

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/11

Reading Passage (Core)

Key messages

- Candidates should be **familiar with key words and phrases of Question Paper vocabulary** to ensure that they focus their answers clearly.
- Some questions require explanation of **explicit** meanings and it is important to respond to these precisely. Candidates should also be aware of the need to **read for inference** (especially in order to show understanding of figurative language such as imagery and the connotations implicit in the writer's choice of words). If possible, candidates should be prepared to **look at the language of a passage as a whole** and to consider the context in which individual words are used.
- **The summary question 1(i) carries 7 marks and is an important factor in the final grade achieved.** Candidates are advised to practise this task carefully in preparation for the examination and to acquire a sound summary-writing technique.
- **Question 2** tests both Reading and Writing Objectives and thus the content of a **response must be closely grounded in the stimulus passage.** The skills of imaginative and creative writing are tested in Paper 3 or Component 4.

General comments

Overall, the reading material in this paper was accessible to candidates and they engaged well with it. The most successful responses showed a clear appreciation of the requirements of the questions and a secure understanding of the passage on which they were based. Candidates responded well to **Question 2** and there were many lively attempts to create an authentic sense of a conversation between an older and a younger sibling. It was important that the focus remained on the precise nature of the task and that a piece of writing showing understanding of the reading passage rather than creative writing was produced. It is important that Centres emphasise to candidates that it is necessary to observe the conventions of this type of writing when responding to similar tasks in future examinations in order to achieve higher mark ranges.

The writing and presentation on the majority of scripts were of an acceptable standard. Responses should be written legibly and it is advisable that all questions are attempted.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates responded well to this question with many achieving the full two marks available. This was frequently done through quoting the two words 'grand' and 'old' to describe the house in which Kralefsky lived (the word 'large' was not acceptable as an answer as it was used in the wording of the question). Many responses also referred to the fact that the house had a 'wide staircase' although fewer mentioned that it was 'mildewed' or of, at least, two storeys in height. The word 'square' was only accepted as correct if it was made clear that it applied to the shape of the house – answers which stated that the house was situated in a square were not rewarded. Clear understanding that there was a knocker on the front door was rewarded but statements such as the knocker had a 'tattoo' on it were not accepted as it was clear that the passage had been misunderstood. Similarly, references to the steps leading to the house being covered with a 'wine-red carpet' and the house being 'on the outskirts of the town' were not acceptable as these did not describe the appearance of the house itself.

- (b) This two-mark question also was answered correctly by many candidates although a small number identified only one correct point. Generally, the fact that the writer was 'grumpy' about himself was clearly understood; however, fewer responses mentioned that he was also digging his heel into the carpet and a much smaller number appreciated that his discontent was also shown by the fact that he 'rapped a sharp tattoo on the knocker'.
- (c) The key phrase to quote in response to this one-mark question was 'primness with humour'. Significantly more responses quoted the complete sentence which contained these words. Candidates need to be advised that close selection is required to demonstrate that the phrase has been understood. In these cases, no mark was awarded unless the appropriate phrase was underlined. About an equal number of responses quoted the phrase 'smile of welcome' which, although indicative of good-nature, did not relate to the character being correct in his behaviour as stated in the question and was, therefore, incorrect.
- (d) It is important for candidates to bear in mind that this, and similar 6-mark language questions in future papers, are intended to test the understanding of the Reading Assessment Objective R4 concerned with how writers achieve effects and for this reason it is essential here to explain how the writer's use of language (e.g. that Kralfesky was a 'gnome' wearing an 'antiquated but very elegant suit') conveys his strange appearance. A large number of candidates gained 3 marks for correctly identifying three appropriate phrases; a small number achieved more than one of the further three marks for showing appreciation of the effects of the language used. In the comparison quoted above, for example, a mention that gnomes are associated with being small, non-human and, perhaps, hard-working, would definitely have gained the additional mark. Simply explaining what was meant by the phrase (often by just stating that Kralfesky 'looked like a gnome' or by picking another appropriate phrase from the passage such as 'not a human being at all') was insufficient for reward.
- (e) The most successful responses to this two-mark question appreciated the fact that Gerry found the idea that his teacher should become friends with him amusing but that out of politeness he tried to control his reaction and stop himself from laughing; less successful responses identified either the humour or his attempt not to laugh but not both and seldom mentioned his politeness. The least successful interpreted the statement to imply that Gerry was scared of Kralfesky or suspicious as to the nature of his offer and, therefore, gave evidence that this section of the passage had not been understood.
- (f) Many responses demonstrated a good understanding about Kralfesky showing Gerry his birds in order that they could bond/become friends/share a joint interest in natural history; there was an equally good understanding that he took him to see the birds as he was late in giving them water that day. It could be suggested that candidates assumed that 'bonding' and sharing an interest in natural history were discrete points rather than being two aspects of the same one. It is also worth noting that many candidates were apparently unfamiliar with the term 'natural history' and assumed that the pair's shared interest was something to do with battles and other events in the past.
- (g) Responses which appreciated that the key word in this question was 'contrast' were the most successful; without recognising the focus of the question they could consequently gain only one of the two available marks. Many showed an understanding that the presence of light and bird song in the attic gave it qualities traditionally associated with heaven or paradise. The second mark was gained when responses went one stage further to make the point that this impression was emphasised by the comparison with the *grubby* corridor by which the attic was accessed.
- (h) Unlike 1(d), the other 6-mark language question, this required an explanation of the writer's vocabulary and not an appreciation of its effects. It is important to note that in all the quoted phrases there are two words (one mark for each) that require explanation. For example, a correct response to 'exclaimed rapturously' would be 'cried out in excitement'; an appropriate definition of 'volunteered modestly' would be 'stated humbly' and for 'danced nimbly' a definition such as 'moved in an agile manner' would gain both marks. Many responses focused on *why* or *how* the characters performed their actions (for example, 'he danced as if he were happy' rather than explaining the precise meaning of the words).

- (i) There were mixed responses to the summary question; some responses were tightly focused on the exact requirements of the task and the relevant section of the passage so that they listed at least seven relevant details about the attic of Kralfesky's apartment and gained all the marks available for the question. Less successful responses gave irrelevant detail about the apartment as a whole and/or included imaginative details not mentioned in the passage and consisted of personal responses written as if they were Gerry, rather than extracting details that were directly relevant to the terms of the question. It should be emphasised that this question carries the highest single mark of all of the sub-questions in **Question 1** and it is, therefore, vital that future candidates practise preparing for it by acquiring a suitable technique. The points noted in the mark scheme that could be made in answer to this task are as follow:

- 1 Creaking staircase (to the top of the house).
- 2 Green door.
- 3 Heavy door.
- 4 Bright/sunny room.
- 5 Grubby corridor.
- 6 Huge attic (taking up whole of the top floor).
- 7 Floor was uncarpeted.
- 8 Large table (only furniture in attic)/sparsely furnished.
- 9 Full of caged birds.
- 10 Floor covered in birdseed.

Question 2

The most successful responses were focused tightly on the passage and on the specific requirements of the question. They skilfully adapted the writer's description of Kralfesky (in particular the comparison with a gnome and the suggestion that he was not really human) to create a humorous and sympathetic account of Gerry's initial impression of the character which also showed that the writer's intentions had been securely understood. Such responses also recreated convincingly the joyful amazement felt by the writer at the surprise of seeing the number of birds in the attic and continued to reveal sound understanding of the passage by stating that there was obviously more to the new teacher than appeared on first sight and that future lessons were likely to be both interesting and enjoyable as a result of the shared interest in aviculture. The most successful responses also were written in a tone that was fully appropriate to an account of a conversation between two brothers and demonstrated control of English prose. They thoughtfully used the brother's questions to develop and illuminate the narrator's comments. A scripted dialogue or a narrative account containing direct speech were both equally acceptable and each was marked on the appropriateness of the tone used and the accuracy of the written expression.

Less successful responses tended to be over-reliant on lifting from the passage which resulted in there being insufficient focus on the requirement to give *impressions* of Kralfesky and contained only limited suggestions as to how future lessons might develop. These suggestions needed to be convincing to show a clear understanding of the passage. The least successful responses showed very little understanding of the passage as a whole and, in particular, relied on an over-literal understanding of some points such as Kralfesky being either an actual gnome or an alien from outer space.

A further feature of responses that were less than fully successful was an attempt to create a convincing sibling conversation without retaining a focus on the content of the question (Gerry's lesson with his teacher). Such responses over-used teenage colloquialisms ('gonna', 'dunno', 'bro', for example) and frequently contained irrelevant, circumstantial details about the imagined family life of the brothers.

Written expression was generally of a satisfactory to good standard and there were very few scripts in which the expression was so limited that meaning was not conveyed. The most successful showed extremely well controlled use of language with a wide range of descriptive vocabulary to develop appropriate tone and register. The less successful contained a range of basic language errors, in particular, lack of sentence control shown through comma splicing, misuse or omission of apostrophes, incorrect capitalisation, omission of direct speech punctuation and uncertain use of the perfect tense.

In conclusion, by far the majority of candidates approached the examination seriously. The most important message to pass on to those taking this paper in future is the necessity to read each question carefully and to ensure that responses are clearly focused on the precise requirements of each task.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0524/13
Reading Passage (Core)

Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for reading (40 marks) although there were 10 marks available for writing in **Question 2**.

- Candidates should be **familiar with key words and phrases of Question Paper vocabulary** to ensure that they focus their answers clearly.
- Some questions require explanation of **explicit** meanings and it is important to respond to these precisely. Candidates should also be aware of the need to **read for inference** (especially in order to show understanding of figurative language such as imagery and the connotations implicit in the writer's choice of words). If possible, candidates should be prepared to **look at the language of a passage as a whole** and to consider the context in which individual words are used.
- **The summary question 1(h) carries 7 marks and is an important factor in the final grade achieved.** Candidates are advised to practise this task carefully in preparation for the examination and to acquire a sound summary-writing technique.
- **Question 2** tests both Reading and Writing Objectives and thus the content of a **response must be closely grounded in the stimulus passage**. The skills of imaginative and creative writing are tested in Paper 3 or Component 4.

General comments

Overall, the reading material in this paper was accessible to candidates and they engaged well with it. The most successful responses showed a clear appreciation of the requirements of the questions and a secure understanding of the passage on which they were based. Candidates responded well to **Question 2** and there were many lively attempts to create an authentic sense of the relationship between mother and son. It was important that this did not lead to a loss of focus on the precise nature of the task and that a piece of writing showing understanding of the reading passage rather than creative writing was produced. It is important that Centres emphasise to candidates that it is necessary to observe the conventions of this type of writing when responding to similar tasks in future examinations in order to achieve higher mark ranges.

The writing and presentation on the majority of scripts were of an acceptable standard. Responses should be written legibly.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates responded well to this question with many achieving at least two of the full three marks available. Many candidates identified that the consul's flat was in an area where there was a 'maze of alleyways' or that it was in the 'old quarter'. Responses that said only that it was in the centre of town were not rewarded as this was not specific enough. Many candidates also identified that it was the 'top flat' in a 'rickety building' or that it 'leaned over/overlooked a tiny square'. Again, it was not enough just to put that the flat was in a tall building. These points could be achieved by quoting the appropriate phrase from the text, although some candidates missed a mark by not quoting enough of a particular phrase. A significant number of candidates, for example, put that the flat was in 'a maze of narrow' which was not awarded a mark.

- (b) This language question had six marks available; three marks for the choice of three phrases and three marks for an explanation of how they convey a sense of the atmosphere of the passage. In general, this question proved challenging. It is important for candidates to bear in mind that such questions, and similar questions in future papers, are intended to test the understanding of the Reading Assessment Objective R4 concerned with how writers achieve effects and for this reason it is essential here to explain how the writer's use of language communicates to the reader the sense of the area being 'rich and colourful'. It is also important to emphasise that candidates need to do more than explain what the chosen phrase means; the key is to identify how it conveys the writer's intended effect. Many candidates gained 3 marks for correctly identifying three appropriate phrases; a small number achieved more than one of the further three marks for showing appreciation of the effects of the language used.
- (c) The two key points to identify in this two-mark question were that the consul gave Gerald a French dictionary and that Gerald was asked to read from it. It was not sufficient just to say that he was given a dictionary. The question asks for candidates to answer in their own words and it is important that candidates made an effort not to simply repeat phrases from the passage.
- (d) The essential feature of this question is that it requires a one word answer. Many candidates correctly chose the word 'amicably' to indicate that the consul was friendly.
- (e) (i) Candidates found this two-mark question quite challenging; the most successful responses to this two-mark question gave an explanation of the consul's reaction by saying that he drew himself up straight ('stiffened' in the passage) and that he made an unclear expression ('suppressed') or expressed excitement ('exclamation'). This is another question in which it is essential for candidates to use their own words to paraphrase rather than to repeat phrases from the passage.
- (ii) Many candidates correctly identified that Gerald's thoughts immediately after the consul's reaction were: thinking the consul was angry because of Gerald's accent and then realising that was not the case. The key to this question was in the word 'immediately'. Candidates who did not get the full marks on this question tended to get the first point, but then to identify thoughts Gerald had later in the passage.
- (f) To gain the one mark available for this question candidates needed to identify that Gerald's initial thought when the consul fired his gun was either: the consul had committed a murder or that he was engaged in a feud with a neighbour.
- (g) Unlike 1(b), the other six-mark language question, this required an explanation of the writer's vocabulary and not an appreciation of its effects. It is important to note that in all the quoted phrases there are two words (one mark for each) that require explanation. For example, a correct response to 'frantic haste' would be 'desperate hurry'; an appropriate definition of 'incessant fusillade' would be 'continuous volley/firing of shots' and for 'humane service' a definition such as 'action for the good of others' would gain both marks. Many responses focused on *why* or *how* the characters performed their actions; only a very few candidates were able correctly to explain 'incessant fusillade'.
- (h) There were mixed responses to the summary question; some responses were tightly focused on the exact requirements of the task and the relevant section of the passage so that they identified at least seven relevant details about the what Gerald observed about the Belgian consul and gained all the 7 marks available for the question. Less successful responses gave irrelevant detail about the apartment and the area in which it was located or focused only on the matter of the cats and his reasons for shooting them. It should be emphasised that this question carries the highest single mark of all of the sub-questions in **Question 1** and it is, therefore, vital that future candidates practise preparing for it by acquiring a suitable technique. The points noted in the mark scheme that could be made in answer to this question are as follow:

Gerald's thoughts and feelings about the Belgian consul:

- 1 Gerald thought the consul was sweet/welcoming/friendly.
- 2 He noticed his moustache and beard/that he had a striking appearance.
- 3 Thought the consul was conceited.
- 4 Thought the consul was shocked by his French accent.
- 5 Was afraid that the consul was going to shoot him.

- 6 The consul was committing a murder.
- 7 The consul was involved in a feud.
- 8 Surprise at seeing tears in the consul's eyes.
- 9 Realised that the consul had a sensitive nature.
- 10 The consul's actions were humane/those of an animal or cat lover.

Question 2

The most successful responses were focused tightly on the passage and on the specific requirements of the question. They gave a lively account of the area in which the flat was located and effectively adapted the writer's description of the Belgian consul to create a humorous and sympathetic account of Gerald's initial impression of the character and how it developed, which also showed that the writer's intentions had been securely understood. Such responses also recreated convincingly the amazement felt by the narrator at seeing the consul reach for his rifle and of Gerald's mother's natural concern at hearing about her son's experience. These candidates often showed sound understanding of the passage by stating that there was obviously more to the new teacher than appeared on first sight and that future lessons were likely to be both interesting and enjoyable. The most successful responses also were written in a tone that was fully appropriate to an account of a conversation between mother and son and demonstrated control of English prose. A scripted dialogue or a narrative account containing direct speech were both equally acceptable and each was marked on the appropriateness of the tone used and the accuracy of the written expression.

Less successful responses tended to be over-reliant on lifting from the passage which resulted in there being insufficient focus on the requirement to give *impressions* of the Belgian consul and contained only a limited sense of Gerald's experience and of his opinion of the consul and of his mother's response to Gerald's explanation of his behaviour. These needed to be convincing to show a clear understanding of the passage. The least successful responses showed little understanding of the passage as a whole and, in particular, relied on an overly factual explanation of the events. A further feature of responses that were less than fully successful was an attempt to create a convincing conversation between mother and son without retaining a focus on the content of the question.

Written expression was generally of a satisfactory to good standard and there were very few scripts in which the expression was so limited that meaning was not conveyed. The most successful showed extremely well controlled use of language with a wide range of descriptive vocabulary to develop appropriate tone and register. The less successful contained a range of basic language errors, in particular, lack of sentence control shown through comma splicing, misuse or omission of apostrophes, incorrect capitalisation, omission of direct speech punctuation and uncertain use of the perfect tense.

In conclusion, by far the majority of candidates approached the examination seriously. The most important message to pass on to those taking this paper in future is the necessity to read each question carefully and to ensure that responses are clearly focused on the precise requirements of each task.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0524/21

Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for reading (40 marks), although there were 10 marks available for writing: 5 marks in Question 1 and 5 marks in Question 3. The requirements for doing well were to:

- give equal attention to all sections of the question
- explain points concisely, but in sufficient detail to show their significance in the context
- use your own words where appropriate; do not copy whole phrases from the original
- be careful to give only information that is focused on the question
- only make the point once
- give thought to the structure and sequence of the material in the response
- adopt a suitable voice and register for the task
- pay attention to length.

Key messages about how candidates can improve their performance for each of the three types of questions will be considered in greater detail below.

General comments

This paper was similar in difficulty level to last year's paper and produced a similar standard of response to all three questions, which covered a wide range. Candidates found both passages equally accessible and were able to finish the paper within the time allowed. For **Question 1** and **Question 2**, to achieve marks in the top band, candidates were expected to demonstrate thorough use of the passage and a wide range of discussion on language. Candidates wishing to score high marks should have a wide, appropriate vocabulary, both to express themselves and to understand the use of language in the reading passages. Responses were sometimes less strong because of the misunderstanding of an individual important word.

In **Question 3** most candidates managed to earn a mark in double figures by finding a reasonable number of points, but some responses contained examples of lifting phrases and sentences from the passages rather than the use of own words. It is important that they use their own words since it suggests that they do not understand the wording of the original. On the other hand, when they rephrase a fact the meaning should not change. It is vital that responses are not overlong, well beyond the one page of normal handwriting required. The mark scheme for Quality of Writing indicates the marks awarded where the response exceeds the permitted length. If a response copied the passage the candidate would not score highly.

There did not seem to be any common misunderstandings of the passages. To achieve well, responses were required to develop and assimilate the material in Passage A for **Question 1**, to understand the time scheme of the passage and to convert the structure of it into a report of the storm which occurred just before.

While quality is more important than quantity on this paper, there needs to be enough of a response to meet the top band descriptors and for all parts of the question to be covered. It is essential that the skills of selection and modification are demonstrated in all three questions. In addition, there needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions. The importance of planning cannot therefore be overemphasised. Checking is also advisable, as marks may be lost through slips of the pen which suggest basic misunderstanding, e.g. Adam's 'dairy', and the confusion between a 'spit' and a 'strip' of land. There was evidence that many Centres now expect their candidates to plan first, with a corresponding improvement in the structure of responses and the coverage of **Question 3**, where the two halves of the question were better balanced this session.

Most candidates answered their questions in appropriate English. There were no marks given for poor writing in this paper, although some responses were affected by unclear or limited style, or over-reliance on the language of the passages. The majority of responses were within the recommended length guidelines and thus were focused and without repetition, which can come with excessive length.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1: Imagine you are a newspaper reporter working in the nearby town. Write a report using this headline: Lone fisherman survives storm of the century. In your report you should include the following: what happened to the fisherman and his surroundings; why he refused to leave his home; how this will affect his way of life in the future.

[20 marks]

Most candidates wrote recognisable news reports and showed that they understood the need to adopt an objective viewpoint. The character of Adam, and the attitude of his family and ex-neighbours, were conveyed in the best responses by the use of short quotations revealing his passion and their admiration or belief that Adam was 'mad'. Better responses were able to explore the idea of his 'addiction' to the place and his lifestyle, to nature and the scenery, rather than just state these as facts. Terror and fascination are not incompatible, and this idea was ripe for exploration. It is worth noting that information given in the introduction to passages should be read, and utilised where relevant, for instance Adam had a name and the geographical location was a village. Those who entered into the spirit of the task gave Adam an age and full name, and named the village. Some were overenthusiastic and referred to severe loss of life in the storm(s), which was moving away from the passage into creative territory.

Less confident responses made little attempt to adapt the material. In such cases the first and second sections needed to contain more than plain facts about the distant and/or recent past, or needed to provide more detail about the context. It was helpful to distinguish Adam's views before and after the storm, though it was up to the candidate to infer whether or not it was likely that he would have changed his position. Weaker responses needed to address the third bullet to work towards achieving the award of a mark higher than the middle of band 3. Some first sections needed to be structured and sequenced, and random details at least needed to convey a clear picture of what happened to the village in this or previous storms. Some second sections were contradictory, unable to reconcile Adam's love and fear, his desire to be a hero and his willingness to die romantically. Responses could have picked up on and made use of the fact that Adam's children were elsewhere and that this revealed his character and priorities.

Most of the marks for this question were given for showing understanding of the passage and for using ideas within the framework of the response. It was not possible to use all the details from the passage in the space available, but good responses managed to include all the main ones, to do with appearance and history of the village and behaviour of the weather. In good responses, references to what had already happened and had been said were the basis of expectations and views about the future. Points for the first two bullets were sometimes effectively interwoven in the best responses, although it was logical to leave the third bullet to the end. Effective planning ensured that there was no repetition between sections and that they were all given equal attention and coverage. The use of ideas demonstrates explicit understanding, whereas the use of detail is necessary to show close reading, and development proves implicit understanding. Responses need to convey all three levels of reading comprehension to attain higher band marks.

References to past storms and the decline of the village were relevant background for the present storm and were rewarded. The build of the village houses was relevant in section one, and many responses mentioned it, though some spoiled the effect by describing them as being made of 'wood and plastic', or claiming that his children had been put into a sanctuary. References to Adam's behaviour during the storm were also credited, such as his sitting in his raised corner or shouting at the storm in King Lear fashion. Responses which had Adam rescued and taken to hospital by helicopter often made less use of the passage material.

In less good answers there were examples of copying whole phrases and sentences from the passage, not as quotations from characters, and sometimes several lines were lifted with virtually no changes in the wording. The more the content of the passage was adapted to the genre and focus of the question, the more likely it was that the mark for reading would be high. Responses were most prone to lifting in section two, without exploration and expansion upon Adam's extreme and unusual views in desiring to live uncomfortably and dangerously. Better responses referred to his diary keeping, his fishing, his damp house, and his way of dealing with floods by leaving his doors open. They made something of his relationship with

his father and the traditions he was brought up with, and his enjoyment of solitude and the 'elements', and related these to his present determination. Credit was also given to details of storms and how he had survived them. Short quotations attributed to Adam when interviewed were an admissible device for conveying his character and for giving authenticity to a news report style. Excessive use of direct speech was less effective and became indistinguishable from a lack of modification of language of the passage.

Where the third section was attempted, weaker responses re-iterated material from the previous section, about his desire to continue to live peacefully and go out fishing, or displayed a lack of understanding of Adam's situation and character in suggesting some inappropriate decisions. Better responses developed the implicit ideas that his house or boat or the linking road had been destroyed, and what this would mean for his future; or they allowed Adam to agree that it was time to give in, having proved his heroic credentials, and move to somewhere safer and with a community.

The writing mark reflected the clarity and fluency of the report, and how well it used vivid language to capture the sense of the drama of the storm and the strength of character of the protagonist. Rhetorical questions were neither plausible in the linguistic context nor an effective means of conveying information. The better written responses had a lively, engaging and convincing style, and the personality and views of the reporter did not overwhelm the informative content or detract from the central focus.

Here are some ways in which this type of response could be improved:

- Answer all parts of the question.
- Answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to the type of response you are writing.
- Be aware of the main issues and themes in the passage and use plenty of detail to support your ideas.
- Create a suitable voice and tone to show your understanding of what you have read.

Question 2: Re-read the descriptions of (a) the appearance of the cloud and the atmosphere before the storm in paragraph 4, and (b) the rain and the wind in paragraph 7. Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.

[10 marks]

Marks in the top band require precise focus at word level. The two parts of the question were mostly answered equally well, and responses were able to provide plenty of relevant choices, including imagery, in both paragraphs. There was some evidence that candidates stopped when they thought they had written enough, without considering the balance of their response. Nearly all responses said something about the 'heavy bank of cloud' in paragraph 4 and the 'demented hail of shrapnel' in paragraph 7. Comparatively few showed understanding of what 'shrapnel' is, and the majority believed that 'demented' is related to 'demonic' and so talked irrelevantly about evil. Many responses gave 'full of menace' as a choice, but few realised that it means something stronger than mischief or teasing. A few responses confused the sea and the sky in paragraph 4, claiming that it was the sea which was about to 'roll steadily ashore', and in paragraph 7 there was confusion between the waves and the rain in commenting on 'smashes itself'. There was also some vague understanding about what a 'tempest' is, and the influence of Shakespeare's play showed itself in the inclusion of comment about gods and magicians.

A wide vocabulary is essential for scoring highly on this question in particular. Close reading is necessary in order for misunderstanding to be avoided. Weaker responses gave a commentary with quotations incorporated in it, and needed to examine the writer's use of vocabulary and imagery. Repeating language of the passage can gain no credit, as understanding is not thereby demonstrated. Naming literary or linguistic devices, even when accurately identified, attracts credit only when accompanied by an explanation of how it is working in this particular context. Explaining an image in the form of another image is not helpful.

The first level of approach is to identify words that have an extra layer of meaning, and the second level is to be able to explain why the writer used them. An example from paragraph 4 was the 'terrible bowl of blackness': weaker responses simply quoted it or said vaguely that it meant darkness, possibly with fearful or fatal consequences, but few examined the implications of the use of the word 'bowl' in terms of shape or ability to encompass or to empty its contents.

It was a noticeable feature of the responses to this question that they were often longer than **Question 1** responses, which should not be the case given the relative weighting of marks. Writing at length does not improve the quality of the response if much of it is repetitive, and there is a danger of there not being enough time left to do justice to **Question 3**. On the other hand, less than a full page of writing is unlikely to produce

a range of choices, with their explanatory meanings and effects, for each half of the question. The choices from each paragraph are not sufficient; the response would be considered to be 'thin' and given a mark in Band 5 or below. Many candidates seemed to have limited themselves to only three choices for each section, though there were many possible appropriate choices from each paragraph. Responses to this question were still provided in grid form; this meant some undeveloped and mechanical comments, often not even expressed in sentences.

Most responses selected individual words and short phrases and treated them separately, but some gave choices which were restricted to only one word when the effectiveness depended on two or three words being used in combination, e.g. 'smashes itself' has a different and more subtle connotation than just 'smashes'. Overviews were given that showed an understanding of the threatening nature of the gathering storm in paragraph 4 and the violent attack of the rain in paragraph 7, but these needed to be supported by a range of individual examples and comments for the full dramatic effect to be conveyed. Many responses contained, in both sections, lists of choices or overlong quotations containing several choices, followed by general comments. Large chunks of quotation from one short paragraph do not demonstrate the skill of selection, and they can only be credited as one choice regardless of how many they contain.

There was a dependence on the idea of personification, re-iterated in both sections, which did not contribute helpfully to the explanation of specific effects. Some examples offered were not actually personifications, as in the case of 'swirling mass', or 'roll steadily ashore' without the 'waiting'. 'Smashes' was routinely described as an example of onomatopoeia, but this was not convincing in the context of the noise heavy rain makes against a building. Alliteration was often commented on, mostly with regard to the 'bowl of blackness', but this needs exploration, including comment on the build-up effect of a heavy and repetitive sound in this context, rather than just a statement of recognition.

The key to paragraph 4 (**section (a)**) is the idea of absence and unnaturalness. The best explanations tended to be about the failing of the light and its connotations of the losing battle with forces of darkness and chaos, and of the end of the world or the apocalypse. General references to tension were not highly rewarded because of 'tense stillness' being a phrase used in the passage, and often the idea of tension was not sustained. Vague references to the calm before the storm were unconvincing in the literal context.

In **section (b)**, based on paragraph 7, 'most magnificent', 'drown me out' and 'frenzied' were often quoted but not well explained as being ironic, predictive or violent respectively. The theme of battle was commented on, but not its different aspects, mental and physical, and the role of the elements in adopting both of these forms of attack, weapons and madness. The idea of wild animals conveyed by 'unleashed' and 'rearing their heads' was usually recognised but not always fully explored or equated with 'frenzied' and 'monstrous'. A weakness of **section (b)** responses was the need to focus on the wind and the rain rather than Adam, and also to make such comments as 'It made him/me feel scared' or 'It makes the reader feel sympathy for Adam' which could not be credited.

The following specimen response includes the selected quotations in the mark scheme, and fewer choices than this would be more than sufficient for the award of the top mark, provided that the quality of the explanation was high and consistent enough. This sample answer is given so that Centres and candidates can appreciate what constitutes an appropriate type of response to the question.

(a) The appearance of the cloud and the atmosphere in paragraph 4

The writer conveys the idea of the impending danger by making the cloud a 'heavy bank', a thick and solid line whose weight can only be suspended for so long. The inevitability of the storm is shown by the image of it 'waiting' and use of the word 'yet' in relation to 'no anger'. The word 'menace' creates the idea of a deliberate, threatening, bullying stance. The personification of the storm in these phrases suggests nature's personal vengeful attack against the village and its lone occupant, who is insignificant in comparison to its might and only a tiny speck on 'the great canvas of nature'. The sky is like a huge painting, dark and dramatic, with little light and where humanity is barely featured. When the cloud is ready to 'roll steadily ashore' it will be with a relentless and continuous motion which will crush everything below it. 'Tense stillness' and 'No breeze, no sound', as if nature is holding its breath, convey an unnatural quietness and absence of movement which can only lead to the breaking of the spell of false calm with huge noise. The 'terrible bowl of blackness' is shutting out the light, which begins to 'fail' and signify defeat, as it takes on a frightening, all-enveloping shape, as if full of a dangerous liquid to be poured out or capable of swallowing everything into itself.

(b) The rain and the wind in paragraph 7

There is vicious and wind-driven water everywhere. The 'most magnificent' storm is ironically awe-inspiring and enjoyable as well as destructive. It 'unleashed a swirling mass'; this turbulent and spiralling movement of a huge volume of water conjures up the idea of whirlwinds and whirlpools, as well as that of a pack of vicious and dangerous animals being set free to cause havoc. The storm is no ordinary storm but a 'tempest', involving multiple elements of air and water capable of extreme damage to life and property. It 'beats' Adam into a 'crouching apology of a man', making clear its physical and psychological dominance and ability to hurt and humiliate. With the rain 'smashes itself', there is the suggestion of a crazed creature intent on destruction at whatever personal cost – a big monster attacking a tiny house which repeats the earlier bullying idea. This extreme violence is continued with the 'demented hail of shrapnel' image, which conjures up a vision of iced balls of water capable of inflicting a similar degree of pain and damage to weapons used in trench warfare, being catapulted with insane ferocity. The rain's ability to 'drown out' and silence Adam's voice parallels its ability to literally drown his house and possibly himself. The 'sheets of rain' are as solid and as continuous as layers of fabric, cutting off sight as well as all other sound. The 'frenzied' waves have caught the general fit of madness, and by 'rearing their heads' like a line of cavalry or sea monsters they indicate an intention to charge against their enemy and whatever stands in their way. The sea is 'monstrous' both in the size of its towering waves and in its animated behaviour, that of unnatural, terrifying and all-powerful creatures of the deep.

Here are some ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Avoid general comments such as 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there' or 'this is a very descriptive phrase'. Such comments will not earn any marks at all.
- Your first task is to choose some words and phrases that seem powerful to you. Do not write out whole sentences but use single words or phrases of two or three words. Do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle.
- 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 not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning, in the context, for each of your choices. That can give you up to half marks for the question if the meaning is accurate.
- When you explain effects, think of what the reader sees and feels when reading the word or phrase. It may suggest more than one thing.
- Learn to recognise images and explain them (but you do not need to know or give their technical names). Say what they convey within the paragraph, and how they reinforce each other, if this is the case.

Question 3: Summarise (a) the facts about the sea, and its amazing features, according to Passage B; and (b) what the fisherman enjoys about living in such a desolate place, according to Passage A.

[20 marks]

To answer this question successfully candidates needed to identify 15 points that were relevant to the question and to present them succinctly in their own words. This is an exercise in informative writing, which should be clear and to the point. There were 23 possible answers in the mark scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. This was the highest-scoring question for many of the responses. Most candidates were aware of the appropriate form, style and tone for a summary. Better responses avoided introductory statements and commentary and concentrated on factual summary, more or less equally balanced across the two sections.

The two sections were generally equally well done in terms of giving relevant points and adopting an appropriate writing style. Good responses were the result of a methodical reading of both the passages. Better summaries avoided repetition, for instance of the fact that Adam enjoyed feeling peaceful. While it was acceptable to give the points in the order in which they appeared in the passage, more able responses changed the sequence so that related points could be grouped together. For example, in Passage B the depth of the oceans goes logically with what can be found on the sea bed, i.e. the coral reefs and the Roman cities, and in Passage A the music of the sea belongs with its peaceful effect. Candidates generally found it easy to identify relevant material in both passages and picked up a reasonable number of reading marks in both sections, although points 10, 18 and 21 were less commonly offered. Points 19 and 21, survival and heroism, were two separate points, although they were often not sufficiently distinguished for both to be awarded and some responses confused 'survivor' with 'saviour'. Point 9 was the speed of the change rather than the change itself.

Weaker responses needed to be expressed in complex sentences with different beginning words and phrases, and in presenting points in lists. Candidates also needed to avoid long explanations. In Passage B, the first two sentences in the second paragraph contain only one point and the rest is exemplification; all that needs to be said was that new species are being discovered, without reference to the spiders as big as dinner plates. Likewise, later references to Coleridge or the Beaufort scale were not necessary, as they are neither facts nor amazing features about the sea. Detailed explanations tended to not only reduce the amount of space available for dealing with other points, but also to make the summary as a whole longer than the permitted length.

Candidates should be advised that responses should follow the guidance for length as responses longer than the permitted length will achieve low writing marks for this question. The expectation is a side of A4 of average handwriting (8/9 words per line). Responses which are 'excessively long' (i.e. more than a page and a half of average handwriting) score 0 marks for writing. Some candidates with very small handwriting clearly wrote at too great a length, even though their answers fitted onto a page; small handwriting and word-processing can fit up to 18 words onto a line, and this must obviously be taken into account. Even where responses paid no attention to the length requirement, they rarely gained all 15 reading points, yet lost writing marks. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the amount of material included in a summary, as well as to the language in which it is expressed.

Attention should be paid to the amount of copying from the passages. From Passage B the information about the blue whale, the '30 elephants' and the amount of suspended gold was often given word for word; there was also much copying from Passage A of the water lying 'like a flat pond as far as the eye can see', of the fisherman being small 'on the great canvas of nature', and of his being 'monarch of all I survey'. These are all examples of wording that needed to be changed to show understanding. On the other hand, in Passage B 'gold' and 'coral reefs' have no synonym and in these cases are not expected to have been paraphrased. There is always a danger that substituted words are no longer factually accurate, and even that they change a positive to a negative connotation, for example when replacing 'solitude' with 'loneliness'.

Section (b) asked only about what Adam enjoyed, but some responses tried to mention all aspects of his life, for example that he went fishing or had a two-storey house, and therefore lost focus. This reduced the likelihood of scoring full marks not only for the reading but also for the writing. It was also important to be clear that the question asked for Adam's viewpoint to be adopted and not what we might enjoy in his place. Better responses were specific, making it clear that being alone in this context was beneficial, and that the reason why he enjoyed extreme weather was because it provided him with challenge and drama, and a chance to appreciate the power of the elements. This point needed to be secured by more than a reference to his being excited by watching storms. For **section (a)**, it was not necessary to mention the dumping of toxic waste, as this is not a feature of the sea but of human treatment of it. References to Bermuda or its triangle were also irrelevant, as these are examples and not facts, and it was not true to claim that the Mary Celeste is an example of a ship which suddenly disappeared.

Higher marks for writing are awarded where the candidate forms varied and fluent sentence structures, and gives just enough information about the points to convey each one clearly. Candidates who wrote summaries clearly, concisely and fluently, without long explanations or repetition, and in their own words, scored the whole five marks for aspects of writing.

When reading the following specimen answer, candidates should note that the points are explained simply, and are also paraphrased into the writer's own words. The response includes all available points, but if handwritten it would fit onto a side of paper with space to spare.

Section (a)

The world's oceans cover most of the Earth's surface and are deeper than the highest mountain in places, so that new species are still being discovered, and Roman cities and coral reefs are hidden in their depths. The sea contains the planet's largest animal, the blue whale, and a large amount of natural gold. There are myths of fabulous sea creatures, and there have been cases of vessels disappearing without warning. Waves can reach an extraordinary height, yet suddenly the sea surface can change back to calm again. The sea could even hold the explanation of the origins of human existence.

Section (b)

He enjoys the view of the placid sea and the total tranquillity it brings him, represented by its music and that of the seagulls. Being alone is a pleasure and it makes him feel that he is the ruler of his surroundings. He enjoys witnessing nature's power in the form of storms, and being reminded of his place in the universe. An angry sea with enormous waves is another sight which pleases him, and makes him think that being stranded and swept away would be a romantic way to die. He aspires to be a survivor of extreme weather conditions, and also to see himself as a conquering hero of the storms.

Here are some ways in which summaries could be improved:

- Make points briefly, but in sufficient detail to show what they mean.
- Use your own words as far as possible. Do not copy whole phrases from the original.
- Write no more than one side of average handwriting.
- Write informatively and never comment on the content of the passage.
- Be careful to give only information that answers the question.
- Make a point only once.
- Be specific; do not generalise.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0524/23
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for reading (40 marks), although there were 10 marks available for writing: 5 marks in Question 1 and 5 marks in Question 3. The requirements for doing well were to:

- give equal attention to all sections of the question
- explain points concisely, but in sufficient detail to show their significance in the context
- use your own words where appropriate; do not copy whole phrases from the original
- be careful to give only information that is focused on the question
- only make the point once
- give thought to the structure and sequence of the material in the response
- adopt a suitable voice and register for the task
- pay attention to length.

Key messages about how candidates can improve their performance for each of the three types of questions will be considered in greater detail below.

General comments

This paper was similar in difficulty to last year's paper and produced a similar standard of response to all three questions, which covered a wide range. Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible. For **Question 1** and **Question 2**, to achieve marks in the top band, candidates were expected to demonstrate thorough use of the passage and a wide range of discussion on language. For **Question 1**, candidates were also required to modify the language and structure, as well as both develop and assimilate the material. Candidates wishing to score high marks should have a wide, appropriate vocabulary, both to express themselves and to understand the use of language in the reading passages. Responses were sometimes less strong because of the misunderstanding of an individual important word or phrase, such as in Passage A believing 'climbing steeply through... trees' referred to climbing of the trees.

In **Question 3** most candidates managed to earn a mark in double figures by finding a reasonable number of points, but some responses contained examples of lifting rather than the use of own words, whilst others copied whole phrases and sentences from the passages. It is important that candidates use their own words since it suggests that they do not understand the wording of the original. On the other hand, when they rephrase a fact, the meaning should not change. There did not seem to be any common misunderstandings of the passages. It is vital that responses are not overlong, well beyond the one page of normal handwriting required. The mark scheme for Quality of Writing indicates the marks awarded where the response exceeds the permitted length. If a response copied the passage the candidate would not score highly.

While quality is more important than quantity on this paper, there needs to be enough of a response in **Question 1** to meet the top band descriptors and for all parts of the question to be covered. It is essential that the skills of selection and modification are demonstrated in all three questions. In addition, there needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions. The importance of planning cannot therefore be overemphasised. Checking is also advisable, as marks may be lost through slips of the pen which suggest basic misunderstanding, for example that the narrator had walked for hours rather than three days to get to the village of Ludhi. Some candidates, on the other hand, wrote out a complete draft – sometimes of all three answers.

There was some evidence that candidates did not complete the paper in the time given and attempted either **section 3(a)** or **3(b)**. For **Question 3**, the second half of the question was often shorter than the first and there was evidence of copying from the passage in both halves. Again this evidence from the quality of the answers indicates that candidates who started **Question 3** first did not have any advantage.

Most candidates answered their questions in appropriate English. There were no marks given for accuracy in this paper, although some candidates' work was affected by unclear or limited style.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1: Imagine that you are Gabriella Le Breton. You have been invited to speak to a group of young travellers planning to trek in the same area of Nepal and hoping to witness the honey hunt. Write the words of the talk to the travellers. In your talk you should explain the challenges of going to see the honey hunt, outline what these young travellers may find interesting about the hunt and discuss your own feelings about the honey hunters and what they do.

[20 marks]

The more competent responses were convincing talks which maintained an enthusiastic yet authoritative voice, selecting from Le Breton's personal experience the features relevant to future plans. They understood the need to develop the details with advice, for example that the 'uncertain weather' necessitated appropriate clothing being taken. Such responses did not exaggerate the challenges, or were able to offset them by positive recommendations about what would be enjoyed in witnessing the hunt. They displayed a variety of feelings about the hunters, with admiration for their bravery, patience and consideration for the natural world, for example. These responses demonstrated clear awareness of the focus of the second and third bullets and did not stray into relating the deliciousness of the honey. It is worth noting that information given in the introduction to passages should be read, and utilised where relevant.

Less confident responses focused less on the task or demonstrated weaker adaptation of the material. In such cases the first section often contained descriptions of the terrain, sometimes using copied phrases from the passage and written in a narrative style. Some of these responses showed a mechanical progression through the passage, picking out potential problems, for example to do with walking. They needed to connect and synthesise these problems. When considering what young travellers may find interesting about the hunt, less good responses needed to rephrase and reorder the passage, and integrate detail within the comments, for example regarding the skill with which the ropes were braided. Content covering the third bullet needed to go beyond general comments to do with admiration for the pride the hunters take, and for their courage. They also included a short section drifting away from the focus of the task to include the enjoyment of the honey.

Where there was mechanical use of the passage, this resulted in a reading mark up to Band 3. Weak answers focused on the passage but not on the task, so relied on repeating the material with little or no modification, especially in the outline of what these young travellers may find interesting about the hunt. Some of these answers showed serious misunderstanding, for example that the trekkers were going to make the ropes, climb the ladders and get the honey, or there was confusion about the two fires lit for different purposes. Such responses often needed to develop the actions taken by the honey hunters rather than list them, and to maintain focus on the essence of the prompts. It is important that the third section is developed and more than a passing reference in a concluding paragraph. There was a tendency to adopt a narrative style, as if re-telling Gabriella le Breton's experience in its entirety to a listener, when a specific voice could have been created.

Many candidates attempted to use an appropriate voice, which was more in evidence in the opening and concluding paragraphs, and in dealing with the first two prompts, when, for example, referring to the breathtaking scenery that was a backdrop to the hunt. Most responses were organised appropriately, but sometimes feelings about the hunters and what they do were incorporated into the middle section with some loss of clarity. A reflection at the end would have been more effective. Weaker responses would have benefitted from changing the order of the passage.

There were responses that turned Gabriella's talk into a conversation or a question and answer session. Some of these managed to adopt a convincing voice for Gabriella, but often these approaches removed the focus from the content of the question.

In less good answers there were examples of copying whole phrases and sentences from the passage, and sometimes several lines were lifted with virtually no changes in the wording. The more the content of the passage was adapted to the genre and focus of the question, the more likely it was that the mark for Band 3 would be awarded the mark for Band 3 at least.

In responding to explaining the challenges of going to see the honey hunt, most responses covered the necessity to walk for a long time, and that the going would be steep, although some thought the trekkers needed to climb up the cardamom plants, rather than through them. Many commented on the unpredictability of the weather, although many used the word 'uncertain' from the passage, and clearly did not appreciate the implications of this. A good proportion of the responses indicated that some physical fitness would be necessary, some suggesting a training programme before embarking on the trip. The difficulty of returning through the forest in the dark was well utilised in some responses. The risk of being stung was noted by many, although for weaker candidates this was related as being only a risk to the hunters (which it was) rather than as a projection that it could affect the trekkers, too. Some candidates commented on how distressing it might be to have a chicken wafted over the trekkers' heads and then made into a sacrifice. Weaker responses wrongly included the challenge for the trekkers of having to carry bamboo ladders.

Responses about what these young travellers may find interesting about the hunt often concentrated on the preparation of the ropes, the arrangement of these ropes into ladders, the sacrificial chicken, the sight of the bee hives, and the fire to smoke them out. Such a response here could constitute competent coverage if dealt with appropriately. It is important that the information is not mechanically reproduced, and that clear points are made without using the words of the passage, for example, what it was about the use of fire to smoke out the bees that would interest young travellers. There was sometimes confusion between three sets of people – the villagers of Ludhi, the guide who took them to the hunt, and the Nai Chi hunters themselves. Better answers included comments on the rarity of the bees, on the fact that it is a privilege to see the hunt as it only occurs twice a year, on the incredible size of the hives, and on the skill with which the hunters use basic commodities to make structures upon which their lives will depend.

Candidates need to attempt all three sections, and in some detail, for a mark in Band 1 or Band 2 to be awarded. Better responses describing Gabriella's feelings about the honey hunters and what they do commented on her admiration for a range of attributes and actions, for example their bravery and teamwork. Here would have been the most suitable place to refer to the treasure the men brought back and how they proudly showed off their stings as evidence to back up the writer's own feelings. Most able responses commented on the fascination experienced by Gabriella when first seeing the hives which could extend to how the men went about their task. Other good answers interpreted the material to suggest that the men were rather foolhardy, that they were damaging the environment and harming the bees, despite acknowledging that this activity only takes place twice a year.

Here are some ways in which this type of response could be improved:

- Answer all parts of the question.
- Answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to the type of response you are writing.
- Be aware of the main issues and themes in the passage and use plenty of detail to support your ideas.
- Create a suitable voice and tone to show your understanding of what you have read.

Question 2: Re-read the descriptions of (a) the forest and the beehives in paragraph 4, and (b) the honey and the eating of it in paragraph 7. Select words and phrases from these descriptions and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.

[10 marks]

Marks in the top band require precise focus at word level and careful selection of powerful words which address the focus of the question. Choices which referred to actions of the group rather than to the forest and the beehives in paragraph 2, and to the kitchen in paragraph 7, could not be credited. Most responses included 'beat our way' and 'dense forest', and these were best treated separately with a detailed comment. Similarly, many responses featured 'dark orange, brown-speckled treasure', and would have benefitted from separating it from 'explode in a potent, floral blend – mango and lychee blossom'. One general comment about this was often the result, rather than three potentially separate ones.

The first level of approach was to identify words that had an extra layer of meaning, and the second level was to be able to explain why the writer used them. An example from paragraph 2 was the phrase 'like

ripples across water'. Weaker responses quoted it or noted vaguely that it meant the hives moved in a particular way, often repeating the word 'ripples'. Repeating language of the passage can gain marks if understanding is not demonstrated. The best responses realised that the image evoked a complex, rhythmic movement usually associated with largish bodies of water, and that it is frightening to think that relatively small insects like bees can join together into a unit to produce such an effect. The primary effect of the paragraph is one of a quest to a mythical land where ordinary objects have been almost magically transformed, and where further changes are possible, perhaps with disastrous consequences. Some candidates gave words from the passage which were merely informational, which were not appropriate as they did not have the extra layer of meaning required for the close analysis expected in this part of the question paper.

This question is worth 10 marks and it is expected that candidates write at sufficient length to produce a range of choices, with their explanatory meanings and effects, for each half of the question. The mark scheme refers to 'a number of words and phrases...in both parts' in Band 2, and there is a requirement to comment on images for the higher band. Where one or two choices from each paragraph are appropriately selected, the response would be considered to be 'thin' and therefore given a mark in Band 5. Some candidates limited themselves to only three choices for each section, though there are more than twice as many possible appropriate choices from each paragraph. It is useful when candidates offer a summary overview of the combined effect of the language of the paragraph, but this is not a substitute for analysis at word level.

Answers should aim to avoid lists of choices or long quotations followed by general comments and instead feature individual words and short phrases which are treated separately. Meanings were usually attempted by candidates, but they are encouraged to provide specific explanations of effects to achieve higher marks. There were some attempted overviews that showed an understanding of the density of the forest and the special nature of the honey. Good responses selected the word 'pulsate' in paragraph 4, defined it as throbbing, and then linked it to the beating of a heart, and thus saw the hive as central to a living organism that sends power to its outer reaches. They also identified the word 'treasure' in paragraph 7 as indicating something valuable, but also saw the connotation, especially when seen in conjunction with 'haul', of something which did not belong to these people and which had been plundered.

The following specimen response includes the selected quotations in the mark scheme, and fewer choices than this would be more than sufficient for the award of the top mark, provided that the quality of the explanation was high and consistent enough. This sample answer is given so that Centres and candidates can appreciate what constitutes an appropriate type of response to the question.

(a) The forest and the beehives in paragraph 4

The writer creates the impression of a daring quest undertaken to arrive at a magical site. 'Beat our way' indicates the repeated heavy blows needed to make progress through the 'dense forest'. A forest is much bigger than a wood and this is close-packed with the possibility of getting lost. It will also be hard going to squeeze between the trees, with the likelihood of being scratched. The 'gnarled rhododendrons' give the impression of aged trees with twisted, knobbly, thick trunks and stems which would hinder progress. Together with the 'red-stemmed cardamom' there is an exotic and fairy-tale feel. The first sighting of the hives is of 'three darkened discs', the noun sounding other-worldly, whilst 'darkened' brings a feeling of apprehension and danger. This eeriness is reinforced by the use of 'shimmer and pulsate eerily', words which stress the shiny, alien, space-ship appearance and rhythmic beating of the hive, as a single organism, like a giant heartbeat. The pulses gradually move outward across the giant discs like 'ripples across water', a continuous movement that here brings menacing power. There are so many bees to produce this effect and they are all on the move, creating a 'mesmerising and frightening sight'. The viewers are fearful yet entranced by the unusual and powerful beauty.

(b) The honey and the eating of it in paragraph 7

The impression created in this paragraph is of unrestrained childish glee and of the highly regarded booty brought back by warriors. A 'large slab of thick honeycomb' shows in two dimensions the huge size of the honeycomb with three single syllable words with harsh consonant and long vowel sounds lending an aural emphasis. It is a 'dark orange, brown-speckled treasure', indicating something precious and stolen, reinforced by the phrase 'gooey haul', which also conveys its stickiness. Whilst the colour is one associated with honey, it is also the warm colour of pure gold. 'Gooey' is another effective aural choice with its deep, thick sound mirroring the thickness of the honey. That the combs have many small bodies stuck to them is conveyed by both 'brown-speckled' and the alliterative 'dotted with dazed bees' – they are stunned by being taken away from their natural environment. 'Bursting into the gloom' and 'thrusting a hand' are violent

actions indicating desperation to get at the honey. The hunters 'flicking them off casually' is a phrase showing single-minded focus on the honey and lack of concern for the bees or their ability to sting. The men 'tuck in' to the honey and 'wolf down vast chunks', phrases associated with an appetite, greed and manners reminiscent of fairy-tale animals. The flavours 'explode' in the mouth, a word usually associated with the detonation of a bomb, and ensuing quantity of debris, gas and dust. This metaphor indicates how the taste – made up of several elements – fills the mouth completely and suddenly. The eater is overcome by the 'potent floral blend', suggesting the powerful taste of the unique combination of different flowers from which the bees have harvested nectar (here mango and lychee which we know of as sweet, juicy fruits). The writer is surprised by its 'tangy rather than sugary sweetness', because we associate honey with an extreme sweet rather than a sharp citrus taste.

Here are some ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Avoid general comments such as 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there' or 'this is a very descriptive phrase'. Such comments will not earn any marks at all.
- Your first task is to choose some words and phrases that seem powerful to you. Do not write out whole sentences but use single words or phrases of two or three words. Do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle.
- 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 not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning, in the context, for each of your choices. That can give you up to half marks for the question if the meaning is accurate.
- When you explain effects, think of what the reader sees and feels when reading the word or phrase. It may suggest more than one thing.
- Learn to recognise images and explain them (but you do not need to know or give their technical names). Say what they convey within the paragraph, and how they reinforce each other, if this is the case.

Question 3: Summarise (a) the benefits of allowing trophy hunting, according to Passage B; and (b) the landscape and features of the area described in Passage A.

[Total: 20]

To answer this question successfully candidates needed to identify 15 points that were relevant to the question and to present them succinctly in their own words. They are reminded that this is an exercise in informative writing, which should be clear and to the point. There were 23 possible answers in the mark scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. This was the highest-scoring question for many of the candidates. Most candidates were aware of the appropriate form, style and tone for a summary.

Good answers were the result of a methodical reading of both the passages. There was evidence that some candidates had made notes, although sometimes these contained items that were so similar to each other that the points could not score twice. Good summaries avoided repetition, for instance of the fact (from Passage B) that the landscape is preserved and the natural habitat is protected. While it was perfectly in order to give the points in the sequence in which they appeared in the passage, good responses changed the sequence so that related points could be grouped together. For example, from Passage B three points that would logically go together are that some areas are preserved whilst others are rehabilitated resulting in an immense area that is now wildlife-friendly.

Candidates generally found it easy to identify relevant material in both passages, and picked up a reasonable number of marks in both sections, although points 12, 14, 16, and 21 were less likely to be offered. Weaker responses tended to be list-like and needed to use own words more often. It is important to focus on the specific requirements of the summary in question. Thus, features of the landscape and the area (Passage A) were expected; description of the night sky or facts about the hunt could not be credited. Detailed explanations, for example naming the rare species saved from extinction, tended not only to reduce the amount of space available for dealing with other points, but also to make the summary as a whole longer than the permitted length of one side.

Candidates should be advised that responses should follow the guidance for length as responses longer than the permitted length will achieve low writing marks for this question. The expectation is a side of A4 of average handwriting (8/9 words per line). Responses which are 'excessively long' (i.e. more than a page and a half of average handwriting) score 0 marks for writing. Some candidates with very small handwriting clearly wrote at too great a length, even though their answers fitted onto a page; small handwriting and word-processing can fit up to 18 words onto a line, and this must obviously be taken into account.

Consideration therefore needs to be given to the material included and to the language in which it is expressed: concision, clarity, focus, fluency and own words are descriptors for the higher writing. Grouping together of some of the features of the landscape would have aided concision and could have contributed to a high mark for writing. Better responses did not have introductory statements nor comments, and concentrated on giving an informative summary.

Higher marks for writing are awarded where the candidate forms varied and fluent sentence structures and gives just enough information about the points to convey each one clearly. Those candidates who wrote summaries concisely and without long explanations or repetition, and in their own words, scored the whole five marks for aspects of writing.

When reading the following specimen answer, candidates should note that the points are explained simply, and are also paraphrased into the writer's own words. The response includes all available points, but if handwritten it would fit onto a side of paper with space to spare.

Section (a)

Trophy hunting is a significant part of the economy of many African countries with hunters paying huge sums to shoot certain species whilst visiting different parts of the continent from other tourists. Jobs are therefore created. Land is retained in its natural state and land previously used as farmland or for other uses is restored. Now the land protected for wildlife is a massive 1,400,000 square kilometres. All wildlife populations have increased, with those of rare species particularly notable. Interestingly, the population growth of trophy species is not affected by the sport, partly due to the anti-poaching measures local people are encouraged to introduce.

Section (b)

Thick forests clothe the hills and mountains of this part of Nepal. Bamboo is commonly seen, and tropical fruit trees alongside cardamom, banyan and rhododendrons, are also often found. Deep gorges slice through the landscape, creating enormous lichen and moss-covered cliffs, on some of which are situated huge hives of Himalayan honey bees. Steep paths wind between terraced fields and through the forests to clearings and huts or villages.

Here are some ways in which summaries could be improved:

- Make points briefly, but in sufficient detail to show what they mean.
- Use your own words as far as possible. Do not copy whole phrases from the original.
- Write no more than one side of average handwriting.
- Write informatively and never comment on the content of the passage.
- Be careful to give only information that answers the question.
- Make a point only once.
- Be specific; do not generalise.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0524/04
Coursework Portfolio

Key messages

Candidates should:

- ensure that the three assignments are written as different genres and in different styles appropriate to audience
- only include assignments that reach the highest standard of which they are capable
- reflect in writing their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them
- write in fluent and varied sentences separated by full stops
- proof read their work carefully – marks may be affected by typing errors.

General comments

Centres should be congratulated for the work that they undertook in planning the courses satisfactorily, following the requirements of the syllabus and for the process of internal moderation, where there was more than one teacher.

Much of the work gave opportunities to candidates to develop their skills as writers over the period of time available and to express their personal thoughts and feelings. There was ample evidence that they were encouraged to write their own ideas and arguments and to use their imagination rather than reproducing ideas that had been taught in the classroom. The best writing was, as always, that in which the writers presented themselves as real, individual people with ideas of their own.

The range of topics chosen for Assignment 1 seemed to indicate personal choices of topics that were of interest to the writers. They were able to write from personal knowledge rather than from second-hand ideas gleaned from the internet.

It was important to remember the implications of awarding the marks for writing according to the standard achieved over all three assignments. Those candidates who succeeded in writing consistently in three different styles, for different audiences and in different genres, demonstrated a wide range of ability and more easily accessed the highest mark band. Those who wrote similar responses for Assignments 1 and 3 demonstrated a narrower range of ability.

Most Centres demonstrated skill in setting tasks of appropriate difficulty.

In Assignment 1 the tasks which were appropriate for the average writers were not necessarily challenging enough for the best candidates.

Many Centres set descriptive tasks for Assignment 2 and these were good to read. Some of the responses, however, were written in language that was designed to impress the reader rather than to convey pictures, atmospheres and emotions clearly. The best writing varied the focus, describing from different viewpoints and in a limited time frame.

Some thought should be given to setting appropriate texts for Assignment 3. It was important that the language and ideas were not too complex for the candidate's ability. Some of the witty journalistic texts were too subtly written and humorous ideas were taken perhaps too literally. Texts which are not effective for this task consist only of information rather than ideas, arguments and opinions and those that are so sensible and well thought out that there are no inconsistencies or issues raised by the confusion of fact and opinion.

Much of the work was accurate and well expressed. The commonest errors were of punctuation, sentence separation, and these were not always corrected on the page. Candidates are advised to read their work, including typed scripts.

Administration

The marks for each candidate need to be the same on each of three documents, the Centre Assessment Summary Form, the MS1 and the folder itself. The CASF is the most important of these because it is a record of the final marks agreed by the Centre at internal moderation. The final mark needs to be the one that appears on the MS1 or its electronic counterpart. It was also important that the final mark was written on the folder itself so that no mistakes are made at external moderation.

Most Centres were careful to avoid errors. As a result of checks that were carried out, several omissions were discovered.

Assessment

The quality of assessment was good. The adjustments that were made were generally of one or two marks. There were a few occasions on which larger adjustments were made. More cases of slight generosity were found than of slight severity.

Marks were sometimes increased because of the accuracy of the writing but more often because of style and fluency and sometimes because of the consistency of the writing across all three assignments.

The most common reasons for slightly reducing the marks were:

- The amount of error, usually of punctuation and less often of grammar. Centres are reminded that it is important to annotate error in the final drafts, since it must be evident whether the accuracy of the work has been taken into account.
- While most of the internal moderation was correctly carried out, there were occasional variations in the standards of different sets, and this usually contributed to an overall reduction.
- The mark scheme for reading was not always correctly applied and some responses were given high marks when there was little more than a summary of the ideas from the text.

Where there were small adjustments made for both reading and writing, these added up to more substantial final adjustments to the total marks.

Drafts

Only one early draft per folder was required. It was comparatively rare to see drafts that showed evidence of substantial change. The best drafts had comments, perhaps with bullets, by the teacher at the end, indicating the improvements that might be made. There was then evidence either in pen or another coloured font that changes had been made to the language (editing) or whole sections such as the ending (revising). This process showed critical awareness and the capacity to make progress in perfecting a piece of writing, which is one of the aims of coursework.

There were cases, not often repeated through all the sets in a Centre, where a teacher had corrected the draft. This was not allowed. The advice given by the teacher must not constitute the correction.

Comments on individual assignments

Assignment 1

The improvement in the suitability of tasks set for this assignment was maintained. There were fewer essays on subjects such as euthanasia, capital punishment and anorexia. While these can be done well, they tended to repeat the same arguments and facts as many others on the same topics and there was little vigour and enthusiasm in the writing. There were also fewer assignments based on material gathered from various websites. The challenge of this approach was to be confident that the writing was original rather than copied from the website or at best, a close paraphrase. It was sometimes obvious that the quality of writing in Assignments 2 and 3 was different from that in Assignment 1, and this was occasionally acknowledged in the marks awarded by the teacher.

The work for this assignment did not have to be argument, although it was sometimes difficult to write informatively at the highest levels. For writers choosing 'A Day in the Life of...', for instance, the information and ideas have to be sufficiently complex to be appropriate to the highest mark band. The choice of persona, including Olympic divers, soldiers, stunt pilots and Usain Bolt, often raised the performance on this task. It is recommended to avoid listed details such as getting up in the morning and having breakfast.

There was some good analytical work based on experiences in school. Some of the best responses were about candidates' own experiences. This led to some exceptionally thoughtful, personal writing, as did a companion piece about candidates' experiences as freshmen at the college. Sometimes the assignment was effective because it dealt with matters close to the writers' experience, such as proposals to end homework or school uniform. These assignments could be presented as arguments, the words of speeches, articles for school publications or as letters to the principal / headteacher. A similar task was to write about *My Ideal Teacher*, which provoked some original thoughts, including a heartfelt attack on 'boring' PowerPoint.

There were some good responses about visits to the theatre and a comparison between *Animal Farm*, the book and the cartoon film. Here it was important that the style should be that of the candidate and not of a stereotypical critic or writer of literary criticism. The same was true of anyone writing a guidebook entry; originality of expression and style was essential.

While it was not necessary to write in essay form, where the topic was interesting and accessible to the writer, the result was usually good. The following list of topics from this year's portfolios gives some idea of the scope:

Video technology and football
Women referees
For and against a graffiti wall
Should women with children work?
Is everything built on lies?
Voting for 16-year-olds
My Dreams
The dangers of the Internet
The new station at Stuttgart
Laptops or books?
Public transport should be free
The Paralympics
How to scuba dive
Skateboarding

Assignment 2

The choice was between fiction, description of places and autobiographical fragments, all of which were equally good options.

Teaching what makes a good narrative before letting any experimentation take place proved to be good practice. Stories were well developed and were rarely a series of events. There was plenty of description and a good deal of tension. Much attention was paid to the climax of the story and there were some effective endings. This was another advantage of coursework, since in the examination there is rarely enough time to work out all the constituent parts of an effective narrative. A number of these narratives were mystery or ghost stories, and here the challenge was to make them sound real and to avoid stereotypes.

Perhaps the secret of a good narrative was in choosing an imaginative title. Some of this year's included:

Nothing lasts
After the rain
The box
The house where time stood still
Mother Nature always forgives
Why me?
Freckles
The story of an hour

There were a large number of interesting and effective autobiographical fragments, one of which was simply called *I remember*. Others included descriptive narratives of visits to places such as Dubai, Taiwan, London, Georgia, Cairo, and Jeju Island. Some of these were return visits to places where the writers had previously lived, and were all the better for it.

Much of the writing was descriptive, and two things are worthy of extra care. The first was focus. It was difficult to write at any length about something seen at a single moment and from one angle. Good descriptions often visited the topic from different angles so that there was movement on the part of the writer. Equally, a limited amount of time could pass without its becoming a narrative. This was not a problem in this component since description and narrative could be mixed, unlike Components 31-33 (Examined). Some tasks got round the problem by requiring description of a place at two times of the day or in winter and summer.

The second area for attention was language. Clever writers sometimes showed off their command of language but needed to enlighten rather than confuse the reader. The intention of description is to convey a picture clearly, not to blur it with excessive language. The same is true of imagery. Imagery explains the unusual in terms that the reader can appreciate.

Where descriptions avoided these difficulties, there was some excellent work. Perhaps the most interesting title this year was *My Grandfather's Porsche* but the most outstanding piece of writing was a monologue spoken by *The Lady of Shalott*.

Although only three assignments are required, it is worth remembering that if more are completed, then it is possible to make a choice and perhaps this will lead to higher marks for writing. There is some sense in practising fiction, autobiography and description to see which the most successful response is.

Assignment 3

Key advice is as follows:

- Choose an article that contains ideas and opinions that can be argued with, evaluated and developed. For example the article may use inconsistent arguments or confuse fact and opinion.
- Choose a single article of no more than two sides and do not choose more than two articles if you are looking for contrasts. It becomes difficult to evaluate too much material and the responses can become general.
- Whole novels, newspaper reports or factual and undeveloped writing from websites are very difficult for candidates to respond to in a way that meets the requirements of the mark scheme.

Most Centres chose texts on behalf of their candidates. Sometimes everyone responded to one text and sometimes there were two or three. In some Centres, every response was to a different text, which caused difficulties where some were more suitable than others.

Some Centres rightly chose controversial articles by journalists such as Julie Burchill and Jeremy Clarkson. Care should be taken as it proved difficult for some candidates to appreciate that these journalists wrote for entertainment and tended to exaggerate their views. Some responses reacted as if everything was literal and hence became diatribes against the writers instead of an examination of the arguments (sometimes sensible) that were offered. The humour, often ironic, was quite sophisticated so that some candidates missed the point of what they read. Practice was required before attempting to counter such awkward articles.

Most Centres left it to individuals to respond to the text, which is the correct approach to avoid responses that looked remarkably the same and were difficult to assess.

Most Centres set a task that involved replying to the writer or the editor of the publication in which the text appeared. An equally good task was an article for a named publication with a particular readership in mind.

The response involved identifying ideas, arguments and opinions, and commenting on them in such a way that understanding was demonstrated. Ideas could be developed or refuted, but what was written had to arise from the reading of the text.

The mark for reading was given in accordance with the mark scheme in the syllabus. This stated clearly that the award of nine or ten marks (Band 1) was for those who 'analyse and evaluate several ideas and details from the text(s) and develop lines of thought'. Band 2 (marks of seven and eight) required a response 'in detail to ideas from the text(s), explaining them and expressing views on them with varying degrees of effectiveness'. Band 3 (marks of five and six) was for those who 'show some response to the ideas in the text(s), summarising them and giving simple views on them'.

Marks were sometimes inflated in the top three bands, particularly giving marks of seven and eight to responses that only met the criteria for Band 3. In addition there was a mistaken understanding that marks could be given to responses that analysed literary devices and the effectiveness of words. This type of response is relevant to Paper 2, Question 2. This question is related to Question 1 of Papers 31-33 (Examination), which it follows closely.