

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0524/04
Coursework Portfolio

Key messages

In this component, candidates should aim to:

- reflect in their writing their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them;
- choose original assignments that challenge them to write at the highest standard of which they are capable;
- write independently of undue guidance from published materials or from teachers;
- demonstrate variety of style, use of language and genre in the three assignments;
- write in fluent and varied sentences separated by full stops and clarified by the appropriate use of commas and other punctuation;
- revise, edit and correct first drafts in their own handwriting;
- proofread their work carefully, avoiding typing errors and errors caused by the inaccurate use of the spell check.

General comments

For this session, candidates for 0524 were entered as complete cohorts, taking the component for the first time. As usual there was a wide range of varied task setting, much of it carefully linked to candidates' interests and enthusiasms. There was also a wide range of ability in English, from those who used language to think and imagine at a high level to those who were still imperfect in English grammar and aspects of style. Much of the work was typical of good practice in coursework.

There were some good examples of careful internal moderation and standardisation during the course. The mark ranges were often realistic, covering the low forties to the middle twenties. Forms were generally fully completed and marks were carefully transferred to the submitted mark forms.

There were few major issues in the completion of coursework. However, there were a number of difficulties in the setting of texts for Assignment 3 and in the understanding of how candidates should respond to what was intended as a test of reading.

Good practice:

In general the requirements of the syllabus were carefully carried out.

The best coursework involved the setting of assignments that were original and which involved candidates in the desire to argue at some length and with personal conviction. Tasks set for Assignment 2 were those that elicited imaginative responses that never lost sight of being written for a reader who needed to be engaged in both content and expression.

In most cases it was better that candidates invented their own topics and titles rather than being given a set of what sometimes resembled examination questions.

An increasing number of drafts bore evidence of the candidates' own revisions, editing and corrections. This illustrated a concerned involvement in the process of writing and was of high educational value.

Many teachers annotated final versions of assignments in detail and also noted errors in the writing. They correctly gave general advice at the ends of the drafts.

Less good practice:

The same tasks were sometimes set to large numbers of candidates who responded with similar content and little personal engagement. It was likely that some candidates would have been at a disadvantage by being set a task that did not concern them greatly. In Assignment 1, writing on social media was rarely original and in Assignment 2 the frequent setting of 'scary stories' produced too many simple and barely credible narratives that followed similar lines.

Some folders bore little evidence of teacher assessment and in some cases there were no obvious differences between the drafts and the final versions of assignments. Moderators need to understand how marks have been awarded. The drafting process is intended to support the process of preparing the best possible version of a piece of writing.

Task setting

Some Centers gave their candidates as much choice as possible in their assignments. This was most apparent in Assignment 1 where candidates were at an advantage if they tackled issues that really concerned them or about which they were enthusiastic. Where the Center set one or a limited number of topics, the result was often competent but not a great deal more. The same was true of Assignment 2 where several Centers told their candidates to write 'scary stories', which resulted in large numbers of similar tales of haunted houses and fairgrounds, leading to unconvincing endings. For Assignment 3 it was sometimes acceptable for all candidates in a set or a Center to tackle the same text for reading because teachers could ensure an appropriate standard of difficulty.

A number of candidates attempted tasks that were not challenging enough for the award of high marks. An example of such a task was a rant against people who eat with their mouths open. While the writing was stylistically witty, the quality and standard of the argument was significantly lower than that of a well-argued examination of, for example, home schooling.

Most candidates wrote three contrasting assignments which were different in genre and register. However, there were rare cases where the first assignment was closely related to a reading text and there was no real difference between it and the response to Assignment 3. Similarly, some candidates addressed the issue raised by the text in Assignment 3, so that their responses resembled those of Assignment 1 too closely. Assignment 3 is meant to be primarily an exercise in evaluation and analysis. Where the contrasts in the three assignments were marked, this contributed to the final, overall mark for writing.

There were a number of cases where it was apparent that candidates had been given unfair guidance as to what to write. This was evident in Assignment 3 where sometimes the selection of points from the texts and the order in which they were presented was the same or very similar. In rarer cases the responses to the points were also similar and had apparently come from the candidates' teacher. This limited the marks that could be awarded for reading. The best candidates were those who thought for themselves and reacted personally and originally to the text.

Assessment of coursework

The Moderators were encouraged by the number of assessors who noticed the change in the numbering of the mark bands, and there was ample proof that the mark scheme was carefully and fully used. On many occasions teachers gave a summary list, showing outcomes in relation to the writing objectives, at the end of each assignment. Fewer assessments were made on the less reliable evidence of marginal comments. This was less common in the award of the reading mark where the mark scheme was often referred to in less detail.

Writing

The main problem in the assessment of writing was that there was too much trading of strands in each mark band: there was too much emphasis on content, structure and register and not enough on style and accuracy. Candidates whose range of vocabulary was comparatively limited were sometimes over rewarded. The most frequent problem was of sentence construction. There were candidates who wrote almost entirely in brief, simple sentences. Some hid the fact by using commas instead of full stops between sentences while others used no punctuation at all. Others used slightly more complex forms, but most of their sentences were of similar length and were generally pairs of joined sentences. The best candidates were those who used vocabulary with assurance and who joined their sentences in a variety of patterns, so that the effect was of fluency in conveying meaning.

It was of some concern when comments at the ends of assignments stated that SPAG was generally correct even when several errors were made. There were many occasions where sentence separation errors were not annotated and had apparently not been taken into consideration.

A number of candidates wrote very long sentences, with little control over the structure. Where this happened, the sense of the sentence was often lost and meaning became confused.

The use of the spell check was often inaccurate and underlined the importance of proofreading. This was often not carried out, although some candidates clearly took care in checking their first proofs. The following are given as examples of avoidable errors:

Your faulty, floored and fictitious article...
It was a rainy day due to the condescension...
You must not let self-coincidence get in the way...

The most common reason for adjusting the writing marks concerned style and accuracy. An addition was made to a Center's marks where teachers had been very exacting about candidates' use of language and the presence of errors, but usually the adjustment was lower. In the award of a mark band it was essential that all strands met the description. Where there was a discrepancy the mark awarded should have been significantly lower in the band.

Assessment of reading

Too many candidates were mistakenly awarded marks in the top band. At this high level it is important that the text set is of a significant reading standard and that candidates are able to demonstrate an understanding of the text and the writer's attitude as a whole. Some overview is needed as well as the evaluation of a number of ideas and opinions of some depth selected from the text. A number of marks given in the top band were more appropriate as a mark of eight.

Conversely, there were some excellent responses where candidates gave an overview and developed a structured argument in which ideas and opinions from the text were effectively assimilated.

Some of the marks given as seven were also too lenient. This was due to the quality of the responses given to the selected ideas and opinions from the texts. There was no justification for a mark above six for candidates who did little more than to express agreement or disagreement with the writer.

Candidates who attacked the writer instead of evaluating ideas and opinions from the text received little credit.

Writing parallel arguments that bore only general relation to the text, or addressing the issue rather than the text, received little credit for reading although they might be marked highly for writing.

It is important to remember that this is a test of reading as well as of writing, and that candidates are required to demonstrate understanding at some depth and to respond to what the writer has put forward.

Administration by Centers

Moderators complimented Centers on their filling in of forms and presentation of the folders. Most Centers enclosed the CASF(WMS) form and indicated which of their candidates were included in the sample. The CASF was required for all entered candidates, and all changes to the marks at internal moderation should

have been shown in the right hand column. This was not always the case and sometimes Moderators had to search for evidence of internal moderation in the folders themselves.

There were few examples where the text(s) used for Assignment 3 was missing from the folders. It was useful for each candidate to have a copy which showed which parts had been selected for evaluation in the response.

One draft per folder was almost always enclosed. It was not necessary for there to be a draft of all three assignments.

Generally, the standard of annotation on final drafts was high except that it was rare for all errors to be indicated; some scripts bore no such indication at all. There were some Centers that did not annotate their work, so that it was impossible for the Moderator to understand how marks had been awarded.

Folders were normally very well presented, but Centers are asked to ensure that the work is firmly fixed together, using treasury tags or equivalent. Folders are frequently moderated more than once and are handled by several people, so that loose papers may easily go missing. Centers are asked not to enclose folders in plastic covers because of the extra time required to handle the work.

Drafts

The draft/redraft process gives the candidate an opportunity to improve work through editing (eg words and phrases), revising (eg sections) and correcting. Teachers should offer general advice about how to improve written at the end of the draft.

Some candidates used drafting process well, revising sections, making corrections and editing language. There were still some cases where teachers made specific corrections on drafts. It was in order to make general comments to the candidates about searching for errors and correcting them, but it is strictly forbidden to do the work for them.

Internal moderation

Centers are reminded that the purpose of internal moderation is to bring the work of different sets into line with each other. Enough folders from each set need to be scrutinised to ensure that it has as a whole, or in part, not been leniently or severely marked. The marks of the set should be scaled accordingly so that the rank order of all candidates in the Center is sound. All changes should appear in the right hand column of the CASF form.

Comments on specific tasks

Assignment 1

This assignment was generally well done. There was a very wide range of topics and many of these were well argued with a good deal of personal conviction, whether as speeches or as formal arguments.

Some of the work was extremely long and Centers are advised against this unless the candidates are able to sustain their arguments effectively over the length. Sometimes the argument was less strong near the end, paragraphs became noticeably shorter, and there was a tendency to repetition. Sometimes the quality of the style was better near the beginning and less fluent and accurate nearer the end.

Some of the research essays lacked personal conviction. Candidates using a number of sources appeared to have effectively gathered their material and reconstructed it into a new form. There were some cases where whole sections of a text were copied, and this was a malpractice.

Some Centers still offered writing under the generic title 'Don't get me started'. While some topics worked well because they were properly structured and the content was appropriate, others offered little challenge, the ranting style was ineffective, and there was a tendency to repetition. Topics such as 'Buses', 'Dog walkers', 'People who suddenly stop walking', and 'Spots' were unlikely to offer suitable challenge.

One Center offered some excellent book reviews of *The Great Gatsby*, *Lord of the Flies* and *Ethan Frome*, which examined themes in some depth as well as characters. These were much more effective than film reviews which were often quite superficial and not very well structured.

Some of the topics were school based, and no less effective for that. Others explored a good range of important issues. Some of the topics were as follows:

Human rights
Using CCTV
University Fees
The Santa Claus myth
The dark side of selfies
Is sugar the new cocaine?
Single sex or coeducational schools?
Safety in Formula 1
No homework for post-16
Are spirits real?

Assignment 2

There were some good accounts of personal experiences which blended original and engaging detail with credible and appropriate emotional responses. The best of these avoided the ordinary and shed new light on the type of experiences that are common to all. Topics even included readable accounts of football matches.

Stories of visits to exciting and unusual places all over the world were also done well. Candidates were careful in their selection of details and events that would interest the reader. They were often well structured.

Fiction varied in its effectiveness. Simply instructing candidate to write a story did not usually work. Where candidates had experience of reading and studying short stories and understanding how they are structured, results were often excellent and in one or two cases, outstanding. There were many good endings and devices such as drip feeding of information, double narrators, and time lapses were often used. The best stories were the products of candidates' own imagination, but sometimes a Center would offer guidance that was effective. One outstanding example was simply to write a story that was based on a conversation between two people. Candidates responded imaginatively in their choice of who were conversing and the reason for the encounter, and the result was entertaining and intriguing fiction.

There were very few good examples of what was variously set as a spooky story or a haunted house. These, and the common story of the fairground at night that suddenly came to life, were stereotypical, following the same inevitable course with similar details. They often degenerated into incredible narratives about dead bodies, people dressed as clowns, and zombies. This genre originated a few years ago as a gothic story and was often related to the study of real examples. However, it has become watered down and most of the examples were unconvincing and on the immature side.

There were a large number of First World War stories and accounts of 9/11, some of which were done quite well. However, it was difficult for many candidates to write convincingly on topics that were part of history and thankfully clearly outside their own direct experience.

There were a large number of descriptions, commonly of parks, forest clearings, beaches, waiting rooms and storms. While these were often competent and usually quite well structured (for example, covering morning, noon and night), they were sometimes a little unoriginal in their presentation of detail and indeed in the topic itself. The best were those that used language appropriately and effectively. Some candidates attempted to use language that was too complex and poetic, so that the picture in the reader's mind was often crowded out by the display of words.

Whatever the nature of the task or the genre, this assignment succeeded insofar as the reader felt that what was being described or recounted was real.

Some excellent work was written in response to:

A fresh start
What was that noise?
Climbing Devil's Tower
I don't want to see you...
A teen pregnancy diary
Station clock (the clock 'writes' the description)
Scuba diver
The cartographer
The beloved harmonica
My grandmother's silk dress

Assignment 3

There was a good deal of variety of texts which tended to be the right standard of difficulty although some were far too long. Centers are reminded that two sides of A4 is the maximum length that candidates can be expected to handle in any detail.

Topics dealt with by the texts included:

Climate change deniers

Your favourite drink can ruin your body (about a well-known drink said to be able to melt a dead mouse!)

Produce waste

Are students lazy?

Two days without a smart phone

Fracking

Gender equality

Self-driving cars

Wearing a poppy (Fifa rules)

The Calais crisis

A word of warning: articles like the favourite drink above are attractive because they are very funny, but candidates commonly do not see the humour, so such texts should be set with care.

Final comments

As usual, on many occasions the standard of work was very high and Moderators enjoyed the originality of thought and the interest of the work. The standard of assessment varied at times, but Centers interpreted the syllabus well and much of the work was refreshing and interesting.

It is important to consider how coursework can be of great educational value and not just to be a pathway to an examination result. Much of the work seen by Moderators demonstrated this educational value.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0524/06
Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

Key messages

Generally, the standard of administration and accuracy of assessment continue to be of a high standard.

Where there are issues, the following guidelines are relevant:

- 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. Component 5 is a test taken within a specified window, being suitable for Centres who wish to assess their candidates on one topic, on one chosen date. Component 6 is 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.
- An **Individual Candidate Record Card** is required for each candidate entered. These cards should be treated as 'living' documents that are completed when each task is undertaken. It is permissible for candidates to fill out the title 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.
- Centres are asked to 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. The AUP file type is not universal, and should not be used. The **quality** of the recordings should be **checked** before despatching to Cambridge.
- It is helpful if for each candidate, a **separate track** is created and its file name is the candidate's name and examination number.
- The teacher/examiner should introduce the recordings using the rubric in the syllabus. 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.

General comments

Centres are reminded that there are specific forms provided by Cambridge for use with Component 6; namely the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form.

For Component 6, Centres are encouraged to be creative in the choice of tasks but the assessment criteria should always be used as a guide to the skills being assessed. The integration of literature into the activities is often a useful source for tasks.

Comments on specific tasks

The most successful tasks attempted were those where the candidates took ownership of a topic and were genuinely interested in what they were saying. Well planned and prepared responses to tasks are generally more successful but responses do not benefit from over-scripted and seemingly 'artificial' performances where spontaneity is missing.

Task 1

A wide range of topics were undertaken although the task generally took the form of an individual presentation. Centres allowing candidates to choose their own topics as opposed to dictating a generic theme is viewed positively. It is important to consider that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when these choices are made. More able candidates should be encouraged to choose more exacting and mature topics that extend their abilities to construct a compelling argument within a time frame of approximately 3–4 minutes that includes an element of introspection and reflection.

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

- A significant event in my life
- My love of a personal interest/hobby (that moves beyond the purely descriptive and is reflective and thought-provoking)
- Why I love a particular text/movie/work of art/etc.
- My passion for
- My favourite place
- Feminism in the twenty-first century
- My hero – who and why

*Some examples of less successful **Task 1** activities include:*

- Should cannabis be legalised?
- Football (Too generic and unfocussed)
- A single topic imposed by the centre for the whole of its cohort in which no individual choice is allowed (Ownership of and commitment to the topic is not always evident)

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. 'Football' remains a popular topic amongst boys but where there is no sense of audience or specific focus there will be little evidence of the skills expected for those wishing to attain a mark in the higher bands. Where candidates have clear viewpoints that lead to persuasive argument the resulting task will be more successful than when candidates rely heavily on description or recitation of facts.

Generally, entirely scripted responses, be they discussions or role plays, do not allow candidates to access the higher attainment bands.

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 four minutes. Given that both speaking and listening are assessed for both candidates, it is important that the activities last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums if marks in the higher bands are to be awarded.

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

- Arguing for and against a current affairs topic such as the benefits of modern technology or the use of GM crops
- Discussing a text or author both candidates know well
- Planning a special event – either at school or for a more personal function
- The effects of social pressures on teenagers

- Comparing the merits of two famous people where each candidate acts as a champion for one of the celebrities
- Acting as employers discussing who should be given a job from a list of prospective candidates (and variations on the theme)

Some examples of less successful Task 2 activities include:

- Should cannabis be legalised?
- Interviews where one of the candidates acts solely as the interviewer (This is limiting for the candidate)
- A single topic imposed by the centre for the whole of its cohort in which no individual choice is allowed (Ownership of and commitment to the topic is not always evident)

Task 3

Task 3 may take the form of a group discussion debating an issue which is topical and 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. A group should consist of no less than three members and it is advised that it does not exceed five candidates. A group consisting of three or four candidates is preferable for the logistical purpose of being able to assess each candidate's performance accurately.

Some examples of productive Task 3 activities include:

- A trial scene, possibly based on a literary text – e.g. George Milton, Arthur Birling
- A discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- Balloon debate – who to include/discard from a list of famous people where each candidate champions the cause of their chosen celebrity
- Planning a celebration or community event

General conclusions

The general standard of assessment by Centres is at or near the correct level. Generally, Centres have become very efficient in the administration of the component and in the choice of topics. Candidates undertaking speaking and listening activities continue to be enthusiastic about the experience and clearly benefit from careful planning and practise.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/11
Reading Passages (Core)

Key messages

- Proof reading is essential. Marks were lost through avoidable mistakes which could have been corrected by candidates checking over their work.
- In **Question 1(g)** candidates should remember that they cannot repeat the same word in their answer to **(ii)** as they used in **(i)**. They should elaborate on the definition given in **(i)** and focus their response on describing the effect of the whole phrase.
- Candidates must remember to deal with all three bullet points in **Question 2**, and attempt to develop ideas, both factual and inferential. The key message here is to go beyond the text for the third bullet point.
- Candidates need to ensure that they are writing in the correct format for **Question 2** as well as following the bullet points to construct their response to the task. They also need to ensure that they pay attention to their spelling, punctuation and grammar to assist clarity.

General comments

Overall, the passages proved to be accessible to nearly all candidates and they responded positively to both passages and questions. The vocabulary appeared to be within the range of candidates at this level.

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the passage had been clearly understood and many responded well to the more straightforward questions. In general, the questions enabled all candidates to produce some correct answers while at the same time challenging those who were more perceptive to gain higher marks. There was very little evidence of candidates not working within the paper time limit and fewer examples of No Response answers compared with previous papers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) **The crew of the Fairwind are described as being 'angry and disturbed'. Explain why they felt angry and why they felt disturbed (paragraph 1, 'On the night of...December 20th.'). [2 marks]**

Most candidates gained one mark by correctly identifying that the crew of the Fairwind were angry and disturbed that the lighthouse was not in operation/had a dead light/light was not working. Fewer noted that 'nothing had been done about it'. Only a small number appreciated the more implied point that the crew felt disturbed because the absence of light from the lighthouse could have increased the likelihood of their ship being wrecked on the rocks of the island during the storm.

- (b) **Why is it thought that the authorities did not act straightaway (paragraph 1, 'On the night of...December 20th.')**? [1 mark]

Many candidates correctly answered that 'the relief ship ... was due to sail out to the islands on December 20th', by lifting the phrase from the passage. In order to secure the mark, it was important to show understanding that the Hesperus (or the 'relief ship') was a different vessel from the Fairwind and to refer to the short timescale.

- (c) **Why was Joseph Moore on the Hesperus and why was he restless (paragraph 2, 'Bad weather delayed...any breakfast.')**? [2 marks]

Most candidates gained at least one mark here by explaining that Moore was 'disturbed ... that the light wasn't working' but many apparently misunderstood his role and stated that he was 'on watch duty' on the Hesperus and not that he was the 'relief lighthouse keeper' – a mark that could have been gained by lifting the relevant phrase directly from the passage. The most frequent misunderstandings were to claim that Moore's restlessness was related to the poor quality of his 'breakfast' or the fact that the three lighthouse keepers had gone missing – something he would not have known until he visited the lighthouse.

- (d) **State two unusual things that the crew of the Hesperus noticed when they landed on Flannan Isle and before they entered the lighthouse (paragraph 3, 'Things were mysterious...the island.')** [2 marks]

This straightforward retrieval question about what was strange when the Hesperus crew landed on Flannan Isle was correctly answered by nearly all candidates who identified the absence of a flag, the absence of empty provision boxes awaiting restocking, and the absence of a traditional welcoming committee. Most candidates gained two marks with many responding with all three possibilities.

- (e) **Explain why the crew of the Hesperus were so concerned about the missing clothing and the one set of oilskins that they found in the lighthouse (lines 22–24).** [2 marks]

Most candidates noted that 'one of the crew had put himself in danger by not wearing his protective gear', adding that it was 'virtually unheard of'; fewer wrote that the men 'had broken the rules' by leaving the lighthouse unattended and hardly any commented on 'the missing gear indicated that at least two of the keepers...not come back'. More successful responses picked up on the point that the keeper had broken the rules by not wearing his protective clothing. Only the most successful deduced that the concern about the missing clothing arose from the conclusion that two of the keepers had not returned and were, therefore, also at risk.

- (f) **Using your own words, explain what the writer means by: 'So much myth and folklore has grown up over the mystery of Flannan Isle' (line 27).** [2 marks]

Few candidates fully explained 'myth/folklore' in their own words, but a significant number suggested that 'rumours'/'made-up'/'exaggerated' stories had 'grown up' over the mystery of Flannan Isle and by doing so gained one of the available marks. Some went on to complete their explanation by pointing out that the effect of the increasingly mythical accounts was that it was very hard for later researchers to work out the truth of the events on the island.

- (g)(i) Re-read paragraphs two, three and six of **Passage A**. **Using your own words**, explain what the writer means by the words in *italics* in the following phrases:
- a 'filled with *foreboding*, pacing the deck and refusing any breakfast' (line 12)
 - b 'the *eerie* silence that enveloped the island' (line 17)
 - c 'Iron railings were bent *grotesquely* out of shape as if by some unearthly force' (lines 32–33). [3 marks]

Not all candidates appeared to understand the precise requirements of this task. The question asked them to explain in their own words what the writer meant by the **words in italics**. Many candidates produced 'catch all' phrases which were more akin to a (g)(ii) type explanation of the whole phrase. Only the more successful responses showed real understanding of the italicised words and only a small number of candidates gained all three available marks for this question.

- (a) For 'foreboding' many candidates were able to convey the sense of dread or anxiety experienced by Joseph Moore about the problems with the lighthouse. Some, however, misinterpreted the word as signifying 'anger' or 'excitement'. A few responses merely rephrased the words thus producing a circular answer which was not focused on the underlined word.
 - (b) 'Eerie' was usually explained correctly with answers such as 'spooky', 'scary' and 'weird' proving to be very popular. Again, as with (a) some candidates gave explanations which focused on the whole phrase rather than the underlined word, pointing out the suffocating silence which enveloped the island but not satisfactorily explaining the meaning of the underlined word..
 - (c) 'Grotesquely' presented a problem for many candidates but it was usually the absence of intensity which stopped some candidates getting a mark here. Words such as 'ugly', 'bent' or 'misshapen' really do not capture the full force of something being 'grotesque' with its implications of unnatural monstrosity. Again, some candidates managed to comment on 'force' rather than the appearance of the railings. As noted above many candidates struggled particularly with explaining the word, 'grotesquely' for 1(g)(i) but, nevertheless, successfully scored a mark or two in discussing the use of language in that quotation in their answers to 1(g)(ii).
- (g)(ii) Explain **how** the language in each of the **phrases** in (g)(i) helps to suggest the atmosphere of mystery on the island. [6 marks]

Many candidates achieved marks on this question by showing some understanding/offering a partial explanation of individual phrases (as a whole). Most commented successfully on Moore's 'apprehension' or 'anxiety' concerning what might greet him on the island; the 'eerie silence' creating an 'unnatural atmosphere', and the 'powerful' force required to bend the railings 'grotesquely out of shape'. Only a small number showed any real appreciation of how the vocabulary/imagery was used to contribute to the writer's purpose.

Less successful responses made general comments about ‘adding to the mystery’, or ‘making things more mysterious’, without demonstrating a clear understanding of the individual phrases. Responses which showed a misunderstanding of ‘foreboding’ explained the whole phrase in terms of excitement or anger. A small number of responses attempted explanations of the phrases by simply re-iterating them or lifting the language from the phrase and simply produced a circular explanation. For example, instead of attempting to find own words for ‘unearthly force’ candidates merely repeated it. It is worth pointing out that the explanations of the phrases should be grounded in the context of the question as opposed to simple interpretations of the words used. The key focus of explanations here was ‘the atmosphere of mystery on the island’ but many responses did not relate their explanations to the focus of the question.

Question 2

Imagine that you are Joseph Moore from Passage A. You decide to stay on at the lighthouse and investigate what has happened. It is the next morning.

Write your journal entry for the events of the previous day and night.

In your journal you should:

- **describe your thoughts and feelings on the way to the island**
- **describe what you found when you landed and entered the lighthouse**
- **say what you think might have happened to the previous keepers and why they cannot be found.**

Base your journal entry on what you have read in Passage A, but do not copy from it. Be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullets.

Begin your journal entry: ‘This was the most disturbing experience...’.

Write about 200 to 300 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing.

Only a few responses followed the requirement to view the situation in hindsight and most merely described the events of the ‘actual’ day as it unfolded. Often candidates wrote responses which addressed the three bullet points, although not always in ‘journal entry’ register.

Many candidates attempted to cover the three prompts in a balanced approach but a significant number, having described Joseph Moore’s feelings and thoughts in some detail, as well as describing the scene at the lighthouse, then rather abruptly concluded the journal entry with the final sentence of Passage A about the damage, and, indeed, the loss of the lighthouse keepers, arising from the ‘terrible storm’. Such accounts often did not speculate on how the storm had led to their demise. In contrast to these responses, others enthusiastically speculated about the lighthouse keepers’ disappearance with some claiming the men had been eaten by a Kraken, had been whisked away to outer space by aliens or simply got washed into the sea while coming back from the local pub. It is important that candidates attempt to develop ideas related to the three prompts which are grounded in the passage, and such development should be predominantly in their own words as opposed to frequent lifting of phrases and even sentences from the original. Less successful responses either contained almost word for word accounts of what was found in the lighthouse together with a brief reference to Joseph Moore’s apprehension and a passing reference to the fate of the missing men or they focused on Joseph Moore’s worries with virtually no indication as to what was found in the lighthouse. A very small number of candidates answered this question in the third person, and a similar number wrote responses which had no relevance to the passage whatsoever.

A significant number of responses confused the events involving the Fairwind and the Hesperus when writing in response to bullet point 1. Only a very small number picked up on the passage’s hints of supernatural possibilities (the ‘grotesquely’ bent railings and the mysterious three birds) in their responses to bullet 3.

Most candidates wrote correct, though relatively simple, sentences, with an adequate range of vocabulary and tried to use an appropriate register. The most successful responses – a significant minority – achieved Band 1 marks for both Content and Language.

Question 3

- (a) **What do you learn about the appearance and behaviour of the kraken and the explanations given for what it was, according to Passage B?**

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

You do not need to use your own words.

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

This question was answered well with many candidates focusing on the topic and the question. However, there were a significant number of candidates who (largely by selective lifting) included several points on the same line thereby self-penalising. The most frequent limitations included the repetition of the 'size' of the Kraken (Point 1) as separate points; confusion between Points 10 and 11 – with many responses incorrectly referring to a 'whirlpool' being created when the Kraken 'surfaced' – and the inclusion of 'historical' (and irrelevant) references to the Kraken. The key was avoiding repetition and answering the question by selecting points relating to the Kraken's appearance and its behaviour, as stated in the question.

- (b) **Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about the appearance and behaviour of the kraken and the explanations given for what it was.**

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

Your summary should include all 10 of your points in Question 3(a) and must be 100 to 150 words.

Up to 5 marks are available for the quality of your writing.

Although some candidates were able to achieve Band 1 for clear, concise and fluent summaries the majority of candidates' responses were Band 2 (points were 'mostly focused' and made 'clearly') or Band 3 ('some areas of conciseness'). The least successful responses were marred by personal comments and unselective 'lifting'. The most successful responses showed careful planning and organisation of material with some synthesis of points. Middle range responses tended to be list-like with a series of loosely connected statements about the Kraken's behaviour and appearance.

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/13
Reading Passages (Core)

Key messages

- Proofreading is essential. Marks were lost through avoidable mistakes which could have been corrected by candidates checking over their work.
- In **1(h)** candidates should remember that they cannot simply repeat the same word in their answer to **(ii)** as they used in **(i)** but should elaborate on the definition given in **(i)** and focus their response on describing the effect of the whole phrase.
- Candidates must remember to deal with all 3 bullet points in **Question 2**, and attempt to develop ideas, both factual and inferential. The key message here is to go beyond the text for the third bullet point.
- Candidates need to ensure that they are writing in the correct format for **Question 2** as well as following the bullet points to construct their response to the task. They also need to ensure that they pay attention to their spelling, punctuation and grammar to assist clarity.

General comments

Overall, the passages proved to be accessible to nearly all candidates and they responded positively to both passages and questions. The vocabulary appeared to be within the range of candidates at this level.

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the passage had been clearly understood and many responded well to the more straightforward questions. In general, the questions enabled all candidates to produce some correct answers while at the same time challenging those who were more perceptive to gain higher marks. There was very little evidence of candidates not working within the paper time limit and fewer examples of No Response answers compared with previous papers. Overall, the standard of performance of most candidates was of a satisfactory to very good level, with only a very small number performing at a less than satisfactory standard.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) **Using your own words, explain why the writer says ‘There was a small grain of truth’ in the rumours about the existence of El Dorado (line 2).** (2 marks)

There was a common error with this task that affected the marks awarded to a great number of the candidates. These candidates assumed that they were being asked to explain the words quoted in the question whereas a full answer required them to read on to find an explanation. For those who did follow this procedure there were two details to identify: **(i)** gold was being mined in the area (a small number of candidates identified this) and **(ii)** gold was used to decorate their chief (very few candidates identified this point). For those who attempted to explain the quoted words 1 mark was awarded for a response that explained that there was a mixture of fact and fiction in the rumours. A reasonable number of candidates gained this mark.

- (b) **What is the meaning of the Spanish phrase, 'El Dorado'?** (1 mark)

The great majority of candidates correctly answered that 'El Dorado' means the 'gilded one' or the 'golden one'.

- (c) **Give two details about the Spanish exploration of South America (paragraph 2, 'The Spanish explorers...not yet ventured.').** (2 marks)

A large number of candidates gained one mark here by explaining that there were 5 expeditions carried out by Spanish explorers in the period of five years. Fewer candidates obtained the second mark available. For this it was necessary to make the point that the explorers did not reach the northern part of South America. This was a question that highlighted the need to read the wording of the question carefully to identify the material required from the passage.

- (d) **Explain why Juan Martinez was punished by his companions (paragraph 3, 'Meanwhile...on his way back.').** (1 mark)

Many candidates gained the mark on this question by explaining that Martinez was punished because the gunpowder exploded and that he was responsible for it. The matter of his responsibility was essential to being awarded the mark – a reasonable number of candidates missed getting the mark by only mentioning the explosion.

- (e) (i) **Which two-word phrase in paragraph 3 ('Meanwhile...on his way back.')** suggests that the writer questions the truth of Juan Martinez's account? (1 mark)

This was a relatively straightforward question and required only that the candidate quote the words 'He claimed' to get the mark. That said, a number of candidates did not choose these words, or choose to quote a lengthy section of text without clearly highlighting these words.

- (ii) **Which piece of evidence later in the passage suggests that at least some of his story was true?** (1 mark)

Many candidates noted that it was discovery of the ship's anchor by Sir Walter Raleigh that offered some evidence of the truth of Martinez's story. This mark could be gained by a succinct quotation from the text and quite a few candidates gave long quotation. However, providing there was some evidence of their selecting material rather merely lifting a large section in the hope of finding something relevant, they were awarded the mark.

- (f) **Explain what is meant by 'potential investors' (line 34).** (1 mark)

A large number of candidates gained the mark for this question. The key element in a correct answer was in showing that there was understanding of the word 'investors'. Any answer which found an alternative means of expressing this (for example by referring to 'money' or 'finance') was successful.

- (g) **Using your own words, explain what the writer means by 'it is most likely that El Dorado was an excuse used by the European adventurers who were eager to discover the quickest path to riches.' (line 38 – 40).** (2 marks)

Many candidates gained one mark for this question by giving some sense of the phrase with an attempt at using their own words. Overall, though, there were few candidates who gave a sufficiently clear explanation to get both marks. This tended to be because candidates relied too closely on the wording of the quotation, thus not demonstrating a full understanding.

- (h)(i) Re-read paragraphs one, two and seven of **Passage A**. Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words in italics in the following phrases:
- (a) ‘and in its retellings, the tale became *embellished*’ (line 8)
 - (b) ‘assumed that this *fugitive* empire was flourishing somewhere’ (lines 12 – 13)
 - (c) ‘a place of fabulous wealth and has fed the *romantic* imaginations of writers throughout the centuries’ (lines 37 – 38).

(3 marks)

Not all candidates appeared to understand the precise requirements of this task. The question asked them to explain in their own words what the writer meant by the **words in italics**. Many candidates produced ‘catch all’ phrases which were more akin to a **g(ii)** type explanation of the whole phrase. Only the more successful responses showed real understanding of the italicised words and only a small number of candidates gained all three available marks for this question.

- (a) For ‘embellished’ a reasonable number of candidates were able to explain that this meant the story had been altered or added to in some way. There were quite a number of candidates who gave explanations involving the story being repeated and passed on from one generation another that might have been more relevant in **(ii)**.
 - (b) ‘Fugitive’ was explained correctly by a reasonable number of candidates who made comments about it meaning ‘hidden’ or ‘lost’ – some clearly seeing that it was connected to the use of ‘fugitive’ to mean some who is evading discovery
 - (c) ‘Romantic’ proved, in many ways, the most difficult of the three words as candidates were distracted by its use to refer to love and romance. A smaller number of candidates gained a mark by suggesting that this meant something fanciful or a fantasy or dreamlike
- (ii) Explain how the words and language in each of the phrases in **(h)(i)** help to suggest how the writer presents the story of El Dorado.

(6 marks)

Many candidates achieved marks on this question by showing some understanding, offering a partial explanation of individual phrases (as a whole). Most commented successfully on the way the stories had been repeated and been added to, or had started as something true but had become more like a story from myth or legend.

Less successful responses made general comments about the content of the stories or repeated the contents of their answers to **(i)** without demonstrating a clear understanding of the individual phrases. As in previous sessions, the marks gained from this question often totalled fewer than for **g(i)**. Sometimes this was because answers to **g(ii)** did, as noted, no more than repeat those given for **g(i)** or because a misunderstanding was carried through from **g(i)**. A small, but significant, number of responses attempted explanations of the phrases by simply re-iterating them or lifting the language from the phrase and simply produced a circular explanation. It is worth pointing out as in previous reports, that the explanations of the phrases should be grounded in the context of the question as opposed to simple interpretations of the words used. The key focus of explanations here was ‘the writer’s presentation of the story’ but many responses did not relate their explanations to the focus of the question. A very small number of the more successful responses detected a hint of irony or disbelief in the writer’s choice of wording and hence the writer’s purpose of both relating the story and expressing his own opinion of its worth.

Question 2

Imagine that you are Juan Martinez from Passage A. You are interviewed by an official about your experience.

Write the words of your interview.

In your interview you are asked three questions:

- ***Tell me exactly why you were cast adrift in the jungle?***
- ***Explain what happened to you before you mysteriously reappeared?***
- ***Why should I believe anything that you are telling me?***

Base your interview on what you have read in Passage A, but do not copy from it. Be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullets.

Remember your interview is formal; you should begin with the first question: ‘Tell me exactly why you were cast adrift in the jungle...’.

Write about 200 to 300 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing.

For this task the majority of candidates seemed to understand quite clearly the need to address each of the bullets and to give a credible account of Juan Martinez’s experiences from his point of view. The majority also understood the interview format and gave answers that directly address the three set questions offering an appropriate register and voice for Martinez.

Many candidates attempted to cover the three prompts in a balanced approach. However, the less successful responses tended to be those where candidates (albeit in their own words) simply repeated the details from the passage. This meant that although, generally, there was not extensive lifting of material there was often little sense of candidates putting themselves in the position of the character and giving life to his experiences. A very small number were a little muddled about the sequence of events.

More successful responses were able to give some explanation for the explosion of the gun powder and suggest why Martinez might have felt he was harshly or unfairly treated. Most candidates dealt reasonably successfully with the journey to and from Manoa. Again, the more successful responses gave some credible details about the local people and Martinez’s thoughts and feelings about them.

The great majority of candidates made some attempt to answer the third question. Some simply insisted that as an officer Martinez would not lie; others gave quite convincing explanations such as the fact that he had obviously survived a long time in the jungle and was left there without food or that there was evidence in the form of the remains his ship (e.g. the anchor).

Overall, the responses showed a very good understanding of the passage, the predicament of Martinez when he was left behind and the difficulty of his being believed when he returned.

Most candidates wrote correct, though relatively simple, sentences, with an adequate range of vocabulary and tried to use an appropriate register. The most successful responses – a significant minority – achieved Band 1 marks for both Content and Language.

Question 3

(a) **Notes**

What do you learn about the appearance and behaviour of unicorns and of the qualities they possessed, according to Passage B?

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

You do not need to use your own words.

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

This question gave candidates the chance to boost their total score by appropriate selection. It was answered very well with many candidates making one point per line as instructed, and focusing on the topic and the question. However, there were a significant number of candidates who (largely by selective lifting) included several points on the same line thereby self-penalising. Sometimes candidates included more than 10 marks worth of relevant points, but by putting them more than one point on each line gained fewer than 10 marks. It is essential on this question that the candidate reads the question clearly to ensure that they are picking out the appropriate material and equally that some attempt is made to set out the relevant points one on each of the 10 lines. This also contributes to avoidance of repeating points. Only a small number of candidates gained full marks, although many achieved seven or above.

(b) **Summary**

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about the appearance and behaviour of unicorns and of the qualities they possessed.

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

Your summary should include all 10 of your points in Question 3(a) and must be 100 to 150 words.

Up to 5 marks are available for the quality of your writing.

On the whole, although some candidates were able to achieve Band 1 for clear, concise and fluent summaries the majority of candidates' responses were Band 2 (points were 'mostly focused' and made 'clearly') or Band 3 ('some areas of conciseness'). The least successful responses, of which there were only a few, were marred by personal comments and unselective 'lifting'. The most successful responses showed careful planning and organisation of material with some synthesis of points. Middle range responses tended to be list-like with a series of loosely connected statements about the unicorn's behaviour and appearance.

Concluding comments

Most candidates completed the paper in some detail and the responses to **Question 2** in particular were of a generally good standard. It is clear that the vast majority of candidates had been well prepared for these questions and were confident in their approach and, overall, this seemed to an accessible and engaging paper. Those who have marked the paper over the years have generally been impressed with the seriousness and competence with which candidates of all levels have approached the questions and hope that similar candidates in future years will continue with this seriousness of purpose in whichever syllabus they attempt.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/21
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read the text carefully before considering the task
- read each task carefully, paying attention to key words and instructions
- considered the evidence of the skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate in each response
- planned and organised their ideas before beginning their answer
- gave equal attention to all sections of each question
- selected only the material appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition
- used their own words carefully, appropriately and precisely
- avoided copying and/or lifting whole sentences or sections from either text
- edited their response to amend any careless slips, incomplete or unclear ideas
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose.

General comments

Candidates' responses generally indicated familiarity with the format of the paper and the demands of each task. Most showed at least some awareness of the need to use, not repeat, the material from the relevant passage in order to answer the questions. The most successful responses demonstrated that candidates were able to adapt and modify the material in the original text whilst remaining focused on the specific demands of each task. Other less successful responses were over-reliant on both the wording and sequence of the passage(s) and/or paid limited attention to the details of the question as set, providing less-convincing evidence of skills and understanding as a consequence.

Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible and engaging, and most were able to finish the paper within the time allowed. There were a good number of excellent responses where candidates had clearly addressed the different requirements of each task and demonstrated skills and understanding at an impressively high level. Very occasionally, achievement was limited by a failure to follow the rubric and/or complete all aspects of a task – for example, by not providing 15 answers in **Question 3(a)**, selecting examples from the wrong paragraph in **Question 2** and/or offering an incomplete response to **Question 3(b)**.

There did not appear to be many significant misunderstandings of the content of either passage. More successful answers were able to demonstrate purposeful reading, interpreting and using details effectively in **Question 1**, and ensuring that selections from the text in **Question 2** and **Question 3(a)** were accurate and addressed the question.

Most **Question 1** responses showed some familiarity with the form of the task – a letter from a character involved in the text. The majority of candidates were able to respond appropriately, many with real engagement and some subtlety, to provide convincing and thorough replies. Responses across the cohort covered the full range of achievement, with stronger answers able to reflect upon recent events in both Harrold's personal and professional life and to draw inferences about his options concerning the job offer made to him. Good answers interpreted a range of detail which helped to anchor responses in a close reading of the passage and show engagement with attitudes and viewpoint. Less successful responses often included insufficient reference to ideas from the passage and/or relied on the language of the text to communicate ideas. Along with unselective copying, lifting phrases from the text is an indicator of less secure understanding and to be avoided.

For **Question 2** candidates need to consider appropriate choices of words and phrases from each of the two paragraphs and make specific, detailed comments about these choices. Many candidates showed they were able to explore and explain in some detail the effects of those choices, demonstrating sound understanding of the writer's purpose. Most were able to identify relevant examples, though a number of candidates were not sufficiently precise in their examination of these choices or concentrated on one word within a longer choice missing potential opportunities to explore the image as a whole. Some repeated the language of the choices in their explanations, offered the same explanation for more than one choice and/or repeated generic comments which could be argued to apply to any author's use of language – diluting evidence of understanding as a result.

In **Question 3** many candidates were able to find a good number of points in part **(a)**. Candidates do not need to use their own words in **Question 3(a)** and most understood that they should use short notes rather than whole sentences taken from the passage. Many had considered both aspects of the question and identified ideas that addressed both sides of the argument efficiently. Where responses were most successful in part **(b)**, candidates had used their own words consistently and organised their ideas helpfully. A few of the least successful responses were over-reliant on copying from the text with minimal/no rewording of the original. Whilst candidates are not expected to change all key words or terms in part **(b)** and do not need to replace every word of the original, they should not however lift whole phrases and/or sentences from the passage. Similarly, indiscriminate copying, repetition and comment should all be avoided.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to be aware that 20 per cent of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing – planning and reviewing their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, imprecise meaning and awkward expression. Whilst writing is not specifically assessed for accuracy in this paper, candidates should remember that unclear style will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Leaving sufficient time to read back through and edit responses is advisable. The best responses considered their intended audience, for example by ensuring that their writing was sufficiently well-organised and controlled to be clearly understood by a reader who had not read the original passage.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Following his successful presentation, Harrold is offered a specialist sales and managerial position as 'Birdbrain' in the Birdland section of the company's brand new megastore. The megastore will replace all three existing local stores which will close next month. Staff not leaving the company will remain on full pay until the new store opens in six months' time.

Unsure if he should accept, Harrold writes a letter to a friend.

Write Harrold's letter to his friend.

In your letter you should:

- **describe your feelings about the various events at home over the past few months**
- **explain recent changes at work and the factors you are weighing up regarding the proposed position**
- **discuss the options you are now considering.**

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

Most candidates were able to offer at least the basics of a letter from Harrold asking for advice, picking up on the tone and cue of the given starter. However, in some responses, a failure to sign off in character was symptomatic of a loss of focus as the response progressed. The task invited candidates to demonstrate their skills and understanding by using and modifying ideas to present them from Harrold's point of view as he reflected on the events in the passage and considered his future. Harrold had new possibilities to consider and respond to, and candidates needed to frame his letter in the light of what they already knew or could judge about Harrold having read the passage. The question encouraged candidates to show that they could do more than just repeat or retell the narrative.

Successful answers demonstrated close reading and some sense of purpose, indicating they had taken account of the whole passage and key details in the question before beginning their response. They had shifted perspective to respond from Harrold's point of view at some point after the events of the passage. Less successful responses tracked the passage in real time and often fell into sequencing errors as a result – or suddenly 'found' Beryl towards the end of the letter. Stronger answers had often traced through threads in the narrative, for example those details and hints linked to Beryl and/or the re-application process, and interpreted them convincingly.

The best answers included integrated details and developed interpretations of Harrold's thoughts, feelings, attitudes and concerns rooted in the passage. The majority of answers recognised at least his interest in birds, his concern for the welfare of any animals in his charge and his dislike of the changes at work. Most were able to respond to all three bullets of the question though a number would have benefitted from more careful planning to widen the range of ideas they included. Opportunities for development were missed on occasion where details needed more careful attention – for example, Harrold's flat was not a new, empty flat but a 'newly empty flat' suggesting he may well be lonely rather than have recently moved house.

The first bullet of the question allowed candidates to offer a number of more explicit ideas as well inviting them to go on to evidence understanding of some of the more subtle, implied points when dealing with events at home over the past few months. For example, a candidate writing as Harrold who explained that his neighbour had died and then supported that by mentioning when it happened would have made a straightforward point and supported it with detail. Going on to suggest that Harrold felt saddened by the death is evidence of closer reading skills – picking up on the affection in Harrold's recollection of old Mrs F and going further by developing the idea. Mention of Beryl – explicit in the text – was included in almost all answers. Beryl coming to live with Harrold, her leaving and her return were each distinct ideas and better responses went on to support these with details – for example that Beryl had previously lived downstairs with Mrs F and whistled tunes. Developments to fill in gaps convincingly such as Harrold meeting Beryl through Mrs F or Beryl popping in to visit him beforehand were all reasonable suggestions in line with the text and could be credited.

It was comparatively rare for an answer not to include reference to Beryl and/or birds, though not all responses showed evidence of having planned the route through their answer carefully and so missed opportunities to evidence understanding clearly from the start. The fact that Beryl was a bird becomes obvious by the end of the passage and where candidates had reflected back on the passage in the light of that information they were able to capitalize on a wider range of opportunities for development – for example by suggesting that Beryl had flown out through an open window (an idea only hinted at in the passage) or going further in evidencing close reading by picking up on implications to suggest that Beryl is a yellow headed amazon and citing detail such as her affinity for learning song to support that. A number of answers referred to Beryl as male despite the indications to the contrary – at times this was a weakness in Writing skills rather than Reading and might have been addressed at editing stage.

When addressing bullet two most answers were able to make some mention of the changes in relation to the nature/ethos of the shop and of the application process leading up to the offer of a promotion. Better answers teased points out, considering implications rather than relying on simply repeating detail, and were able to broaden the range of ideas they included as a result – for example by talking separately about the rebranding/updating of the business and the emphasis on hard selling as demonstrated by the publicity campaign or considering the contrast between Harrold's approach and view of the job to that of the new staff and/or new owners. A number of answers at the lowest levels appeared to be attempting to write their response as they read the passage for the first time relying on the language and order of the original to communicate ideas – the timescale and structure of their response often became muddled as a result and evidence of understanding was less secure. The weakest responses relied on repeating snippets or sections of the original text with limited modification and were unable to demonstrate more than very general understanding at best.

In the third bullet candidates were able to identify in broad terms a number of options for Harrold to consider – some related to accepting the job offer, postponing his decision, and/or finding an alternative income and others discussing the possibilities for what he might do in the time before the new store opened or if he left. Taking a trip or doing something to improve life for Beryl were possibilities considered by some candidates – for example some picked up on adverts on tv for tropical breaks coupled with Harrold's mention that he'd never seen yellow heads in the wild to suggest that he may take the opportunity to do just that in the months before the shop opens and/or the free time he has if he decides to leave his job. Some candidates had made decisions about Harrold's age – some suggesting he might retire, others having envisaged him as much younger suggested that having been at the pet shop for a number of years it was time Harrold considered his future career prospects more carefully and accepted the promotion.

Some answers included and supported a number of ideas in relation to the third bullet, others selected two or three ideas and developed them more fully – either approach had the potential to evidence thorough reading. Most understood and exploited at least in part Harrold’s moral dilemma in relation to the job offer. Many were able to offer some well related, and in the strongest responses, sustained development. Answers in the mid-range often missed opportunities in this third bullet. They tended to limit their response by just opting for a basic expression of the need to decide at the end of the letter without suggesting the factors to consider and/or did not address the third bullet directly, simply asking their friend to tell them what they thought. A number of answers signed off in the candidate’s own name rather than as Harrold suggesting some loss of focus, whilst other more successful responses were careful to create and sustain a convincing voice for Harrold with a number choosing to imitate to good effect a certain, old-fashioned formality in their responses.

A feature of good responses was the evidence of careful and close reading of the whole passage and the question. Candidates had clearly read and understood the material and had been able to arrive at judgements about Harrold’s viewpoint and the ways in which his attitude towards events was presented and developed in the passage. With these candidates there was a strong sense of purpose indicating that they had arrived at an overview and understanding of Harrold’s character before writing up their responses. There were a number of subtle cues in the text which prompted candidates towards such an understanding, for example, his wanting to avoid Lisa when arriving at Head Office, his raising of an eyebrow at the promotional signs, his response to the nickname – ‘even smiled’. Strong answers had arrived at a holistic overview of Harrold’s experiences, being able to draw connections between his personal life (bullet one) and professional life (bullet two), using both areas to help shape predictions for the future (bullet three). Such responses were often more sophisticated when considering the future for Harrold, avoiding the more straightforward two option approach (accept the job or not), and saw how the two areas of his life could overlap, perhaps drawing lessons from Beryl’s escape and bright-eyed return, linking this to the detail listed in the last paragraph (the content of the adverts and ‘dreams of better things’) and/or seeing a symbolic value in Harrold leaving the window open at the end.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- read the passage carefully, more than once, and think about how to use key details before you begin your answer
- take account of the given persona, audience and purpose for your response
- give equal attention to ideas relevant to each of the three bullet points
- plan a route through your answer to ensure that ideas are sequenced logically for the response
- adapt material from the passage to make it an appropriate response to the specific task set
- answer in your own words and check that you have explained your ideas clearly
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct any errors in your writing which might affect meaning
- consider details of both the text and task carefully to help relevant development of ideas.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a) the pet shop and Harrold in paragraph 2, beginning ‘Pet shops had changed...’
- (b) people and presentations in paragraph 8, beginning ‘Increasingly animated presentations...’.

Select four powerful words or phrases from each paragraph. Your choices should include imagery. Explain how each word or phrase is used effectively in the context.

Write about 200 to 300 words.

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

Responses in **Question 2** need to identify relevant examples of language for discussion and to provide sufficiently focused and clear analysis of these evidence understanding of how the writer was using language in each case. Many candidates evidenced understanding and skills in the higher bands and, across the cohort as a whole, very few could make little or no ‘appropriate’ comment based on their choices. A good number of candidates profited from a willingness to engage with choices and tease out meanings, producing solid answers in Band 3. Some choices invited some subtlety of thought, for example ‘mild surprise’, and where candidates had recognised this they were often able to comment on tone and/or consider levels of interpretation, including Harrold’s mockery and humour.

Where the precise meaning of words was considered in context, candidates were often able to suggest something of the effect. Better answers remembered to consider all key words within choices, arriving at a more complete understanding of the overall impact. There were plenty of potentially useful choices relating directly to both the pet shop and Harrold in paragraph 2 and the people and presentations in paragraph 8. Where candidates had not paid close attention to the detail of the task less relevant choices were occasionally considered resulting in more general comments.

Responses to **Question 2** often began by offering a meaning for a word or phrase and then considering its connotations and associations, in order to suggest effect. For some candidates this approach proved profitable though on occasion opportunities to connect ideas between choices and arrive at an overview were missed. The majority of candidates understood something of Harrold's disapproval of the commercialising 'marketing magicians' and desire to escape the excitable applicants/staff at the presentation evening. They were able to focus on how the associations that a word or phrase might have could shape the insight they get for instance, into character and situation, or the pictures that are created in the reader's mind. While some candidates remain unhelpfully focused on simply identifying literary devices, there were responses which more profitably used that knowledge as a starting point to discuss a specific effect being created. It was evident that some candidates who had missed opportunities to demonstrate an interpretation of Harrold's attitudes in **Question 1** did a better job in **Question 2** when considering how they were communicated via language choices.

Some words were clearly very familiar to the majority of candidates and most had chosen carefully those examples about which they felt able to offer comment: the majority offered a clear picture of what the effects of a 'splatter-gun' would look like, 'wincing' and 'excruciating' were understood as being associated with pain, 'loud' taken to mean 'brightly coloured' and, surprisingly perhaps, many chose and commented effectively on the idea that an emporium was a large shop containing many products. Not all candidates showed that they knew that 'animated' could mean 'lively' or full of movement or actions, jumping straight to the connection to cartoons and/or the graphics that could be inserted into a PowerPoint slide presentation and missing some opportunities as a result. Others missed opportunities to evidence understanding by attempting to simply offer the explanation of a word via another form of the same word – for example asserting only that 'digitalised emporiums' revealed how digital the shop had become.

Partial or imprecise choices sometimes limited explanations as the subtlety of the full idea was lost – for example those who settled for 'animated presentations' lost out on the chance to comment on the building sense of competition that 'increasingly' added. Similarly, though many noted and dealt efficiently with 'captive' relatively few took the chance to consider what 'still' might add. Opportunities were also missed in some answers where a chosen phrase contained more than one word of interest and the answer moved on too quickly – offering a more general explanation of the phrase as a whole and/or only considering one of the words it contained. 'Batch' was considered comparatively rarely alongside 'excruciating', despite being included in many selections. 'Pampered poppets' was a popular selection and allowed most to suggest the idea of 'spoiled' or indulged pets, a few candidates reading less carefully took poppets as referring to the children, rather than the animals. Care is needed both when explaining and when copying choices from the text – for example 'adored' rather than 'adorned' resulted in inappropriate comment in a few answers.

A good number of candidates were able to provide evidence of skills and understanding in Band 1. Others struggled to offer evidence of understanding at Band 5. For the most part, candidates were able to show that they recognised at least some potentially interesting examples of language use and could offer some sense of the meanings and/or effects of their selections, even if only in a generalised way. For marks in the top bands, candidates need to be careful to select and interpret choices accurately, considering examples in context and demonstrating that they understand some of the subtleties of how the language is working. Better answers focused on quality of analysis rather than feature spotting.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- focus on the question carefully to ensure that all your choices are relevant
- re-read the whole paragraph before making selections; choose the best and not those which happen to come first
- ensure you copy choices accurately – avoid careless errors with spelling which change meaning
- once you have identified the potentially relevant choices from each paragraph, select your strongest four from each to explore and explain
- make sure your choices are precise – do not copy out lines of text

- remember to put quotation marks around your choices – it makes it easier for you to focus on the exact wording
- if you are unsure about effects, try to begin by giving a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- avoid empty comments such as comments praising the writer for good use of language or using lots of similes and metaphors
- show your understanding in full – consider all the key words within your identified choice.

Question 3

According to Passage B, what are the arguments some people offer for not keeping parrots as pets and how do responsible owners of pet parrots ensure the well-being of their birds?

To address the task successfully, candidates needed to first identify points from the whole passage that were potentially relevant to the question, then select 15 distinct clear ideas and list them in part (a) – one per numbered line. Candidates are reminded that they are only credited with a maximum of one mark per line and should spend time identifying their strongest points rather than simply offering ideas as they occur in the passage. Candidates are not required to use their own words in part (a) of the question, though better answers had often chosen to do so for clarity, for example where points were implied and/or exemplified more than once in the original text. There was more than one way in which points could be logically grouped and these options were reflected in the mark scheme. Most candidates were able to identify a good number of points from the passage. Better, more focused, answers typically scored two thirds or more of the available content marks.

Almost all candidates had understood the need to identify just 15 points in **3(a)** and only a few tried to add additional points after the grid – additional answers cannot be credited unless replacing a crossed out answer earlier on. The need to select and identifying points to answer the question meant that candidates had to read and plan their answers carefully, both to avoid repetition and to organise their ideas sensibly. Weaker responses indicated some difficulty in distinguishing rhetoric from argument – for example including the reference to Long John Silver as a point, or suggesting that parrots are like toddlers. Content could be selected as arguments against keeping parrots as pets and/or presented as a counter-argument in the form of measures that responsible owners use to ensure the well-being of their birds. Where candidates lost sight of the question and attempted to answer by simple cut and paste from the passage they ran the risk of missing key details of points and/or distorting the idea in hand. ‘Liberating pet birds born in captivity is not a viable option’, ‘(they) don’t understand weather patterns’ and ‘think all cats are friendly and fluffy’ were examples of lifted phrases offered in weaker answers which did not stand as either an argument against keeping parrots as pets or an example of what responsible owners did. Similarly, a number wrote that parrots were ‘used to being cleaned’ rather than ‘cleaned for’ which changed the meaning.

When approaching **Question 3(a)**, candidates who focused on what the question was asking were best placed to offer relevant, distinct ideas for their answers, avoiding overlap and repetition of aspects of the same idea. The most successful responses had recognised where argument and counter argument might helpfully be combined into one umbrella point and arrived at a useful overview of the material over the range of their fifteen answers which they were able to take through into the second part of the task. Occasionally incomplete or imprecise communication in part a blurred the point in hand – a few candidates offered note form without considering that those notes needed to make the point clearly. The best answers had been written as if to communicate each idea to someone who had not read the passage – taking account of advice offered in previous examiner reports.

In **Question 3(b)**, many candidates demonstrated an awareness of an appropriate style for a summary, though a number relied on the language or order of the original passage. The most successful responses re-ordered and re-grouped the relevant information from the text, connecting ideas with some skill – often having organised their points around arguments against keeping parrots as pets and those counter arguments made by responsible owners detailing their actions and approach. The least successful copied wholesale from the text with minimal or no modification, or offered a response which communicated very few relevant ideas. Candidates producing answers at the top end often showed signs of having revisited points in **3(a)** when planning **3(b)** in order to edit and further refine points in this first part of the question and plan their route through their prose answer. This resulted in clearer, more distinct points in **3(a)** and an efficient and often well-focused response in **3(b)**.

Successful responses were written in a concise and fluent style, and expressed using the candidate’s own words. Occasionally in otherwise good scripts there was some conflict between maintaining concision and the use of own words, with candidates attempting to substitute unnecessarily every word in the passage with

their own phrasing, and in doing so becoming overly verbose. When trying to avoid ‘purpose-built aviary’ some wrote along the lines of ‘have more spacious accommodation which has been built especially for them where the birds can fly around’. Candidates are reminded that it is not necessary to replace every word from the text with a synonym, and should be aware that sometimes by attempting to do so they can lose focus on both the task and the sense, obscuring the idea. However, it is also clear that some other candidates still need to be reminded that they will not gain credit for Writing skills when relying on lifted or copied material. Lifted material remains a feature of the least successful answers. Responses that tried to simply lift from the passage in **3(a)** and then string those phrases together with an (often) indiscriminate choice of a connecting phrase were rarely able to produce answers which were better than ‘sometimes focused.’

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- read the question carefully to identify the focus of the task
- re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify potential content points
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to establish and select 15 complete and distinct points
- list your points – one complete idea per numbered line – using as few words as possible
- plan your response in **3(b)** to organise and sequence content helpfully for your reader
- write informatively and accurately, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- do not add details or comment to the content of the passage
- you can choose to use your own words in **3(a)** and must use your own words in **3(b)**
- do not add further numbered points in **3(a)** past the 15 required
- avoid repetition of points
- check that you understand the point you are trying to communicate
- when checking and editing your answers to Question **3(a)**, consider whether each point you are making could be easily and precisely understood by someone who has not read the passage.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

<p>Paper 0524/23 Reading Passages Extended</p>
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Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read the text carefully before considering the task
- read each task carefully, paying attention to key words and instructions
- considered the evidence of the skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate in each response
- planned and organised their ideas before beginning their answer
- gave equal attention to all sections of each question
- selected only the material appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition
- used their own words carefully, appropriately and precisely
- avoided copying and/or lifting whole sentences or sections from either text
- edited their response to amend any careless slips, incomplete or unclear ideas
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose.

General comments

Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible and the majority were able to finish the paper within the time allowed. There did not seem to be many significant misunderstandings of the content of the passages. Candidates' responses to this paper demonstrated an understanding of the need to select and adapt relevant material from the passages to answer the questions. All parts of the three questions had been answered by most candidates. Generally, responses were an appropriate length, although shorter responses provided less opportunity to demonstrate understanding.

More successful answers were able to demonstrate purposeful reading of the passages, interpreting and using details effectively in **Question 1**, and ensuring that selections from the text in **Question 2** and **Question 3(a)** were accurate and addressed the question.

Most **Question 1** responses were focused on the question. Good responses displayed a sound understanding of the ideas in Passage A by including a range of relevant ideas that were often developed effectively and supported by appropriate detail to explain the reasons for Marc's career move. Less effective responses tended to neglect the idea that Marc was writing to his parents attempting to persuade them that his new business was worthwhile and were unable to select relevant information to develop points. Copying was sometimes evident, especially in response to the second bullet point: there is a significant difference between using textual detail in support of points and lifting whole sections of the text or key phrases. The concerns of Marc's employers were often copied in their entirety, for example, 'you're' too immature', 'no one wants to work with you' and 'you don't know the first thing about business'. The majority of candidates read the question carefully and wrote the letter from Marc to his parents using an appropriate style, therefore demonstrating a good sense of audience. Responses written from the wrong perspective were rare, though a small number of candidates paid insufficient attention to task instructions – for example writing the letter prior to resigning, rather than a month later. This resulted in a limited response to the third bullet point. Some mid-range answers missed opportunities to develop and interpret the material, and often produced uneven responses which included the addition of extraneous material related to Marc's first day of work as a result.

For **Question 2**, candidates needed to make specific, detailed comments about their choices in the context of the two paragraphs. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to demonstrate understanding of the writer's purpose and consider the connotations and associations of the language used. Most responses included a sufficient number of appropriate examples from the relevant paragraphs. Fewer answers included the clear explanations of effects and images that are required for marks in the top bands. Many contained

some accurate explanations of meanings and the identification of some linguistic devices but only partially explained effects. Weaker responses tried to explain the selected language in the same words as the language choice – for example, suggesting that ‘rainbow-coloured smoke’ means that the smoke is the colour of the rainbow, or that ‘cinematic fantasy’ means that it is a fantasy. Some candidates missed opportunities to consider individual words within longer choices and demonstrate understanding at higher levels, repeating instead rather broad and vague comments such as ‘this shows that they are old’ and/or simply labelling devices without exploration of how the example was working within this particular context.

In **Question 3**, many candidates managed to find a reasonable number of points in **part (a)**. In **Question 3(a)**, short notes that clearly identify the point are required, rather than whole sentences. Candidates should be aware that these notes are for an audience, so single words that fail to address the point should be avoided. Candidates do not need to use their own words in **Question 3(a)**, though some did to good effect, which clearly benefitted their summary writing in **part (b)**. In **Question 3(b)** own words need to be used and some responses missed opportunities to target higher bands by relying on lifted phrases from the passage to communicate a range of ideas. Candidates should use their own words as far as possible in this summary task, though it is not a requirement that every word is altered – more technical terms or names for example are unlikely to have suitably precise synonyms, and words such as ‘caesareans’ and ‘deadlines’ did not need to be replaced or explained.

Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading: 20% of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing in terms of planning their responses to avoid repetition between sections, awkward expression, and to ensure that each question is dealt with in sufficient detail. Whilst writing is not specifically assessed for accuracy in this paper, candidates should be aware that undeveloped language or inconsistency of style will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Candidates are advised to leave sufficient time to check and edit their responses.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

At the end of his first month at the new surgery, Marc decides to write a letter to his parents explaining his career move and persuading them it was a good idea.

Write Marc’s letter to his parents.

In your letter you should:

- **explain what it was like working at your previous job and why you felt you needed to leave**
- **answer the concerns you know your parents will have about you, your decision and your ability to run your own business**
- **outline how things have been going so far and your plans for the new surgery in the future.**

Base your letter on what you have read in Passage A, but be careful to use your own words.

Address each of the three bullet points.

Write your answer using short **notes**. **Write one point per line.**

You do not need to use your own words.

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

Stronger responses to this question selected and condensed the events in the passage, modifying and adapting the ideas to create a suitable style for a letter to Marc’s parents, including a convincing voice for Marc. They offered reassurance about Marc’s recent career move, whilst also demonstrating that they were adults who were capable of directing their own lives. Many candidates had a secure appreciation of the frustrations of working with the ‘elderly wizards’ and appeared to enjoy taking revenge on them by making a success of the out-of-hours clinic. They were able to sustain the use of supporting detail throughout the response, firmly tethering any development to details in the passage. There was also evidence of some fictional development at the expense of factual material from the passage, for example considering pets that had been treated, such as an alligator. The best responses firmly linked their ideas for each bullet to details

in the passage, but developed them by explaining why Marc planned to leave his previous job, addressed his parental concerns and his plans to make improvements and develop his business in the future.

In response to the first bullet, most candidates were able to identify details such as the age difference between Marc and his employers, including their refusal to listen to him, their rejection of his ideas and how they were set in their ways. However, some focused purely on the meeting where Marc resigned and missed points related to the dress code and communication. There was also some confusion between where Marc previously worked and his current out-of-hours practice. Some mistook him for a doctor treating human patients and described a hospital setting.

The second bullet was sometimes addressed thinly, or relied heavily on lifting the views of the partners, as opposed to identifying that they share similar views to Marc's parents, gauged through the subtlety of reading such details as 'a ball of tumbleweed had rolled past'. A few candidates resorted to a general approach choosing to pick on the human element of relations between parents and children or individuals and employers. Some became too focused on a dialogue between Marc and his parents about family, whilst others lost focus on their audience, for example referring to how the partners were like Marc's parents, when the audience was Marc's parents. Some candidates did not evidence an understanding that Marc was already a fully qualified vet and that he was going to open his own practice. There was also some lack of precision in the use of details from the passage, particularly relating to time-scales, such as how long the out-of-hours practice had been running. There was also a considerable amount of directly lifted material such as: 'serve all practices in a forty kilometre radius', 'a few filing cabinets, a kettle and a nurse', 'well-travelled, impulsive, energetic' and 'word was quickly spreading'. Additionally, a few candidates included material from Passage B in their response, commenting on the gruelling training to become a vet, which was not relevant and not credited.

In the third bullet, some candidates focused on the initial visit of a single client in significant detail, but did not progress to fully address the requirements of the question which was related to how the practice had become busier and Marc's plans for the future. A mechanical use of the passage demonstrates at best a reasonable level of understanding, whereas those displaying a competent or thorough reading of the passage were able to adapt and modify the material in the passage. Good responses focused on all three bullet points and displayed the ability to select material relevant to each part of the task. They contained a range of ideas that were developed and closely related to the passage, and a good range of integrated detail. Where responses were less successful in targeting higher bands, there was often the sense that rather than returning to the text to identify and plan content for their answers in advance of writing, candidates had either focused on generic points, such as how a parent might react to their child's resignation with a more limited focus on the details of the passage, or had worked back through the passage repeating events and limiting their focus on the task. The least successful answers were often thin, simple or short. They offered a very general view of the situation but few ideas and details in response to the bullet points, and often did not move beyond the first bullet.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity, fluency and coherence of the response and how well it used language to respond in the required form of an informal letter, and how successfully it addressed audience and purpose. Occasionally, awkward expression and/or weaknesses in structure detracted from the overall effect. Efficient planning allowed stronger answers to address the bullets and interweave details from all aspects of the text. Lapses into narrative indicated an inconsistency of style in less assured responses, whilst copying directly from the text was often the most frequent feature of the weakest writing.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- read the whole passage carefully, including any information given in the introduction
- think carefully about audience and purpose
- answer all parts of the question, covering each of the three bullet points in reasonable detail
- answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to make it an appropriate response written in the required style
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- use relevant details from the passage to demonstrate close reading
- develop and modify some of the ideas relevantly
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a) waking up on the morning of the resignation in paragraph 1, beginning ‘Unusually, the day I resigned...’
- (b) the partners and their reactions to Marc in paragraph 6, beginning ‘The partners were sitting...’.

Select **four** powerful words or phrases from **each** paragraph. Your choices should include imagery. Explain how each word or phrase is used effectively in the context.

Write about 200 to 300 words.

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

Responses to **Question 2** are expected to take the form of continuous prose in order to allow candidates to explore their choices fully and consider how language examples are working in context. The use of a grid or table format is not advised as this often results in duplication of material and forces responses to be expressed very briefly or in note form. Pleasingly, these were extremely rare. Similarly, brief notes jotted under the choices as a sub-heading are unlikely to allow for full consideration of the subtleties and complexity of the language choice being discussed. Some candidates readily appreciated the references to ‘wizards’. Most appreciated the unrealistic vein of the choices in **part (a)**, but few could clearly explain the significance of the theatrical/filmic allusions, nor grasp the gently humorous tone, which resulted in simple, often inaccurate meanings of the selection of choices, such as ‘fade’ rather than ‘fade in’ or ‘revealing rays of sunlight’ instead of ‘curtains part, revealing’. Many selected ‘alarm clock slowly fades in’, and therefore focused on the alarm clock rather than the scene coming into focus as in a film or on stage. As a result, many candidates performed better on **part (b)** than **part (a)**. Generally, vocabulary in these passages was understood by candidates, though there were some frequent misinterpretations, particularly with ‘whizzes’, ‘warbles’ and ‘imperceptibly’, and ‘council’ was sometimes taken literally rather than developing meanings that were rooted in the text. Choices that were most commonly well explained were ‘rainbow-coloured smoke’, ‘spring in my step’, ‘one grey partner to another’ and ‘hailed from different planets’.

The most successful responses to **Question 2** showed precise focus at word level and were engaged and assured in their handling of their appropriate choices. They considered meaning and effects throughout the response. Additionally, they selected carefully, including imagery, put the choices in context, and answered both parts of the question equally well. They were able, for example, to link some examples such as ‘cinematic fantasy’ and ‘curtains part, revealing’ to the idea of it being unrealistic and dramatic whereby linking it to the theatre. A few candidates picked up on the partners being old and wise, but ineffective in ‘like a council of elderly wizards on comfy chairs’.

The weakest responses had very few language choices, or offered few explanations beyond the very general. They sometimes adopted a ‘technique spotting’ approach by identifying literary techniques. This approach often led to rather generic comments about the effects of the techniques rather than the words themselves which limited the response. A feature of less effective responses was a list of choices at the beginning of the answer, followed by a general comment. Candidates, therefore, were not able to show how language works, as they were not writing about specific examples. A few misread **part (b)** and chose to focus on Marc, rather than the partners, which resulted in inappropriate choices, such as ‘well-travelled, impulsive, energetic’. Other candidates repeated the same explanation after each choice, for example, that the partners were old or surprised at Marc’s resignation. Some candidates offered single word choices only, not always selecting the most appropriate words, for example, offering ‘eyebrow’ instead of ‘his eyebrow curling imperceptibly upwards’ and did not explain it in the context of the passage. Occasionally candidates offered an extremely sparse number of choices or simply lifted whole sections of the paragraph without comment, therefore offering insufficient evidence of understanding for Band 5.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- focus on the question carefully to ensure that all your choices are relevant
- re-read the whole paragraph before making selections; choose the best and not those which happen to come first
- ensure you copy choices accurately – avoid careless errors with spelling which change meaning
- once you have identified the potentially relevant choices from each paragraph, select your strongest four from each to explore and explain
- make sure your choices are precise – do not copy out lines of text
- remember to put quotation marks around your choices – it makes it easier for you to focus on the exact wording
- if you are unsure about effects, try to begin by giving a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- avoid empty comments such as comments praising the writer for good use of language or using lots of similes and metaphors
- show your understanding in full – consider all the key words within your identified choice.

Question 3

According to Passage B, what challenges and difficulties might a young person wanting to qualify as a vet face, both in terms of training and the job itself?

Candidates appeared to find this task accessible with the majority scoring more than half marks. Most were clear that they needed to identify fifteen points from Passage B that were relevant to the question and to list them clearly, one numbered per line in note form in **part (a)**. Candidates can only be credited with a maximum of one point per line and any points added after line 15 are not credited unless replacing an answer crossed out earlier on. Selecting and identifying points meant that candidates had to read and plan their answers carefully both to avoid repetition and to organise their ideas sensibly. Better, more focused, answers typically scored two thirds or more of the available content marks. The second part of the task requires candidates to use their notes, adapting and organising them to write a summary in their own words. There were very few cases of wholesale copying.

The question had two strands: the challenges and difficulties a young person wanting to qualify as a vet might face in terms of training and in the job itself. The best responses organised their points to clearly acknowledge these two aspects. The best responses in **part (a)** were able to use the information in the passage and write the list mainly using their own words and without changing meaning. Weaker responses offered partial information, so could not be credited, such as 'draining' or 'competitive' without elaboration. Similarly, they listed 'fear of mistakes', rather than focusing on the element of professionalism that was also required to evidence clear understanding and secure the mark. Where candidates had not engaged fully with the task and/or attempted a more mechanical approach paraphrasing the material, repetitions were common, such as 'physically draining', 'long work shifts' and 'on call all night too'. In these examples, candidates needed to identify the essence of the idea rather than offer more than one example of the same idea. One word answers such as 'litigation' were insufficient to communicate an understanding that the challenge was a fear of such consequences.

Many responses confused the entrance criteria, training requirements and tribulations of training and in doing so struggled to provide a coherent, cogent summary. Weaker responses tended to copy chunks from the passage, with little realisation that they had to use their own words where appropriate. Often their summaries were unfinished. A few summaries were written in an incorrect form, with some more like a persuasive text, asking questions within the response. Exceeding the word count was a feature of weaker responses; this lack of concision was self-penalising.

There are no marks to be scored for Writing in **3(a)**. However, checking responses for accuracy in spelling and grammar is clearly essential if candidates are to avoid the potential danger of negating points through careless slips. Candidates should pay particular attention, for example, to correct any details that might change meaning; for example, some candidates wrote that just five years at vet school was required, whereas it was specified in the passage as needing to be at least five years.

The most successful responses in **Question 3(b)** used the notes from **3(a)**, re-ordering and regrouping the relevant information with a clear focus on the question. The best answers had considered carefully both the content and organisation of their answer, writing in fluent sentences, within the guidance for length and using their own words as far as possible. They avoided writing introductory statements and making comments, and concentrated on giving a factual objective summary.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- read the question carefully to identify the focus of the task
- re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify precisely potentially relevant content points
- select 15 distinct points that relate to the task
- list one relevant point on each numbered line in as few words as possible
- be very specific if referring to amounts, dates or acronyms, for example 'RCVS'
- when checking and editing your answers to **Question 3(a)**, consider whether each point you are making could be easily and precisely understood by someone who has not read the passage
- check that there are no repetitions or very similar points
- plan the structure of your response in **3(b)**, to organise and sequence content logically
- write informatively and do not comment on the content of the passage
- be careful to give only information from the passage that answers the question

- you can choose to use your own words in **3(a)** and must use your own words in **3(b)**, although you do not need to change every word
- do not add further numbered points in **3(a)** in addition to the 15 required
- if using a word-processor, number your points for **Question 3(a)**
- pay attention to the guidance for length in **3(b)**.