

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/11
Reading Passage (Core)

Key Messages

1. Questions such as 1 (g) require candidates to provide definitions of six italicised words in total with one mark being awarded for each correct definition. It is important that candidates attempt to define all italicised words and focus their responses closely on those words.
2. It is important that candidates attempt to use their own words whenever a question requires them to do so in order to make clear their understanding.
3. Questions such as 1 (h) require explanation of *how* a writer's choice of words helps to produce a particular response from the reader and, therefore, a complete answer to such questions involves more than simply defining the meaning of the quoted phrase. Centres are advised to focus on developing effective strategies for tackling the specific requirements of key words within the question, particularly *how*, in order to explore nuances of meaning resulting from the words used by the writer.
4. Candidates should ensure that their responses to **Question 2** are closely linked to the context and content of the Reading Passage. They are also advised to spend some time proof-reading their responses and, in particular, focus on checking that they have separated sentences correctly by using full stops.

General Comments

Candidates responded well to this paper and the overall impression is that the Reading Passage was both challenging but accessible in terms of understanding, but also a very good stimulus for the newspaper report in **Question 2**, which produced a large number of thoughtful and well-focused responses. Nearly all candidates responded conscientiously and diligently to all questions and made creditable attempts to confront the more demanding sub-questions of **Question 1**; although such responses did not always gain the full marks available for these questions, there were many occasions where partial marks were gained as an emerging sense of understanding was apparent from candidates endeavouring to express a complex point.

There was very little indication that responses suffered from timing problems and most answers were of adequate length for all questions; overall presentation and handwriting were generally of a good standard. Nearly all responses gave clear evidence that the examination was being taken seriously and that all candidates were trying their very best to do well.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates answered this correctly by choosing either the phrase *Down the years* or *I cannot remember*. There were a few responses consisting of whole sentences rather than just the three word phrase specified in the question - it was not possible to reward such responses unless the correct word was clearly identified, such as by underlining.
- (b) Most candidates gained at least one mark by explaining that this was his conclusion from his memories or that it was a general view of what happened. To obtain the full mark it was essential to give an explanation that covered *both* key words: 'overall' and 'recollections'.

- (c) The question asked for candidates to identify three details about the exterior of the house where the character Christopher lived. This could be achieved by choosing three short phrases for some points, by choosing a single word. There were seven possible points to choose from: there was a driveway; a gate (or gateway); there was a road outside; there were two oak trees; there were gardens (with garden walls); hedges and a door or doorstep. This question was effectively addressed with many candidates getting the full three marks and very few failing to get one mark.
- (d) This was another question that required candidates to use their own words to explain why Christopher did not take much notice of the two cars on his return home. Many candidates gained two marks by explaining that his mind was focused on other things – some specifying that he was concentrating on getting a glass of water and/or finding out the correct time.
- (e) This question was answered successfully by the vast majority of candidates who identified correctly that Christopher was able to see his mother talking to the three men because there was a door open in the hallway through which he could see what was happening.
- (f) This question was one of the least well answered on the paper. The key points required were to show an understanding of Christopher's perception of the relative sizes of himself and his mother. The reason that he felt 'very young again' was that his mother seemed very large and he felt very small against her which made him remember a much earlier experience. Quite a number of candidates identified at least one point from the phrase: *looming and large* - used to describe the mother; the second point (the relative size) being more an inference from that description.
- (g) As mentioned in the Key Messages section of this report, this question proved demanding and it is essential that candidates focus their responses on defining the italicised words in the phrases quoted.
 - (i) This was the most effectively answered part of this question. Many candidates understood (and explained clearly) that *coherent order* was a sequence that made sense (or a chronological order). Some found more difficulty in finding synonyms for *various details*; different facts (or events or even memories) was an acceptable explanation here.
 - (ii) This proved to be a demanding question with only a small number of candidates gaining the full two marks. Many explained what was meant by 'triumphantly', there being a wide range of acceptable synonyms used. The term 'perched' caused much greater difficulty as it required candidates to understand the sense of precariousness about Christopher's achievement; relatively few expressed that sense – although comments that suggested that he had just managed to reach a very high part of the tree could gain that second mark.
 - (iii) This question was answered well by those candidates who were careful not to repeat the wording of the original phrase: a *lowered* voice is one that is quieter and a *composed* voice is one that is calm. Again the advice in the Key Messages section is crucial to success with this task.
- (h) This question also proved to be demanding with only a small number of responses going beyond explaining a content detail for each phrase to examine the effect of the language used, and how it contributed to Christopher's view of his parents. This resulted in very few two mark answers. Some candidates did little else than paraphrase the original wording which gained one mark if the answer revealed that the phrase had been clearly understood. A few candidates ignored the instruction to select three of the four phrases quoted in the question and simply chose their own phrases to explain; such responses could not be rewarded and nor could those that offered roughly the same explanation for each of the different phrases or which used one given phrase to attempt to explain another.

- **“smiled, kissed her lightly on the cheek”**

A large number of candidates clearly understood the impression that his parents were affectionate to one another (or that the father loved his wife); fewer saw the suggestion of the father being delicate or gentle.

- **“came striding out to where I was waiting”**

A number of candidates identified the sense of the father appearing to be a vigorous, active man and some the implication that Christopher clearly admired his father. Many candidates obtained

one mark by explaining that this showed the father was keen to say goodbye to his son and not to forget him.

- **“her presence, which seemed looming and large”**

Many candidates were able to comment on Christopher's awe at his mother's presence. Some went further and commented on how this made her a powerful figure for him. It is worth noting that where candidates chose this phrase and the next there was a temptation to give very similar, and sometimes overlapping, explanations.

- **“silenced me with a stare that frightened me”**

Many candidates explained this phrase effectively, many commenting on the power of his mother's facial expression, or that he understood her to be in earnest and some explaining this in terms of its effect of stopping him from talking or protesting. As noted above; the less successful answers were those in which candidates, having chosen the previous phrase, gave answers that focused again on her the power of the mother's presence.

- (i) Most candidates managed to score between 4 -7 marks for this summary question, and indeed there was a significant number who got full marks. Less successful responses were the result mainly of candidates who did not stop summarising the events at line 25 (as specified in the question) and continued with, or even concentrated on events after Christopher entered the house. Candidates in general seemed to be well prepared for this question and it would appear that many Centres have concentrated successfully on summary techniques as part of their preparation for the examination.

There were eleven points (stated below) from the passage about the Christopher's actions which could have been identified up to a total mark for the question of 7:

- 1 Loitered in the driveway.
- 2 Said goodbye to his father.
- 3 Played with toy soldiers.
- 4 Ate lunch (with Mei Li).
- 5 Walked down the road.
- 6 Climbed a tree.
- 7 Sat in the tree/looked at the neighbouring gardens/houses.
- 8 Climbed down the tree.
- 9 Felt thirsty/went to get a glass of water.
- 10 Went home/went through the gate.
- 11 Saw two cars in the drive.

Question 2

This question elicited some very successful responses; candidates selected salient points from the extract and were able to develop newspaper reports about the mysterious disappearance, its effects upon the family and the possible explanations. The majority of candidates adopted an appropriate style and register for a newspaper; only a relatively small number confusing the register with that of a radio or TV news report.

Overall, the marks for Reading and Written Expression were of similar quality, with the average mark for Reading being marginally higher than that for Written Expression. The best responses showed a mature and perceptive understanding of the characters and situation described in the passage and convincingly conveyed both the family and the police's uncertainty over how the situation had occurred. The most successful responses dealt with the second bullet point by integrating it into the speculation over how a

possible kidnapping (or other serious crime) might have taken place in a wealthy or middle class family. These responses also entered successfully into the possible reasons for the father's disappearance, the relationship between husband and wife and the possibility of there being work related problems of which the family had not been aware of; all of these being related to small details or to inferences from the passage. In some case these ideas were incorporated effectively into police statements to the press. Less successful responses tended to retell (often in great and some unnecessary detail) the events that day, particularly what Christopher did while waiting for his father which were not directly relevant to the business of his disappearance. However, most candidates displayed a good general understanding of the family and the predicament which they faced, and especially of the effect of these events on a young child.

The written accuracy was considered, overall, to have been an improvement on responses in previous series. Spelling of basic words still represents a challenge for a number of candidates and there is still a lot of uncertain sentence punctuation, but in general, candidates attempted both to select vocabulary that was precise and wide-ranging and also to use varied sentence structures for effect.

Most candidates, as noted above, responded enthusiastically to this question and it would appear to have allowed them the opportunity to write to the best of their ability. There were only a small number of very short responses; in fact, many were sustained successfully over three or four sides of the answer booklet. The most successful of these addressed each of the bullet points in some detail; the less successful addressed one or two of the points with either no reference to the others or at best, a cursory one. However, a majority of the candidates covered the four bullet points to some extent and many used them effectively to structure their writing. It should be emphasised that the most successful answers dealt with the bullet points in turn, using them as a paragraph framework for their answer.

Most responses scored within bands 2 or 3 for both elements of the question, with at least as many responses achieving band 1 marks as those gaining marks in bands 5 and 6. Many candidates gained a higher percentage of their marks on **Question 2** than on **Question 1** - a detail that reinforces the point made in the Key Messages section that it would help those taking this examination in future to ensure that they follow precisely the requirements of the wording of the sub-questions in the first section of the paper. In conclusion, this proved to be a successful paper which allowed the majority of candidates to produce work of a satisfactory to good quality.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/21

Reading Passages (Extended)

Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for **Reading (40 marks)**. In addition, there were up to **10 marks** available for **Writing**: 5 marks in **Question 1** and 5 marks in **Question 3**. Candidates are advised that in order to aim for high marks in this component they should:

- read the passages carefully and purposefully more than once
- remember to consider both explicit and implicit meaning within a passage
- take note of any extra information offered e.g. in an introduction to a passage
- read questions carefully, paying attention to the specific guidance offered
- plan the content, structure and sequence of answers ahead of writing the response
- give equal attention to each section of each question
- adapt writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- use the facts, ideas and details in the passage to inform answers
- use own words as far as possible and not copy whole phrases or sections of the passages
- avoid repetition of points but ensure ideas are complete
- leave sufficient time to read back through answers and edit as required

General Comments

Candidates' responses to this paper mostly showed reasonable understanding of what was required in each question and evidence of having engaged with both passages. Almost all candidates offered responses that at least attempted to address the task as set. There were very few instances where candidates had missed all or part of a question.

The majority of candidates offered responses of a suitable overall length and took care with presentation suggesting they had approached the tasks with some diligence. It was not always the case that within responses all sections of a question had been given equal attention. In many instances one part of a question was stronger than another – some answers were rounded off too early. Candidates are reminded that length in itself is only one feature of any answer – the best responses look to cover a range of points with some precision and offer a complete overview.

For higher marks at Extended level, the reading paper requires candidates to demonstrate a competent understanding of both passages and be prepared to explore not just the immediately explicit points of texts but to be willing to tease out more implicit ideas. Many responses would have benefited from closer attention to detail and a commitment to revisit key points in the passages in order to secure understanding. It was not unusual to find a candidate who had initially misread or not understood an idea when attempting Question one, who on returning to the text for **Question 2** and **3** had clearly then modified their understanding, but not returned to their original task to correct their error.

Pleasingly, most candidates endeavoured to use their own words and there were those who did so with precision on occasion. There was evidence that a wider working vocabulary was required for others as limitations affected both Reading and Writing marks at times. Some misunderstandings of key ideas within the passages were the result of incomplete understanding of specific vocabulary rather than any complexity in the text itself.

Where candidates had planned responses these more often successfully targeted each section of the question. Those who had also edited their answers, perhaps adding detail or changing wording, often did so to good effect. There were strong answers offered by candidates to each of the questions, though in many cases focus was not maintained across the script as a whole.

Most responses were written in an appropriate register, many with some sense of audience. However, Writing marks were affected by awkward expression as well as problems with basic grammar. Whilst writing

is not specifically assessed for accuracy in this paper, proof reading to avoid errors affecting the response is advisable. Errors in the use of possessive pronouns were evident in a number of responses. Candidates should endeavour to offer fluent and controlled responses.

Copying from the passages was rarely an issue. Some responses were over-reliant on the wording of the text and lifting of phrases was not unusual. The most successful responses had avoided this and offered carefully structured answers that modified and used the passages, rather than repeating or paraphrasing them.

Candidates must try to develop the ideas in the passage in response to **Question 1** in order to achieve higher marks and look to offer a more thorough response, dealing with details and points selected from the whole passage. Many candidates restricted their attention to the sections narrating the night time walk itself, missing opportunities to pick up on ideas in the second half of the text as a result. For **Question 2**, candidates needed to make more careful choices of words and phrases, selecting images and examples which they feel are powerful or interesting in some way. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to offer specific and detailed comments about these choices, demonstrating that they have understood something of the writer's purpose. Responses that try to explain the selected language in the same words as the choice will not score well. In **Question 3**, candidates should not be adding to ideas in the text or looking to analyse. Careful selection of points in both halves is necessary to access higher marks. Candidates who had spent time planning and organising their response were often most able to score more convincingly for content than those who tried to follow each passage through chronologically.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

You are the grandfather. Some years later you write a letter to Natalia, for a special birthday, to remind her of your shared experience. Write the letter. You should include: the atmosphere of the city that night; your reasons for taking your granddaughter out that night; your thoughts and feelings now that you look back on the experience.

Base your letter on what you have read in Passage A. Address all three bullet points. Be careful to use your own words. Begin your letter, 'Dear Natalia, I wonder if you remember...' Write between 1½ and 2 sides, allowing for the size of your handwriting. Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing

(20 marks)

Almost all of the responses to this question indicated that candidates were familiar with the need to draw ideas for content from the passage.

Most answers had understood something of the general feel of the experience and were able to remind Natalia of the atmosphere of the night. A remarkable number of candidates made no reference to the elephant in response to any of the bullets. Others mentioned it only in passing as a casual detail. Comparatively few made use of the information offered later in the passage explaining how the elephant had come to be in the city and the role of the soldiers and zoo keeper in saving it. Many answers would have benefited from the inclusion of further detail and further exploration of the nature of the gift.

Stronger responses to this question often began with thoughts and feelings from the Grandfather's perspective looking back and established the significance of the experience as a shared bond. Some drifted too far from the passage in creating narrative backdrops for their letters. Whilst a few speculative details of the context for writing were occasionally useful in adding to the sense of voice, those answers that spent too much time creating an unsupported narrative, e.g. that the grandfather was now dying or that Natalia's behaviour had somehow necessitated a reminder, were in danger of losing sight of the passage and missing the chance to show what they had understood from their reading.

The response to the atmosphere of the city for the first bullet showed that candidates were generally able to pick out the more obvious elements of setting - the darkness, silence and emptiness. Many were able to go further, suggesting a magical or surreal quality or even the unusual calm in the context of the war. Too often though details were lifted and repeated mechanically rather than being integrated into the response. At the top end, candidates found inventive ways to incorporate details and responded to the suggestions of neglect or hardship rather than listing them.

A noticeable feature of mid-range responses was a tendency to carry over the sense of atmosphere from the second and third bullets rather than consider the specific focus each required, resulting in a lack of detail and opportunities, particularly in relation to the significance of the elephant and precise nature of the gift. Weak responses suggested largely superficial reasons for going out that night, offering assertions that it would be “one of those moments” without exploring how and why. This often resulted in repetition of ideas related to bullet one rather than suggestion of the grandfather’s reasons for sneaking out with Natalia that night. More successful answers moved on to consider the excitement of the grandfather, offering the suggestion he wanted to surprise Natalia as a treat to contrast with wartime life and was enjoying the sense of sharing the moment with her. The best responses connected subtleties in the text that suggested meeting the elephant was no coincidence and began to explore ideas related to that – seeing the elephant was exciting, but seeing it in secret before anyone else found out was particularly special.

Most candidates were able to offer potentially relevant ideas in the third bullet. The least successful approach was to simply repeat reminders of details of the walk – often again facts related to the atmosphere, without a sense of evaluation or development. Typically candidates mentioned Natalia’s concern at her mother’s possible reaction. Many did not go on to suggest how the grandfather might have interpreted that. The most convincing responses were able to shift perspective and offer reactions from the grandfather looking back on the whole episode, remembering that he would at the point of writing know the facts about the elephant’s plight as reported in the newspaper. A good number of candidates picked up on the idea that he hoped it might remain their secret or at least be shared wisely. Not all were able to go further than the text, repeating the advice to “think carefully about where you tell it and to whom”. Many candidates would have profited from re-reading this last section of text to clarify and refine their ideas. Skim reading led some candidates to misinterpret “This is yours”, suggesting Natalia was handed the elephant as a pet. Likewise, the zoo keeper was variously misrepresented as responsible for the elephant being near death, cruel for using the elephant to advertise the zoo, or a failure as a businessman, in missing his role in saving the animal in the face of his own wartime suffering. There was much to be gained from an intuitive reading of this last paragraph. Some candidates did mention the elephant as a manifestation of hope in a general sense, while others less successfully merely mentioned the zoo or circus material in a loose narrative way. Notions of inspiration, admiration and humanity manifesting in love or care for a suffering animal were often not taken up, though occasionally candidates drew useful comparisons between the elephant and the grandfather.

The ability to manipulate information and ideas from the text is crucial to success at the higher levels. In this case, the question required candidates to shift perspective from that of Natalia who narrates the passage to that of the grandfather some years later. The change in perspective and time frame of the question was mostly well managed. Some candidates chose to deal with each bullet in turn, offering a sense of during, before and after the experience. Others attempted to weave in ideas, which had the potential to be more convincing but needed some careful thought and planning beforehand to ensure all bullets were covered and a good range of ideas offered. The question offered plenty of scope for creating voice and a sense of audience, though occasionally candidates allowed their writing to become maudlin and over sentimental at the expense of using material in the passage.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity of the response and how carefully language was used to indicate shades of meaning. Candidates often showed some ambition in their vocabulary. A smaller number were sufficiently precise in their use of language to be able to achieve some subtlety in terms of the grandfather’s recollections of the experience and relationship with Natalia. Even those struggling to offer a range of ideas often still retained some sense of voice, though this was at times marred by awkward expression. The better written responses matched some sense of personality and deliberate style with fluent, mostly controlled writing.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- read the question carefully, then re-read the passage with the question in mind
- identify potentially appropriate ideas from the passage
- be prepared to re-read sections of text to work out details about which you are unsure
- plan your answer to address all parts of the question and offer a range of ideas
- check you have given equal attention to each of the three bullet points and avoided repetition
- decide on a suitable voice, tone and style for your response
- identify supporting detail and plan to use it throughout the response, not just at the beginning
- extend and develop at least some ideas with these details in mind - think yourself into the situation of the character writing
- avoid simply repeating the words of the passage

- leave sufficient time to read your answer back and make any necessary changes

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of: (a) the approach of the elephant in paragraph 8, beginning with ‘Hap block...’, (b) the elephant in paragraph 10, beginning with ‘Its ears were folded back...’.

Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects using this language. Write between 1 and 1½ sides, allowing for the size of your handwriting. Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer

(10 marks)

Candidates are required to select examples of appropriate language from both paragraphs. Comments on stylistic effect are only credited where explicitly linked to choices. Having been directed to the paragraphs and given the focus of each description, candidates need to offer choices that are precise and complete in order to demonstrate secure understanding. Incomplete or over-long choices are less likely to be useful. For example, a number of candidates offered “ears folded back against the domed” as a choice, diluting the strength of the choice by suggesting both incomplete understanding of meaning and often leading to discussion of only one of the two choices it contained. A surprising number of candidates offered “enormous” without mentioning shadow – or offered the whole choice but explained only one word.

Long lists of choices also tend to be less helpful to candidates and are less convincing when they contain inappropriate choices. It is better to take time to select the most powerful examples and offer a more considered range in each half of the question. Each choice can then be discussed in turn specifically and at some length. Offering a number of choices followed by a comment to cover them all is not sufficiently precise to evidence any more than partial understanding. Candidates should be demonstrating that they can see how each of their separate choices is contributing to the reader’s view of the whole.

The response is best written in continuous prose to allow candidates room to explore and explain their ideas fully. Credit is given for the ability to select evocative, interesting or unusual examples of words and phrases relevant to the focus of the question. Responses that discuss the specific meanings of these choices are credited. Those which go on to consider layers of meaning or connotations in relation to the choices are beginning to show an understanding of their effects in the context of the passage. The strongest answers offer clear evidence that candidates have understood how the language is working through precise selection of a range of relevant choices in each half and close consideration of effect. The ability to recognise images within each paragraph and explain their effect on the reader is a feature of better answers. Naming a literary device, even accurately, is less important than offering an explanation of how it works within the context of the passage. Candidates are not being tested on their knowledge of technical terms, though do need a sufficiently wide range of vocabulary to be able to recognise and explain subtleties of language beyond explicit literal meaning.

General assertions that an example “creates an effect on the reader” or “helps you imagine it” are insufficient evidence of understanding. Similarly, those candidates who opened with at times lengthy introductions summing up the narrative or congratulating the writer on an accurate description of an elephant were not fully exploiting their opportunity to address the task.

Most candidates were able to identify potentially interesting examples from both of the paragraphs. Many found it difficult to go further than slight or partial explanations. Weakness in understanding and difficulty explaining vocabulary was apparent. Misunderstandings included references to “groan” as the specific and immediately recognisable noise of an elephant (as trumpeting might have been) and discussion of rock (noun) rather than rocked (verb). Few were able to respond to the subtle differences of movement implied by swaying, rocked forward and rolling. Some recognised references to the sea and boats but did not think further and explain how that might be related to the movement of this elephant.

Candidates found some profit in teasing out the writer’s method, the deliberate obliqueness of the first paragraph, the detailed picture of the elephant in the second. The idea of mystery and suspense were popular and sometimes sustained, as the shadowy and monstrous impression of the ‘thing’ caught candidates’ imagination. Many understood the meaning of organic and its hint that this was something alive but rarely paired it with lumpy or considered the effect of the full comparison. Some limited their discussion in the second half to a consideration of how the description related to elephants in general rather than considering this particular specimen.

A tendency to impose a single idea throughout the interpretation limited a number of answers. Nuances within and between choices were ignored. Most common here were ideas of being 'big' and 'slow', though not usually all of them together. Candidates were often stating and restating the same about elephants in relation to choices offered – especially in **Section B** – rather than carefully unpacking the whole phrase. Weaker answers, "It dragged its curled trunk like a fist," typically drew observations that it was an accurate picture of an elephant since elephants have large heavy trunks that curl at the bottom.

Better responses were able to go some way towards discussing the separate elements of dragged, fist and even curled. It was rare for candidates to put all of those elements together, connecting their ideas to explain the image as a whole.

"Domed" and "arched" were often cited as examples. A few better scripts engaged with the sense of the animal's architecture and demeanour. A number of scripts were able to suggest something of the animal's condition: weakness, age, fatigue - mainly linked to the fact that its skin was described as dry. There were few candidates who attempted to explain its latent power, submissiveness, or vulnerability.

Two phrases were cited by candidates, 'making almost no noise' and 'taking up the whole street'. The literal quality of these phrases did not allow scope for comment on effect at word level and consequently these would not have been credited as linguistically interesting examples. However the latter, in particular, had credence for those offering size as a basis for their comments and discussion in relation to them occasionally added usefully to the overall picture.

The following response from a candidate in this examination series offers just one example of the ways in which candidates approached this question. It is not intended as a model answer. However, the answer is appropriate and offers evidence of understanding. Explanations of effect might well have been further refined.

Question 2 example

"Enormous shadow" creates a feeling of mystery as the girl is unsure of what she is looking at.

"Enormous" also creates a sense of scale as we can visualize how big the creature was in comparison to the girl. There is a semantic field of the sea and its movement with "swaying", "rolling motion" (of waves) and the simile "like a tide" which compares the elephant's movement to that of waves. "Rocked forward" also links to the idea of the elephant compared to a boat rocking forwards and backwards with the tide. "Soft dragging sound" juxtaposes two contrary ideas of the heaviness of the large elephant dragging his weight with lightness or softness. The use of commas to separate the second sentence also allows the reader to slowly change the image they are visualizing and creates a transition from something mechanical "a tram" into something "organic" and "lumpy" by placing these words in the same sentence. "Sucked in air" confirms the reader's expectations that the "thing" is alive and the "deep groan" suggests suffering and fragility even though it is a large creature. Shadow also refers to a feeling of something gloomy, dark and unknown which can excite both fear and curiosity in the reader and the girl.

The adjectives "domed" and "arched" introduce an idea of architecture and the elephant as being a precious monument or building or even a work of art. "Bouldered head" creates visual imagery for the reader to visualise the head of the animal as a large grey stone, also creating a sense of the heaviness of the elephant's head that he has to carry. "Dry folds of skin" promote a sense of the animal being ancient as they can be interpreted as wrinkles, which also means mature and wise. "Seemed to take up the whole street" also creates a sense of the scale of the elephant as a colossal, huge creature that awakens a certain awe in the reader. "Shifted its weight" and "dragged its curled trunk" with the simile "like a fist along the ground" suggest that the elephant and its weight are imposing and he is conquering the street as he passes – a sense of power and strength.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- read both parts of the question to identify the focus for each and re-read the chosen paragraphs carefully
- identify examples of words and phrases used by the writer that seem interesting or powerful
- select a range of choices from these examples to comment on: try to choose the best, not just the first one you see
- do not choose whole sentences but be careful not to only offer one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase
- re-read the question to ensure that all your choices are relevant

- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or only give a general comment which applies to all of them
- remember to put speech marks round your choices as it helps to identify them
- avoid general comments such as 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there', 'this creates a strong visual image', or 'this draws the reader in and makes them want to read on'. Comments like these will not earn any marks and take up your time
- when you are not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- if your choice is a phrase, do not forget to look at all the interesting words within it as well as explain it as a whole
- remember you do not get any marks for identifying literary techniques or devices unless you focus on the meaning and effects of the words themselves
- to explain effects, think of all that word might suggest to a reader- the feelings, connotations and associations of the language
- include images from each paragraph, and try to explain them in detail
- use your own words to explain your choices rather than repeat the words from the choice itself

Question 3

Summarise:

- (a) the importance of mammoths *and* the reactions to this discovery, as described in Passage B
- (b) the perceptions *and* actions of Natalia, as described in Passage A.

Your summary must be in continuous writing (full sentences; not note form). Use your own words as far as possible. Aim to write no more than one side in total, allowing for the size of your handwriting.

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

(20 marks)

To answer this question successfully, candidates needed to identify fifteen points that were relevant to the question and present them succinctly, in their own words as far as possible. This task requires writing to be clear, concise and to the point. Candidates who had planned their response beforehand, then checked and edited it at the end, gave themselves the best chance of doing well.

There were twenty-three possible answers in the Mark Scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. Though all points were offered by some candidates at some point, answers did not often demonstrate the coverage required to achieve higher marks. Each part of the question suggested two areas from which points might be drawn and candidates needed to revisit each passage when planning, to ensure they had targeted those. In part (a) candidates frequently did offer both general points about mammoths and specific points in relation to the discovery of Lyuba. Weaker answers included unnecessary information relating to other discoveries too. Part (b) answers tended to offer either Natalia's perceptions or her actions, limiting the scope for scoring content points.

Some offered part (b) in narrative form, including much unnecessary detail as a result and repetition of points was evident in a number of answers. Some answers indicated that despite using it themselves, candidates had clearly not fully understood some key vocabulary. For example, incomplete grasp of the word 'extinct' meant that some candidates took Khudi's find to be a living specimen. A few candidates picked up on the idea of mammoths being related to elephants and subsequently tried to forge a link between the two parts of the summary, which was not required at all. Comparatively few answers went over length, but stopping when a page is completed is not the same as offering an organised answer that addresses both halves equally and covers a full range of ideas within a page. Answers that tried to work through Passage B chronologically and then move on to approach Passage A the same way often ran out of space and ended abruptly.

Pleasingly there was a clear sense of candidates trying to use their own words most of the time with the better answers showing some effective organisation of ideas and, in some cases, grouping together related points.

The following answer, produced by a candidate in this examination series, makes over 15 Reading points, balanced fairly evenly over the two parts of the question. It is not intended as a model

answer, as for example organisation and concision might have been further honed, but as one example of a successful response:

Mammoths are important characters in the Nenets' culture. They are well known and considered bad omen because of their ties to evil gods. Yuri Khudi was afraid when he discovered it but still sensed it was important and decided to let someone else know. His old friend reacted in the same way and was able to contact the local museum and authorities who flew in helicopter to see the animal. Mammoths are also important for science. They are closely related to living elephants. The preserved state of this mammoth and the fact it is complete with flesh, milk tusks and teeth, makes the carcass useful for research. Scientists can use it to study an extinct species, and as evidence in debates. The director of the museum is grateful for this discovery.

Natalia was hesitant at first, thinking about how her mother would react to find them both gone. Then she is surprised by the lack of activity since she expected the tram to be working. She begins to notice the silence and notices the rising moon. She struggles to catch up with her grandfather and indignantly demands to know where they are going. She tries to get him to reveal their destination. She is struck by how asleep the street is and is distracted by a beggar who seems to be dead. She collides with her grandfather's elbow and almost falls. Natalia notices but does not understand his excitement. She only sees the emptiness of the street but then finally sees the elephant. She is struck by its size and at first she does not know what it is. She becomes entranced with its movements.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- this task is a selective summary – not a précis – not all information in each passage will be relevant to your answer
- read the question carefully and underline the key words which indicate the focus of each part of the summary
- re-read each passage in order to find the precise information to answer each part of the question
- plan your answer carefully by listing relevant points in as few words as possible
- read through your list of points and link any that are similar or the same
- write up your answer in full sentences; refer only to your notes rather than the passages
- do not write an introduction
- do not try to compare the passages
- do not use quotations in your answer to **Question 3**
- do not write a narrative, or answer in the first person
- do not copy whole phrases from the passages
- write no more than one side of average handwriting
- write in an informative style and never add to the content of the passage
- make each point only once.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/04
Coursework Portfolio

Key messages

In order to aim for high marks in this component, candidates should:

- reflect in their writing their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them; demonstrate variety of style, use of language and genre in the three assignments;
- choose assignments that challenge them to write at the highest standard of which they are capable;
- write in fluent and varied sentences separated by full stops;
- proof read their work carefully, as marks may be deducted for typing errors.

General comments

There were a large number of entries for this component and, in general, the standards of reading and writing were satisfactory. Many candidates wrote from personal interests and experience and their writing was all the better for that.

The Key Messages, printed above and repeated from previous sessions, represent what the Moderators were looking for. The first two of the Key Messages had evidently been followed by many Centres. The third, refers to the choice of challenging assignments, and while the choice was usually appropriate to candidates of average ability, some of the tasks did not always stretch the better thinkers and writers.

An example of this was a package of assignments used by many Centres and consisting of a task starting with the words 'Don't get me started...', a description of the tragedy of 9/11, and a response to an article on the television programme, 'Educating Essex'. The only one of the three tasks that tended to evoke a high quality response was the second. The first misled potential Band 1 and 2 candidates into writing on comparatively trivial topics and sometimes in the form of a rant. The third was often a collection of disconnected responses to the same quotations from the article. There was only rarely an overview of the shortcomings of the article, and no realisation that the picture given of the school was the result of manipulation by the television company. Good candidates did not appear to have been warned that they needed to go deeper into the article as a whole to get reading marks in Band 1. Centres using these tasks might consider whether they are not now rather outworn, and try to experiment with tasks that are suited to the interests and specific abilities of their candidates.

The fourth of the Key Messages refers to one of the most important indications of a good writer. There were those who immediately stood out because they could write fluent sentences in which ideas were clearly related. Candidates at a lower level wrote in repetitive sentence patterns and often their sentences were short, so that ideas did not connect in a coherent pattern.

What was disturbing was the number of candidates, including good writers, who did not understand the conventions of punctuation. The three main problems were as follows:

- sentence separation errors where candidates frequently used commas instead of full stops;
- the omission of commas in more complex sentences, necessary to clarify meaning;
- the incorrect use of colons and semi colons, where sometimes semi colons were placed in the middle of a simple sentence.

The final Key Message refers to proof reading which had very evidently not been carried out by a large number of candidates. This meant that final drafts contained word-processing errors, and there were frequent mistakes where the two words (such as 'of' and 'off' or 'there' and 'their') had been confused because the spellcheck had not indicated a mistake. Some candidates misused the spellcheck so that the word that appeared in the text was manifestly nonsensical.

Centres are reminded that coursework, which has hugely valuable educational advantages when conducted, gives great opportunities to candidates to do their best. However, there are also responsibilities that come with coursework, challenges that candidates must accept if they are to do well.

Despite these comments, the majority of the folders were very worthwhile, and candidates had frequently put a good deal of effort both into planning their work and in presenting it neatly and efficiently. Similarly, much of the administration was carried out well by Centres, the assessment was generally good and internal moderation was carried out with care.

Administration by Centres

Administration was generally sound, and the Moderators extend their thanks to Centres for their efforts in providing accurate and complete lists. However, there were some occasional problems.

- Samples were correctly submitted as required by Cambridge, except that a number of Centres did not include the folders with the highest and the lowest marks. These are essential because of the way in which the moderation is carried out.
- The sample must contain a copy of the mark sheet, either the MS1 (filled in by hand) or an electronic version. It must also contain the Candidate Assessment Summary Form (CASF) for all the candidates in the Centre, and not just for those in the sample. The CASF shows changes made to the original marks at internal moderation. The mark sheet and the CASF must tally, and Cambridge carries out checks on the Centres' behalf to ensure that this is so.
- There were many examples of marks on the CASF that were not the same as the marks on the mark sheet or the folders. The mark on the CASF was always taken as the mark intended by the Centre.
- There were some examples of folders where one or more assignments were not submitted. The Centre did not always follow the procedure. This was to give a mark for writing as if all three assignments were present, and then to deduct one third of the marks for each missing piece. If the missing piece was the third assignment, then in addition, there was no mark out of 10 for reading.
- Some Centres did not provide a copy of the text used for Assignment 3.

Assessment by Centres

This was again generally sound, and there were only minor instances where the overall rank order for the Centre was not accurate. There was a tendency to mark slightly leniently both for writing and for reading, and in some cases this added up to a trend in the overall assessment of -3 or -4. However, by 'slightly' an adjustment of -1 or -2 was normally indicated, and that was not necessarily over the whole mark range. Many Centres had obviously taken advice from previous reports, and their marks were either unchanged or even judged to be slightly severe.

Moderators took care not to make extreme adjustments based on particular candidates, in order not to penalise others in the sample.

Assessment of writing

It was important to achieve a balance in marking between Content and Structure on the one hand and Style (including audience) and Accuracy on the other.

For Content, candidates achieving high marks demonstrated ability to respond to challenging tasks and to use their thinking skills. Candidates in Band 3 responded to straightforward tasks and used competent but less original ideas with less development and illustration.

For Structure, candidates achieving high marks demonstrated order and balance in their responses and in particular, paid attention to the sequence of their ideas within paragraphs. Candidates in Band 3 wrote in an overall structure, using paragraphs sometimes of unequal weight, but were not required to demonstrate skills of sequencing to a consistent extent.

For Style, all candidates were given credit for adapting their language to a supposed audience, but candidates achieving high marks demonstrated a wide range of language which they used with assurance.

They also wrote in a variety of sentence types and lengths so that they communicated clearly and accurately. Candidates at Band 3 demonstrated a competent but straightforward range of language and some candidates relate ideas within sentences.

For Accuracy, it was important that at Band 1, errors were either absent or very few, and it was not in order for candidates whose sentences were incorrectly separated by full stops to be given a mark in this range. The same was largely true of marks 34 and 35, where Moderators were looking for a high degree of accuracy as well as an indication of a personal style. Some candidates were placed in Band 3 by Centres, although they made so many errors and wrote in such a simple vocabulary that they should have been in a lower band.

Three points were noticed and, where appropriate, need consideration and appropriate action.

The first was that errors were often not annotated in the text. It was not clear that they had been noticed by the marker, especially when the comment at the end suggested that there were few mistakes. This was at odds with what the Moderator noticed. Final drafts should be annotated to show where there are errors of punctuation, proof reading or usage. The amount of error was often the reason for an adjustment to the marks.

The second point was the practice of annotating in the margin where there was evidence of achieving an objective at an appropriate level in the mark scheme. While this was admirable in that it proved that the mark scheme was being used, it is important when assessing the writing that the various strands of a band description are achieved consistently. In some cases, credit was given for a very slight match with the description. For that reason it was probably better when the summative comment identified those strands that were sustained throughout the response.

The third point was that there was a tendency in the summative comments only to credit what was positive and to ignore what were sometimes quite important weaknesses. Assessment is partly the matching of strengths and weaknesses. Those who ignored the weaknesses usually gave too high marks to the work.

Assessment of reading

Most candidates understood that they were to respond to the text by selecting ideas and opinions and to comment on them. By doing this sufficiently and with understanding they could be given a mark in Band 3. However, it was not enough merely to express disagreement without sound reasoning, and those who made subjective comments were worth no more than 5 marks. Those candidates who entered into mini debates with individual points and who responded with some weight were worth a mark in Band 2. Candidates in Band 1 expressed an overall view of the text, offering a review and criticism before analysing it. They also grouped and structured ideas so that the response had some consistency of thought. Some Centres were too ready to give marks freely in Band 1 to candidates who did not achieve a consistent and overall view of the article. While much of the marking was accurate, there were instances where candidates were over-marked by one or two.

Some candidates used the text as a stimulus and wrote a response that was not directly related to ideas and opinions that they had read. They should not have been marked at more than 4.

The reading mark scheme in the syllabus is clear and should be used carefully in awarding marks.

Annotation

Some Centres did not annotate individual assignments, all of which required the marking of errors and some form of summative comment.

Drafts

Some Centres made very good, educational comments on the drafts. These included matters of editing, such as adjusting the length of sentences or making general changes to language, and changes to the structure of the work, such as shortening some sections or providing an alternative ending. There were also warnings about checking accuracy.

The best drafts had advice from the teacher at the end of the work and notes on the text by the candidate.

It was not appropriate for teachers to make notes in the body of the text, either to comment on errors or to highlight specific points specifically to draw attention to them. Where this happened, usually only in the case of one teacher, it was unfair and defeated a purpose of coursework which is to make candidates responsible for their own work. By advising them with general comments, teachers were able to make the process of writing educationally valid.

Many drafts had no comments on them at all and there was no evidence that changes had been made in producing the final version. This meant that an educational opportunity had been missed.

Plagiarism

There was no evidence that there was any widespread abuse, but Moderators are used to spotting what may not be original, and one candidate was discovered copying from the Internet. This was a leaflet about healthy diets and it is this type of assignment that lays itself open to abuse and endangers the future of coursework. Proper supervision and planning of the work can ensure that this type of matter does not occur.

A second type of writing that is prone to copying from the Internet is the research essay. This is where the Centre allows candidates to choose areas of study and leaves them to find their own material. Where this was done there was widespread partial copying of content, largely because candidates did not know how to make notes and use them in their own writing. While this practice should be properly monitored, it would be better not to set this type of essay, which is not the sort of personal writing that is required. The section on Assignment 1 in the Coursework Training Handbook gives guidance on setting appropriately.

Assignment 1

The choice of topic for this assignment is now much wider than in previous sessions. Candidates were obviously prompted to choose for themselves matters about which they felt strongly. They needed to write about topics that they knew something about, and they also needed to avoid the Internet as much as possible. If they did use it for important facts, it was important that the final response should be as personal as possible and that it should have some strength of intent and persuasion.

Candidates who responded to a single topic set to the whole class by the teacher were often at a disadvantage.

Candidates in one Centre achieved some very competent and lively writing on a variety of topics that included:

- *Comprehensive education*
- *Violence in the media*
- *The pay given to footballers and soldiers*
- *Technology rules our lives*
- *Female empowerment.*

In other Centres, topics looked promisingly controversial:

- *Are all blondes dumb? (written by a girl)*
- *Underage pregnancies*
- *Which is more important, health or grades?*

There were some good words of speeches on, for example, homework, zoos and the jury system. These continued to work well, although it was better to make it clear who the audience was and the occasion on which the speech was given.

The best leaflets were not set out as leaflets but as a series of headings with the words underneath. Without layout, the text was more coherent and sustained. These were best done as descriptions of candidates' schools for new year 7 candidates, for example. Leaflets about endangered species did not read as original work and were done without any personal involvement.

'A Life in the Day of...' is nearly always very unchallenging. One Centre set it to all candidates and in the sample, only one account contained content of interest and thought. Information about waking up in the morning and what one had for breakfast was not engaging.

There were some good factual accounts of activity weekends, and holidays. Provided that the tasks were different from Assignment 2, these are in order as tasks.

Letters to the council about the provision of public transport or to the Principal about spending money on a college were also effective tasks. These again provided the writer with a voice.

Assignment 2

Most of these pieces were fiction and gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their ability with language and vocabulary. Some wrote in a narrow range of vocabulary, which affected their marks. It was important that descriptive language was appropriate. Some responses used language for its own sake and the effect was cloying. The important thing about language is that it must convey pictures that relate to the writing and that engage the reader's attention.

Stories often sounded real and had interesting endings. There were some narratives that used too many events and which sounded incredible. It was normally better to avoid airplane accidents and haunted houses. Some warfare and science fiction stories were tedious, and letters from WW1 were very variable.

Much attention was given to titles which engaged the imagination of the reader. This is a small selection:

- *The Insider*
- *Not just Adam and Eve*
- *The Man in the Street Light*
- *Witch or Princess?*
- *Dangerous Rubbish*
- *The Hybrids.*

One candidate wrote pretending to be a clock and another wrote about a finger that was discovered in a salad bought at a supermarket.

There were comparatively few accounts based on personal experience, which was a pity since these have often been very effective in the past. They have often arisen from autobiographical fragments.

There were quite a few descriptions, for example of the last lesson of the day, the School cafeteria, break time or a snowy day.

This assignment was done well and was often the best written of the three.

Assignment 3

The assessment for writing almost overlapped with that of reading since Moderators were looking for a well-structured response, and the structure usually revealed an understanding of the article itself.

It was increasingly clear that the best articles were those with which candidates could disagree. It was quite difficult to extend and qualify ideas that no normal person could deny. Most articles that were controversial were also quite silly, so it was easy to express opinions to counter what had been read.

In general, Centres set the same article either for all candidates or one article per class. This was sensible, since individual choices tended to impose unequal standards of difficulty which might not be appropriate. One Centre did set a number of different articles and achieved a similar standard with each one.

There were still examples of inappropriate texts. These included:

- informative texts from the Internet, mostly in paragraphs of two or three lines, rarely containing any opinions of note and were badly structured (with repetition);
- news reports from newspapers;
- multiple articles, or articles that were too long for candidates to absorb;
- literary texts (such as the whole of *Romeo and Juliet*) which led to candidates making inappropriate comments about language (tested elsewhere in Papers 1 and 2).

The majority of Centres set appropriate articles, some of which were on the following topics:

- *The curfew will alienate teenagers*
- *Ask FM*
- *Private Education*
- *Children smoking*
- *Bullying*
- *Corporal punishment in Schools.*

These were all topics that were familiar to teenagers. Less so was the Terry Pratchett article on the right to die.

Moderators again thanked Centres for the efforts they made to produce valuable and often entertaining work. This session continued to prove the educational advantages of coursework.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/06
Speaking and Listening

Key Messages

It is important for a Centre to choose either Component 5 or 6 before planning the schemes of work through which this examination is to be delivered. The two components are very distinct in their format and execution. Component 5 is exam-based and rigid, being suitable for Centres who wish to assess their candidates on one specific topic on one chosen date. Component 6 is much more flexible in that three separate tasks are required that can be assessed at any time during the course. This flexibility allows a broader range of topics and skills to be assessed but requires Centres to fully embrace the concept that the speaking and listening tasks are an integral part of the overall course.

Having chosen Component 6 Centres should pay close attention to both the current syllabus and 'Speaking and Listening Handbook' to ensure the requirements for the administration of the component are met in full. In particular, the Individual Candidate Record Cards should be treated as 'living' documents that are completed when each task is undertaken. It is permissible for candidates to fill out these sections themselves but please check the accuracy and amount of detail given. Specific information about the choices made for each task is required by the Moderator and not just generic statements that are unhelpful. For Task 1 a comment reading 'a talk about a hobby of your choice' is not helpful but 'my interest in (explain specific hobby)' is useful for the Moderator.

Cambridge requires a Centre to provide four different items in the package sent to the Moderator. These are a recorded sample on CD, DVD or USB drive, the Summary Forms for the whole cohort entered, a copy of the marks that have already been sent to Cambridge and the Individual Candidate Record Cards for the candidates included in the sample. Each one of these items is very important in the process of assessing a Centre's performance. Centres are urged to ensure all four of these items are included in the package sent to Cambridge as the omission of any of them may cause a delay in the moderation process, or in the worst scenario, an inability on the part of the Moderator to complete the process until the relevant items are received.

Please would Centres use digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or USB drive in a recognised common audio file format that can be played by standard computer software such as mp3, wav and wma but not AUP. Please check the quality of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge.

It would be very helpful if for each candidate a separate track is created and its file name is the candidate's name and examination number.

Please follow the specific instructions on page 42 of the current syllabus that outline the way in which the recordings of candidates undertaking tasks should be introduced by the Teacher/examiner. For paired activities it would be helpful if candidates introduce themselves and the roles they are playing before beginning the task so the Moderator can clearly distinguish who is speaking and when.

Although there is no formal requirement that activities should be of a minimum length, please consider whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met if the activity is very short. It is difficult to see how both candidates in the Paired-Task activity can meet higher level criteria such as 'responds fully', 'develops prompts' or 'employs a wide range of language devices' in a performance lasting less than two minutes. Given that both speaking and listening are assessed it is important that the activities last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums.

General Comments

Centres are reminded that there are specific forms provided by Cambridge for use with Component 5, namely the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form. Please use these documents. It is also noted that the Component 5 Summary Form is different and it is not interchangeable with the Component 6 Summary Form. Any choice as to which component to undertake should be made before any assessment takes place.

For Component 6, Centres are encouraged to be creative in the choice of tasks as long as the assessment criteria are used as a guide to the skills being assessed. The integration of literature into the activities is again encouraged.

Comments on specific tasks

Moderators have noted that the tasks which worked most successfully were the ones which had clearly been candidate driven rather than teacher led. Where the candidates took ownership of a topic and genuinely believed in what they were saying, they performed well. Well planned and prepared responses to tasks were generally more successful but, in particular, Tasks 2 and 3 do not benefit from over-scripted and seemingly 'artificial' performances where spontaneity is missing. The balance between preparedness and a candidate's ability to think about changes in the direction of the discussion and to react accordingly needs to be maintained if higher skill levels are to be achieved.

Task 1

Once again Moderators reported a wide range of topics being undertaken although the task generally took the form of an individual presentation. Some Centres allowed candidates a choice of specifics within a general framework such as 'Room 101' or 'My Family' while others allowed a completely free rein as to the topics chosen. Either approach is acceptable but when choosing topics it is important to take into account that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when choices are made.

Some examples of productive Task 1 activities include:

- My life through the songs/moments/events that define me
- My love of dance/theatre/Guides (or any personal experience that is relevant and thought-provoking)
- My faith
- My participation in...
- The movie/book/television series I love/hate the most.

Task 2

The Pair-Based Activity works best between two candidates of similar ability discussing a topic they have prepared and that they feel strongly about or engaging in a lively role play that allows them to demonstrate their discursive strengths. A clearly defined focus is better than a general exchange of views on any topic be it football or School rules. Where candidates have clear viewpoints that lead to persuasive argument the resulting task will be more successful than when candidates are unsure of their opinions.

Some examples of productive Task 2 activities include:

- A discussion about how to spend an allocated budget for a School function (e.g. a Year 11 Prom)
- Arguing for and against violent video games
- Acting as co-editors making choices for the front page of their newspaper
- How the School should commemorate a specific event (e.g. the centennial of WW1)
- The merits of one personality over another where each candidate champions one famous person (e.g. Rooney or Suarez, Miley or Beyonce)
- Acting as employers choosing who should be given a job from a list of prospective candidates (and variations on the theme).

Task 3

Task 3 may take the form of a group discussion debating an issue which is topical and possibly controversial or a role-play where each candidate plays the part of a character. Both can be successful as long as the assessment criteria for the group work are met. It is most important that each candidate in the group is allowed sufficient scope within the activity to demonstrate their strengths without being dominated by others. To this end, it is advisable to create groups of similar ability levels so that weaker candidates are not disadvantaged and to consider the group dynamic so that each member has the opportunity to contribute to the best of their ability. The role of a group leader should be considered as a more successful outcome usually results from having one of the candidates directing the focus of the discussion.

Some examples of productive Task 3 activities include:

- A trial scene based on a literary text – e.g. George Milton, Arthur Birling, Voldemort
- Plan and perform an extra scene from a play
- A discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- A Jeremy Kyle style role play possibly with literary figures as the central characters
- Balloon debate – who to include/discard from a list of famous people where each candidate champions the cause of their chosen celebrity.

General Conclusions

The general standard of assessment by Centres is at the correct level. There were fewer administrative problems this November, as opposed to in June 2013, but the need for all Centres to disseminate and follow the specific instructions given by Cambridge regarding the requirements for the sample remains a concern. Centres must be clear as to which of the two available speaking and listening components they are choosing. The vast majority of candidates undertaking speaking and listening activities appear to be enthusiastic about the experience and benefit from careful planning and practise.