics. Here are a few successful text topics:

*Paternity leave*
*Single sex schools for boys*
*Homework*
*Choosing state education*
*The Syrian migrant crisis*
*Women and boxing*
*Ban the TT (An annual race for motor bikes on an offshore British island)*
*Charlie Hebdo*
*The Glastonbury Festival (an annual summer rock festival held in a field in the middle of the British countryside)*

**Final comments**

Again the Moderators thank Centres for the efforts they made to complete what were often very worthwhile and readable folders. They would suggest however, that more thought might sometimes be put into the setting of assignments and particularly of allowing candidates opportunities to make their own choices about what they want to write about. Once the work has started it is important that they should be free of reference to resources that guide their writing, and teachers should not offer undue guidance in class.

# FIRST LANAGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

**Paper 0500/05**
**Speaking and Listening**

## Key messages

The main messages:

- **Timings.** Read carefully and thoroughly the instructions in the syllabus relating to how this component should be carried out. In the syllabus, the required timings of both parts of the test are clearly stipulated and if these are adhered to then the likelihood of an efficient examination is greatly increased.
- **Sending all recordings.** Please note that all centres are required to send the recordings for all of their candidates. Failure to submit all recordings may result in a delay in releasing candidates' results.

Other messages:

- Generally, candidates should try to make their **Part 1** presentations lively, by perhaps incorporating more creative presentational styles. There is scope for further creativity in **Part 1** for example, by taking up a 'voice' or presenting a dramatic monologue. Presenting empathic work using literary texts often leads to quality work. Teachers may like to explore these approaches in lessons.
- Differentiation by task-setting is encouraged for this component. A more capable student is likely to attempt a more ambitious presentation and to engage with more sophisticated content – and such a student should be encouraged to do this. Teachers are encouraged to work with individual students to help guide them towards topics which promote a full, 6 to 7 minute dialogue in **Part 2**, allowing for the incorporation of anecdotes, examples, views, opinions, etc.
- To avoid the pitfall of short or over-long discussions, practise carrying out sustained, on-task discussions of around 5 minutes on a regular basis in the classroom. This should explore the use of tangential discussion – i.e. contributions from both parties which change direction but which still relate to the main theme.
- Centres should avoid sending video files, as these can often cause issues with Moderators. Any video files which are sent are viewed without a picture, as this is an assessment of speaking and listening, thus negating any benefits of have a visual recording.

Messages relating to assessment:

### Part 1

- In **Part 1**, Moderators advise examiners to be sure that a candidate has met the criteria for Band 1 fully before awarding 9 or 10 marks. If an individual task is of the standard, factually-based, reportage style, even if well done, then a low Band 2 mark is likely to be the highest available, and a Band 3 mark perhaps more appropriate.
- More mundane and pedestrian talks should be placed in Band 3.
- Candidates who present very short **Part 1**s or those which rely heavily on notes are not likely to achieve higher than Band 4, where 'delivery is not secure, resulting in some loss of audience interest' is the most likely and appropriate descriptor.
- Very long **Part 1**s do not satisfy Band 1 requirements, as they lack the required control, structure and poignancy. An over-long **Part 1** is one that runs for beyond 5 minutes.
- Examiners are reminded not to award marks for content per se – it is the use of (i.e. the development of) the content which is being assessed. For example, 'What has inspired me...' could achieve a Band 1, or indeed a Band 5, depending on how the content has been planned, is introduced, is organised, and then presented and developed.

**Part 2**

- Some discussions were too long; 7 minutes is the maximum time allowed. Over-long discussions are unnecessary and counter-productive. If a discussion carries on beyond 7 minutes there is a likelihood that the assessment criteria will become compromised as the discussions may stray off task and begin to lack cogency. There is no need to extend **Part 2** beyond the allotted time and it may indeed disadvantage candidates as marks may be reduced at external moderation.

**Internal moderation**

- Centres using more than one examiner should conduct internal moderation – i.e. a systematic revision of a sample of candidates, covering a good spread of marks. This is often successful when completed as a team effort, and should achieve consistency among assessors and highlight any outlying marks for specific candidates which can be further investigated.

## General comments

**Conduct of the examination and a suitable location**

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

**Materials required by the Moderator**

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

**1** Please create a single folder on the CD or USB and place all recordings in that folder. The use of sub-folders should be avoided. Please note that without the full set of recordings, Cambridge is unable to moderate the work from a centre and this may affect the timing of results issued to candidates while the full set of recordings is requested and supplied.

**2** The summary form is the form that records the separate marks awarded to the two parts of the test, in addition to the total mark. The teacher/examiner who conducts the examination is responsible for filling out the summary form. The form is a working record of the examining undertaken, and should be signed and dated by the teacher/examiner responsible for the tests. It would be very useful if the candidate numbers can be recorded on the summary forms as they appear on the mark sheets.

**3** The Moderator needs a copy of the mark sheet in order to verify the accuracy of the transcription of the marks from the summary forms.

## Comments on specific questions

### *Part 1 – the Individual Task*

**Strong work in Part 1**

The more interesting and successful individual tasks were from candidates who spoke from brief notes and about a topic they felt passionately about and which they had researched thoroughly. Successful tasks often included some kind of visual presentation to the examiner, such as sharing a Powerpoint slide or some photographs. The most successful presentations were given by candidates fired by a passion who also utilised a variety of speaking devices to maintain the listeners' interest. In all the best examples there was a real sense of engagement with the topic. Where candidates chose well, prepared thoroughly and were fully committed to the task the results were usually good.

**Alternative approaches**

Those candidates who tried something different stood out as being more likely to meet the top band criteria – for instance, talks with humour, irony and emphasis suggesting an eloquence which showed greater awareness of a wider audience. These presentations were often highly engaging and memorable. Candidates who created their own literary pieces (e.g. in character, or empathic pieces) often performed well and more candidates are encouraged to create their own, original pieces.

**Use of third party sources**

Every candidate is encouraged to choose a topic of personal interest and to talk as freely as possible about this. Some candidates will perform better therefore by relying less on collating from third party sources and simply repeating this. However, candidates who refer to third party sources for inspiration and then create their own talks based on the material will achieve higher reward. In the worst cases, reliance on third party sources can lead to plagiarism. In the better cases, being stimulated by third party sources and quoting directly from them in a minimal and selective manner can lead to highly competent work.

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

- Experiences from travelling (there were many inspiring talks about personal experiences of moving to different countries)
- Feminism linked to education or other issues (e.g. there were powerful talks about Malala Yousafzai)
- Political topics (e.g. discussion on South Africa today and the lasting impact of apartheid)
- The unwelcome revival of eugenics
- My future life as a rugby coach (in character)
- Escaping from a war zone
- Leaving Syria as a refugee
- Nigerian weddings
- Paranormal activists
- Child marriage.

From this list, it can be seen that the crafting of the task is important. Some topics hinder candidates – e.g. my family, my pets, my football team, my favourite video game, etc. – unless these are woven into a controlled piece with a specific objective and/or rationale. ~~In short~~, very broad topics are not likely to be as successful as refined topics – e.g. instead of why I like the sport of rugby, the candidate who delivered a monologue as if he were a rugby coach showed finesse and very careful planning.

### *Part 2 – the Discussion*

**Strong work in Part 2**

Moderators are happy that in many cases, examiners were very much part of the discussions, entering into the spirit of the occasion, and that in these cases the conversations were generally productive extensions of the individual tasks. Such candidates had clearly planned for further discussion and had predicted probable questions, or areas of interest that might be appropriate for further discussion. More effective examining 'raised the bar', encouraging stronger candidates to explore more sophisticated issues by asking challenging questions to demonstrate higher order thinking skills.

**Taking notes to prepare for discussion**

Effective discussions clearly arose when examiners took notes as the candidates completed their talks, and then based the discussions very closely on what the candidates had actually spoken about. This usually led to focused conversations, and changes in direction which arose naturally from the content covered in the individual task.

**Staying on task**

In general, candidates and examiners stayed on task. However, there were some instances of examiners using the allotted time to involve candidates in discussions about other matters – for example, their future plans or other interests – when this was not part of the candidate's talk. Such transgressions are likely to result in lower marks as the assessment criteria assume that content in **Part 2** relates directly to content in **Part 1**. The examiner should ensure that the discussion stays on-task for the duration of **Part 2**. At no point is it acceptable for an examiner to introduce other topics and themes or to stray into general conversation.

**Open and closed questions, and effective questioning**

A good prompt will draw on previous discussion and will enable the candidate to respond with an argument, a defence, a point of view, an anecdote, an example, etc. More work in the classroom practising dialogic learning is likely to help here to create a culture of effective questioning, and this should be aligned to the principles of the assessment of integrated speaking and listening as delineated in the **Part 2** assessment criteria grid. Moderators accept that it is not an easy task to conduct an effective **Part 2** discussion for this examination. However, where an examiner has not conducted his or her part of the discussion effectively, the impact on the candidate is of great concern.

**Concluding comments**

There were many cases where Moderators reported refreshing and lively work, where it was clear that the students had enjoyed taking control of their own learning and had responded well to being allowed to be active in the skills of research, oral presentation and subsequent discussion.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

**Paper 0500/06**
**Speaking and Listening (Coursework)**

## Key messages

### Choosing the correct pathway

- Component 6 consists of three distinct tasks: **Task 1** is an individual presentation; **Task 2** is a paired activity; **Task 3** is a group activity.
- The three tasks are distinct and should be attempted at different stages in the course, preferably using different topics. It is not advisable for candidates to undertake **Task 1** and **Task 2** in one session in a hybrid form of the Component 5 test as this is against the spirit and ethos of Component 6 and can lead to stilted responses lacking scope and depth.
- The three separate tasks can be assessed at any time during the course. This flexibility allows a broader range of topics and skills to be assessed but requires centres to fully embrace the concept that the Speaking and Listening tasks are an integral part of the overall course.
- Centres should decide whether to choose Component 5 or Component 6 at the beginning of the planning stage. It is very difficult to change from one component to the other and is certainly not recommended as the components are distinct in their approaches to the Speaking and Listening section of the syllabus.
- Uncertainty and confusion as to which pathway to follow can lead to centres entering for the wrong component. This always causes problems for the centre and the moderator.

### Recommended support material

- Centres are urged to use both the current syllabus and ‘Speaking and Listening Handbook’ to ensure the requirements for the administration of the component are met in full. All the relevant information is contained within these documents.
- Official Cambridge training sessions are run throughout the year.
- Enhanced online support materials are available.

### What to send in the sample packet

- Please be aware that four different items must be included in the sample package sent to the Moderator: All the centre’s recordings; all the Summary Forms; all the individual Candidate Record Cards and a copy of the mark sheets showing the total marks awarded for each candidate entered.

### Recordings

- Centres are required to record all the **Task 1** and **2** responses for the entire entered cohort. All these must be sent in the centre’s sample for the purpose of moderation.

- We strongly encourage the use of digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or USB drive in a recognised common audio file format that can be played by standard computer software.

- Centres should avoid sending video files, as these can often cause issues with Moderators. Any video files which are sent are viewed without a picture, as this is an assessment of speaking and listening, thus negating any benefits of have a visual recording.

- Please check the quality of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge and ensure that the CD, DVD or USB is securely packaged to avoid damage in transit. A jiffy bag is recommended.

- Ideally the recordings should be arranged in the same order as on the mark sheets – i.e. in candidate number order.

- Centres are urged to transfer their cohorts' recordings onto a single CD or USB that contains one file for **Task 1** and another for **Task 2**. In turn, these should contain the candidates' recordings arranged in candidate number order. Sub-files for different teaching groups or for recordings made on different dates are unhelpful and time-consuming for the moderator.

- Each track should be labelled with the candidate's name and number. For **Task 2**, both candidates' names and numbers should be included in the title of the track.

- Each track should be introduced formally using the rubric prescribed in the current syllabus and centres should ensure that each candidate involved in the **Task 2** Paired Activity is clearly introduced at the beginning of the recording so it is absolutely clear to the moderator who is speaking first and who is the second participant.

- Wherever possible, recordings should be made in a quiet, undisturbed environment.

**Summary Forms**

- Moderators require Summary Forms detailing a breakdown of the marks awarded for the whole cohort entered. Preferably these are completed in candidate number order.

- Please note the Component 6 Summary Form is different to the Component 5 version. The two are not interchangeable.

- Ideally the Summary Forms should be arranged in the same order as the mark sheets – i.e. in candidate number order.

- The accuracy of the Summary Forms should be checked thoroughly before submitting to Cambridge.

**Candidate Record Cards**

- A requirement for this component is that an individual Candidate Record Card should be completed for each candidate.

- All the Record Cards should be included in the sample sent to Cambridge.

- The individual Record Cards should include specific information about the choices made for each task and not just generic statements.

- The moderator is required to make a judgement as to the suitability of the centre's approach to Component 6. Without the Record Cards this judgement cannot be made.

**A copy of the mark sheets**

- A copy of the marks (the MS1) already sent to Cambridge should be included in the sample sent for moderation

- Centres should ensure that the copies can be read clearly.

## General comments

- Any candidate who is absent should be recorded as such on the relevant documentation and only those who attempted the activity but who failed to contribute should be given a mark of 0.
- If a mark has been changed as a result of internal moderation, please make it clear on the Summary Forms which of the four separate criteria marks have been modified.
- Cambridge provides specific forms for use with Component 6; namely the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form. These can now be found on and downloaded from the relevant page of the Cambridge website. It is permissible for centres to create their own versions of these forms but in doing so centres must ensure the required information is present and easy to disseminate.
- For Component 6, centres are encouraged to be creative in the choice of tasks as long as the assessment criteria are used as a guide to the skills being assessed.

## Comments on specific tasks

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

In response to **Tasks 1** and **2**, it is very difficult to achieve the higher bands if the performances are heavily scripted.

### Task 1

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

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

- 'My holiday in .....' that is developed beyond a narrative account.
- A personal experience that is relevant, thought-provoking and developed beyond narrative.
- Personal responses to relevant social issues such as cyber-bullying, gender equality and media bias.
- A review of a film, book, concert or sporting event where the candidate is thoroughly engaged and able to develop the presentation beyond a literal re-telling of the events.
- An engaged reflection on a hobby or sport in which the candidate is thoroughly engaged. (Generally sports other than football work best as they tend to be less generic and more specifically focussed.) Topics that seem to work particularly well are: Anime, skate-boarding, working with horses and rugby.

### Task 2

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

For paired activities it is essential that the Moderator is able to distinguish between the candidates in the activity so that successful moderation can take place. The simplest way of achieving this is for the candidates to introduce themselves and their roles in the activity at the beginning of the recording.

Unlike Component 5, there is no specified time duration for Component 06 tasks but it is difficult to see how 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 two minutes. Given that both speaking and listening are assessed, it is important that the activities last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. Planned, rehearsed and developed performances will normally justify higher marks in the same way written examination practise encourages more successful outcomes.

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

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

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

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

- Body image
- Playstation or X-Box?
- Topical social issues such as sexism in sport
- Feminism/Gender inequality
- Reality television versus real life
- Planning a school prom
- Analysis of set texts such as poems and novels
- Cyber-bullying
- Are zoos an evil necessity or just evil?
- Should teenagers take more notice of politics?
- Room 101 but only if well-prepared and where both candidates take it in turn to be the participant.

It is strongly advised that **Task 2** should not be scripted but a level of preparation and formality is required. Seemingly unprepared, chatty and informal discussions do not reflect well on the candidates' ability and often do not address the higher band criteria in the mark scheme.

**Task 3**

**Task 3** may take various forms but it is most important that each candidate in the group is allowed sufficient scope within the activity to demonstrate their strengths without being dominated by others. A group made up of candidates of similar ability levels is often more successful. In more diverse groupings the weaker candidates are disadvantaged and do not have the opportunity to contribute to the best of their ability. The role of a group leader should be considered as a more successful outcome usually results from having one of the candidates directing the focus of the discussion.

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

- Characters from a literary text participating in a televised debate
- Performing an additional, self-devised scene from a play candidates have studied
- Any discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- What to include in a time capsule/ school newspaper, etc.
- Championing a character from a film or book where each candidate chooses their favourite
- Balloon debates

**General conclusions**

- It is gratifying to report that the general level of assessment by centres is in line with the expected standard.
- There are many centres where internal moderation has been successful.
- Successful centres continue to implement the component efficiently and imaginatively. Samples are generally well-prepared and aid the moderation process considerably.
- A huge 'thank you' is extended to all our successful centres.
- Component code errors continue to cause considerable disruption and are unnecessary.
- Where problems have arisen, centres have not followed the instructions regarding sampling and documentation. It is an expectation that centres provide the requisite documentation and that it is accurate.

All the documentation asked for in samples is used to check and cross-check as part of the rigour that underpins the moderation process. In the end this is of benefit to centres and their candidates. It is important to remember that every centre is moderated in every session and that this process is conducted rigorously to protect the reputation of the component and to maintain the standard so that centres may have continued confidence in the product they have chosen.