

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/13
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 1(c) 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 look for clues within the passage and to develop those ideas, 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 virtually 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 the majority of candidates 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.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Reread the first sentence. Give one word that suggests the journey is difficult for the bus.
[1 mark]

The majority of candidates gained the one mark available by choosing ‘desperately’, ‘swerving’ or ‘died’. The most common misunderstanding of this question was by those candidates who tried to refer to the rain storm. Whilst this could be regarded as a danger on the journey, it was not something that could be referred to by the choice of a single word; thus, candidates who made this mistake generally put ‘torrential’. However, ‘torrential’ required the word ‘rain’ to complete the sense and could not gain the mark on its own.

- (b) **Using your own words, explain what the writer means when they say that travelling by bus was ‘The most practical option’ (lines 5–6).** [2 marks]

The key to gaining the two marks for this question was to provide an explanation of ‘most practical’ and ‘option’. The first mark could be explained as, for example, the ‘easiest’, ‘most achievable’, ‘straightforward’ or ‘most suitable’. A number of candidates suggested that this meant the cheapest; whilst this might be the case, it is not part of the explanation given in the passage. The second mark required some attempt to suggest a synonym for ‘option’. Thus; ‘method’, ‘way’, ‘choice’ or ‘means of transport’ are all acceptable synonyms and are examples of successful attempts by a good number of candidates.

- (c) **Give the meaning of the underlined words in the following three phrases as the writer uses them in the passage. Then explain how the phrases help you understand the excitement that the narrator experiences on his trip.**

- (i) **‘every possible type of extreme and sublime landscape.’ (lines 8–9)** [1 mark]

- (ii) **Explanation of the whole phrase:** [2 marks]

A reasonable number of candidates gained the one mark by offering an explanation of ‘sublime’ as meaning ‘very beautiful’ or ‘stunning’. ‘Beautiful alone was not sufficient to gain the mark. The phrase suggested that there was a great variety of landscapes. Where candidates added some reference to this landscape being unique or dramatic, they would gain both marks for part (ii).

- (iii) **‘who drove their rickety contraptions at such speeds that the wheels would sometimes leave the ground.’ (lines 13–15)** [1 mark]

- (iv) **Explanation of the whole phrase:** [2 marks]

The majority of candidates correctly commented that ‘rickety’ suggested the busses were ‘shaky’, ‘unstable’ or were ‘falling apart’. A number went on to get 1 or 2 marks for their explanations of the phrase as a whole. These marks could be gained by commenting that the vehicles were not roadworthy and that they were being driven with no concern for safety.

- (v) **‘observing the gradual transformation from their lush lower slopes to the bleak high-altitude moorland.’ (lines 16–17)** [2 marks]

- (vi) **Explanation of the whole phrase:** [1 mark]

A number of candidates were able to explain ‘bleak’ successfully – ‘barren’ and ‘bare’ are examples of synonyms used by many of these candidates. Fewer candidates were able to gain two marks for an explanation of the phrase as a whole. To do so they had to comment on the slow and contrasting change from the green base of the hills to the isolated and sparse moors higher up. Some candidates gained one mark by an attempt to express the idea of contrast.

Overall, the attempts at this question showed a good focus on the requirements of the task with many candidates getting 3 or 4 marks and doing more than simply paraphrasing the original passage. As in previous sessions, the marks gained from (ii) often totalled fewer than for (i). Sometimes this was because answers to (ii) did no more than repeat those given for (i) or because a misunderstanding was carried through from (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 important to note that each phrase requires a different explanation, as some less successful responses gave very similar explanations for all three phrases. It is also 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 how the writing conveyed the writer’s excitement.

- (d) Give two main differences between travelling on buses in Ecuador and Peru (lines 18–23, ‘It was not ... by tape.’). [2 marks]

Many candidates gained one mark on this question by explaining that Ecuador has better, or better surfaced, roads. The other mark required the candidate to explain that it was possible to catch a bus more easily, or without a long wait. The points could also be obtained by explaining that the reverse was true in Peru. In fact, a good number of candidates gained both marks for this question.

- (e) Why does the writer suggest that reaching the mountain town of Chachapoyas by 10pm would only be achieved through good luck (paragraph 3, ‘It was not ...’). [2 marks]

A successful response could gain two marks by identifying two out of the three following points: that the journey was on a dirt track; that it was made in a battered bus or that there was a long climb over high passes.

- (f) Give two things the writer enjoys when reaching Chile’s Carretera Austral (paragraph 4, ‘The main challenges ...’). [2 marks]

The essential details to identify were that the writer enjoyed the brilliant blue conditions and the ‘forests, fjords and glaciers’.

- (g) Give two details the writer suggests make the journey through Patagonia less interesting (paragraph 5, ‘But, however much ...’). [2 marks]

Marks could be obtained by identifying that the journey through Patagonia was less interesting because it the scenery was ‘unchanging and flat’ and that it had never ending ‘straight roads.’

Question 2

Imagine you are the narrator of the events in Passage A. When you return home you are interviewed by a local radio station about your experiences on the journey.

Write the words of the interview.

In your interview you are asked the following three questions only:

- What were the particularly impressive sights on your journey?
- What were the best things about travelling by bus?
- What are your thoughts and feelings about the challenges you faced on this trip?

Base your ideas 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 bullet points.

Begin your interview with the first question.

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 the events of the passage from the writer’s point of view. The majority also understood the format and gave answers with an appropriate register and voice. The most successful responses avoided simply repeating the passage and made some attempt to express the ideas in different words.

Many candidates attempted to cover the three bullet points 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 wasn’t extensive lifting of material there was often little sense of candidates going beyond the details in the passage which obviously had a bearing on the detail included for the third bullet point.

Some successful responses covered the relevant ideas for the third bullet in the process of dealing with the first two questions. This meant that although they produced short answers to that third question, they had already made sufficient comment about the writer's thoughts and feelings about the challenges faced. This was acceptable in terms of gaining a high reading mark. Overall, the responses showed a very good understanding of the passage, the atmosphere of the place and the writer's thoughts and feelings about the experience of taking the trip with the most successful providing a quite convincing sense of the writer's excitement about the challenges and dangers along the way.

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 6 marks for both Content and Language.

[15 marks]

Question 3

(a) Notes

What do you learn about the features and the achievements of the first Zeppelin 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.

[10 marks]

This question was answered very well with many candidates making one point per line 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 – only one mark is awarded for each line regardless of the number of points it contains. Sometimes candidates included more than 10 marks worth of relevant points, but by putting more than one point on each line gained fewer than 10 marks. Similarly, only the first 10 lines are marked, so candidates who added further lines and points were still only credited for points included in the first 10 lines. It is essential on this question that the candidate reads the question clearly to enough 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 in the summary that follows.

(b) Summary

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about the features and the achievements of the first Zeppelin?

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

Your summary should not be more than 150 words.

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

[5 marks]

On the whole, although some students were able to achieve Band 3 for clear, concise and fluent summaries the majority of candidates' responses were in Band 2 (a response that may 'lack some clarity and organisation' or where there may be 'frequent lapses in organisation'). A small number were placed in Band 1 where the response might be marred by personal comments and unselective 'lifting' or where there might be a lack of organisation. The other cause of being placed in Band 1 was where the candidate had included irrelevant material, especially regarding the French airship La France. The most successful responses showed careful planning and organisation of material with some synthesis of points. The responses placed in Band 2 for writing often tended to be list-like with a series of loosely connected statements.

Concluding Comments

Most candidates completed the paper in some detail and the responses to **Question 2** in particular were of a generally good standard.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/21
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- used their own words appropriately and precisely when explaining, using and interpreting ideas
- avoided copying and/or lifting from either passage
- considered carefully the evidence of skills and understanding they needed to show for each of the three tasks
- paid attention to the guidance and instructions for each task
- returned to the text when necessary to clarify an idea or reconsider an important detail
- planned their ideas and the route through their answer before writing
- gave equal attention to all aspects of each question
- selected only the material that was most appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition
- edited their responses to correct any careless slips, incomplete ideas or unclear points
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose.

General comments

Candidates' responses for the most part indicated a familiarity with the format of the paper and that they had understood the demands of the three tasks in general terms at least. There were relatively few instances where all or part of a task had not been attempted, though opportunities to target higher marks were missed where candidates offered a restricted range of ideas, misread or over-looked details and / or dealt unevenly with each part of the task in hand. Better responses indicated an awareness of the need to use, rather than repeat or replay, the material from the text in order to answer the questions. The most successful answers were able to modify the material in the passages skilfully and use it to demonstrate understanding, paying attention to the specific focus of each task. Less successful responses were often over reliant on the wording and/or sequence of the text(s) and paid limited attention to the details of the question, providing less convincing evidence of skills and understanding as a result. Centres are reminded that simple paraphrasing, lifting and/or copying of the text should be avoided, whilst careful attention needs to be paid to key words in the task instructions.

Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible, and were for the most part able to finish the paper within the time allowed. Very occasionally, achievement was limited by a failure to follow the rubric and/or complete all aspects of a task – for example, by writing from the wrong perspective or for the wrong audience in **Question 1**, explaining fewer than eight choices in **Question 2** or writing far more than the maximum of 250 words advised for **Question 3**.

Successful answers were able to interpret and use details to demonstrate accurate reading in **Question 1**, offer explanation of meaning and effect in relation to appropriate selections from both paragraphs in **Question 2** and show understanding of carefully identified, relevant ideas which addressed both aspects of the focus of the task in **Question 3**.

Most **Question 1** responses had attempted to include ideas relevant to all three bullets of the task and candidates were generally aware of the need to reinterpret Peter's account of his experiences as a trainee guide from the viewpoint of the more experienced Head Guide, Chris, offering advice to new trainees as described. Many candidates were able to respond appropriately to the passage, with the best adopting the role of Head Guide convincingly and demonstrating a particularly strong sense of purpose and approach. Responses across the cohort covered a wide range of levels of achievement, with mid-range responses often missing opportunities through more mechanical and/or generalised treatment of the text. Less successful responses either included only brief reference to the passage or repeated Peter's narrative with minimal modification. Along with unselective copying, reliance on the language of the passage and/or the wording of any introduction in order to communicate ideas 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 specified paragraphs and offer precise comments in relation to these choices. To aim for higher bands, candidates should explore and explain in some detail the meanings and effects of the examples of interesting or powerful language use they identify, demonstrating understanding of the writer's purpose. Most were able to suggest potentially useful examples for analysis, though a number of candidates were not sufficiently clear or careful in the examination of their choices. Some had paid limited attention to the focus of each of **parts (a)** and **(b)**, and as a result missed opportunities. A number repeated the language of the choices in their explanations, and/or offered generalised comments, diluting evidence of understanding as a result.

In **Question 3** most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of some relevant ideas and some understanding of the requirements of the task. All points on the mark scheme were covered over the range of answers seen, though repetition of aspects of the same idea from an earlier part of the text and/or inclusion of material not relevant to the focus of the question meant opportunities were missed by some candidates to target higher marks. Some candidates dealt with only one aspect of the question, limiting the range of ideas they could include. Where responses were most successful, candidates had made a consistent attempt to use their own words, to keep explanations concise and to organise their ideas helpfully. Less well focused responses were over reliant on copying from the text, with minimal/no rewording or reorganisation of the original. Candidates are not expected to change all key words or terms in their prose response. They should not however lift whole phrases and/or sentences from the text, or rely on simply listing ideas in the order of the passage. Indiscriminate copying of the passage, repetition and adding comment or example should all be avoided as these do not allow candidates to successfully address the selective summary task.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, 20 per cent of the marks available are for Writing – divided equally 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, errors that impede communication of ideas and awkward expression. Candidates should be aware that unclear style will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Leaving sufficient time to edit and correct responses is advisable.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

You are the Head Guide, Chris (Peter's boss). You are responsible for training safari guides. When a group of new trainee guides arrives at the camp, you give a talk to prepare them for what lies ahead.

Write the words of your talk.

In your talk, you should:

- describe the range of attractions Idube camp and the area around it have to offer and how these might appeal to guests
- explain what being a trainee guide is like – the kind of activities they will be asked to do and what they should and should not do as trainees
- suggest what makes a good safari guide, the challenges of the job and the personal qualities they will need to develop

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

Begin your talk, ‘Welcome to Idube Camp...’

Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had understood the passage and task in at least general terms. Many offered extended detailed responses, attempting to rework and develop the material with their audience in mind and engaging with both task and text. Where content had been planned in advance, and the route through the answer considered beforehand, answers were often able to include a good range of relevant ideas – both explicit and implicit – in relation to all three bullets. Where responses relied too heavily on tracking through the text, replaying the passage, answers were less well focused and often simply repeated rather than developed ideas. The least successful responses copied sections of the text with minimal modification and/or included inaccuracies as a result of misreading key details and information.

The most convincing responses to **Question 1** showed evidence of candidates having revisited the passage to reconsider and interpret Peter’s narrative account of events for the audience of new trainees that Head Guide Chris was addressing. Many made good use of the guidance in the bullets to help them identify and then organise the ideas and detail they might usefully include and most had used the prompt offered as a helpful starting point for their response. Others made less effective use of time by offering overlong introductory paragraphs where Chris outlined in general terms what he would include in his speech – often almost verbatim repetitions of the task instructions.

The first bullet of the question invited candidates to outline the range of attractions of Idube Camp and to suggest how these might appeal to guests. Better answers had identified the basic information from the introduction to the text and gone on to interpret and support that with useful detail from the passage, extending and developing ideas to consider the nature of the appeal of each attraction. Almost all answers recognised that guests were offered drives, walks and dinner nights though did not always read sufficiently carefully to note that the dinner nights were at a location a little way away from the main camp. Less successful responses misread/misused details, for example to suggest that dinner nights appealed to guests because they were cheap and/or that the guests would be transported for safari drives in an ageing, decrepit truck. Many answers identified the chance to see a range of animals as an appealing prospect, though suggestions of petting zoo opportunities and/or feeding baby lions were speculative/outside of the passage and could not be credited as evidence of reading. Likewise, the suggestion that guests would book a holiday at Idube to sunbathe on the beach could not be supported by the text.

Where candidates had attempted to just paraphrase the passage rather than read purposefully and identify ideas for inclusion before they began their response, opportunities for linking and developing suggestions in the text were often missed. Many candidates however did make good use of the guidance within each bullet to help focus their response and, in bullet two, were able to include a range of potentially relevant ideas. Most had understood that the ‘walking’ trainees needed to learn related to the skills and knowledge needed to lead a guided walk. Where evidence of reading skills was less secure, some answers had tried to link learning to ‘walk’ with the advice ‘don’t run’ – instructing new trainees to slow down around camp.

Rather than consider the nature of the activities trainee guides might be required to undertake, responses in the mid-range often simply repeated Peter’s account of what he had to do and offered long lists of items loaded on to the truck. Where details had been less carefully considered some answers went on to suggest that trainees would have to transport heavy loads of drink by wheelbarrow through to Bush Camp and/or find shortcuts through from one camp to the other – neither of which was trainee Peter supposed to do. More secure responses were able to include suggestions in line with the implications of Peter’s reflective narrative for example that trainees should never walk off into the bush on their own or be tempted to try to find a shortcut, explaining the potential dangers of such actions.

In dealing with ideas related to bullet three, most answers were able to make use of the advice not to run when faced with a wild animal, though many relied on repeating it word for word. Answers tracking the text often included the point in passing more than once and missed opportunities to make explicit other suggestions. For example, the ideas that guides might need to be good communicators, able to deal with excitable tourists and observant/able to interpret the warning signs around them, were picked up in more competent responses. Where answers had taken a mechanical approach to the task and/or relied on lifting from the text with the occasional own word substitution, evidence of any general understanding often had to be balanced with that of misreading. A sense of context and/or some understanding of the whole text was evident in answers that were reasonable or better. On occasion, the words substituted into lifts from the passage in the weakest responses changed the facts – for example, the suggestion that ‘tigers often walked

in the soft sand' was incorrect. Candidates are reminded that they need to work to understand the ideas in the text rather than look to lift and/or copy sections of text with minimal modification.

Some answers moved too far from the text when suggesting what makes a good safari guide – forgetting that they needed to show evidence of their Reading skills by using ideas in the passage. For example, some included suggestions of extreme survival skills they imagined they might need if separated for long periods of time from camp – a possibility not hinted at in the text – and/or offered long lists of general personal characteristics that might, or might not be, relevant without any clear indication of how or why. The best answers had often recognised that the narrator's viewpoint was distinct from that of 19-year-old Peter and were able to suggest that a good safari guide might well have learned from experience (including their mistakes).

In creating a voice for Head Guide Chris, stronger responses had often picked up on the suggestion that he might need to curb the enthusiasm of new trainees a little and caution against over-confidence. Better responses had interpreted the tone of his comment 'You'll need to learn how to walk' and applied their reading of it to the voice they created – with some responses adopting a stern tone. The best had often decided on a more measured attitude, in keeping with the role model position of Head Guide and carefully contrasted with the impetuous and impatient attitude of new trainee Peter. Stronger responses had recognised the suggestion in the narrator's voice that young Peter had had much to learn. On occasion less effective writing contained some awkward expression, often as a result of insecure vocabulary choices and/or a failure to read back to check for the sense of what they had written – for example, suggesting that quests 'can see animals inside vehicles'. In the weakest answers, lifting in relation to all three bullets was an issue, with copying of sections of text not uncommon. This affected evidence of both Reading and Writing skills. Meanwhile, answers at the top end were often presented in a firm but fair style and able to evidence a strong sense of purpose and approach in their use of ideas from the passage.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- remember that the response to reading task is asking you to adopt a different perspective to that of the text – for example by writing from the point of view of a character other than the narrator
- consider the audience and purpose for your response and keep these in mind as you write
- decide on the voice and style you want to create and maintain in your answer
- read the whole text carefully, more than once, and return to reconsider any points you are unsure of
- give equal attention to each aspect of each of the three bullet points – the bullet points are designed to help you to identify relevant ideas in the text
- plan a route through your answer beforehand – you can choose not to follow the order of the bullet points and/or link ideas from each
- express ideas from the text which are relevant to your answer using your own words – do not copy from the passage
- try to extend and develop relevantly a number of the ideas you include rather than simply repeat details – for example, by explaining justification or reasons for any advice/ideas offered
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response
- do not waste time by counting the exact number of words in your answer – the number of words suggested by the question is a guide to help you plan your time, not a limit.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a) Wusani and her experience at Bush Camp in paragraph 2, beginning 'Setting up meant ... '
- (b) Peter's journey to the Bush Camp in paragraph 9, beginning 'After struggling ... '

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.

Responses in **Question 2** needed to have identified a range of relevant examples of language use for discussion in each half of the task, paying attention to the particular focus of each part of the question: Wusani and her experience at Bush Camp in **part (a)** and Peter's journey in **part (b)**. Where answers were not focused on the task as set opportunities were missed to evidence understanding. Strong answers offered clear analysis of relevant selections, often beginning with explanations of meaning and moving on to

consider effect, and were able to demonstrate understanding of how the writer was using language in each case.

Where candidates considered all of the key words in longer choices they avoided those more general comments of weaker answers which offered only partial explanation of the phrase as a whole. The strongest responses considered words individually as well as how they worked within the phrase and in the context of the description as a whole. Rather than selecting the first four choices in each half they came across or the most ‘obvious’ literary devices, successful answers often set out to identify the relevant selections that they felt best able to explain.

In **part (a)**, some less focused answers attempted to discuss choices that were not related to Wusani, such as ‘cool tranquillity’ and ‘enjoying the shade’ and missed opportunities to target higher bands as a result. In **part (b)**, some answers selected only part of a longer image and/or selected the whole image but only explained one word from it, limiting the evidence of understanding offered. For example, a number of answers offered explanations of ‘sense of peace’ as meaning calm or tranquillity, though fewer went on to explain the image as a whole and many included the word ‘mingled’ in their selections without attempting to explore its meaning and/or effect. Repetition of the vocabulary of the text in the explanations offered in **part (b)** was common in less successful answers, whilst more successful responses were able to offer explanations of precise meaning in their own words that then lead them onto a suggestion of effect. Some for example, considered how ‘met’ and ‘mingled’ were suggestive of a polite social gathering and/or how ‘undercurrent’ might suggest Peter was in danger of being carried away by his sense of adventure.

Where the meaning of words was considered carefully in context, candidates were often able to go on to suggest something of the effect and better answers ensured that they had considered all key words within choices. For example, in **part (a)**, having considered the precise meaning in context of choices such as ‘unpleasantly surprised’ and ‘gravity’s pull resolved the issue’ many candidates went on to suggest both the deliberate understatement in Peter’s description and the cartoon-like humour of the situation. Likewise, in considering how the meaning of ‘improbable’ combined with ‘perched’, many responses were able to suggest the intended humorous effect of picturing the large figure of the chef balanced precariously on a branch like some kind of over-grown bird. Meanwhile, opportunities to target higher marks were missed where meaning was not carefully considered or explained – for example, suggestions that ‘ominous creaking’ meant the approach of something dangerous like a lion or that the truck in which Wusani was travelling was haunted were not accurate and could not be credited.

Candidates are reminded it is the quality of their analysis that attracts marks. Answers that simply list literary devices used and/or copy from each paragraph without careful consideration of the examples to be discussed are not likely to evidence the skills and understanding necessary to target higher marks in a language question.

A number of weaker answers relied on simply spotting literary devices and as a result struggled to interpret meaning or effect. For example, whilst many candidates who selected it were able to offer credible interpretations the description of the lourie bird’s call ‘long drawn out hag-like rasp’, others struggled to comment as a consequence of having simply identified it as ‘an example of a simile’. Taking time to select from the full range of potential choices those about which they felt most able to comment, rather than simply trying to spot literary devices, would have helped a number of candidates who offered only thin or inappropriate comment.

Many candidates were able to provide satisfactory evidence of skills and understanding in either one part of the task or the other and might have achieved higher marks by extending their explanations to consider ‘how’ or ‘why’ the words chosen were creating the general or basic effect they claimed. Most candidates were able to show that they recognised at least some potentially interesting examples of language use and could begin to offer some relevant comment. 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. Answers offering less careful or considered choices sometimes prejudiced the evidence of understanding they were able to demonstrate in relation to meaning and effect, for example by attempting to discuss selections such as ‘slugging through soft sand’ or ‘improperly perched’.

Better answers focused on exploring and explaining each of their choices in detail, offering some high quality analysis in each half of the question. Selections in **Question 2** need to be clear and deliberate – helping to focus the analysis that follows. Long quotations with only the first and last words identified are less likely to be useful and often result in very thin general comments at best. On occasion, candidates selected phrases containing a few words and then went on to unpick the separate elements of these with some success.

Others narrowed the focus down to single words and then reassembled the image. Both were potentially useful approaches where careful explanation was offered and replaying of the language of the original as part of the commentary was avoided.

Opportunities were missed in some answers, such as 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. For example, a number of answers discussed the use of ‘adrenaline’ but missed the chance to consider the effect of ‘fuelled’. Similarly, some candidates having identified ‘branches met overhead, offering cool shade’ limited their discussion to either ‘met’ or ‘offering’ rather than consider each in turn and suggest how they might work together.

Planning of relevant ideas ahead of writing would have helped some candidates to avoid empty phrases such as ‘the writer’s use of language makes the reader want to know what happens next’ or ‘this helps us to imagine the scene’. Unless the answer goes on to suggest exactly how and in what ways the writer is doing this, such comment can offer a false sense of security and take up valuable examination time unprofitably. Stronger responses, offering considered and careful analysis focused on language use in both parts of the question, were often able to build to a useful overview of how the language was working and evidence clear understanding.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- once you have identified the potentially relevant choices to answer **part (a)** and **part (b)**, select your strongest four from each paragraph to explore and explain
- make sure your choices are precise and accurate – do not copy out lines of text, miss out key words or include only part of the choice you wish to discuss
- avoid empty comments such as comments that ‘the writer has used lots of great adjectives’
- show your understanding in full – consider each of the key words within your identified choice
- if you are unsure of effect, start by explaining the precise meaning in context of the word(s) you have identified
- try to explore and explain the connotations and associations of the words within choices to help you to suggest the effect the writer might have wanted to create
- allow time to edit your answer – for example to add in further detail and/or correct errors to help show you have read carefully and understood.

Question 3

What were the problems for wildlife reserves and their surrounding communities in 2010 and what was being done to help tackle these problems, according to Passage B?

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

Your summary should not be more than 250 words.

Candidates who addressed the task successfully often showed evidence of having planned beforehand both the content and a route through their answer. They had identified those points that were potentially relevant to the dual focus of the question (the problems and what was being done to tackle them) and had reflected on their potential answers to refine their ideas and avoid excess. For example, they were able to group examples usefully together under one umbrella point, identify implied points and/or avoid repetition of ideas or inclusion of unnecessary detail. Successful answers did not rely on the structure or language of Passage B to communicate ideas and considered carefully the evidence of skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate for a selective summary task. Less effective responses had often relied on trying to offer a précis of the whole text and/or tried to paraphrase the original or shadow it, substituting (sometimes inappropriate) vocabulary for individual words. The least effective answers adopted a cut and paste approach, copying sections from the original and/or were almost entirely reliant on the language of the text.

On occasion, incorrect and/or incomplete lifting from the text also served to dilute evidence of understanding in potentially stronger answers that would have benefitted from careful editing. Reading back through their answer afterwards to make sure that it would make sense as a piece of informative writing for a reader who had not read the original passage would have helped a number of candidates target higher marks. Often answers began well and showed some understanding of relevant ideas but lost focus, for example by repeating information and/or including unnecessary details such as statistics to exemplify their point. A few less successful answers showed evidence of having misread details of the task – for example by offering

comment from outside the text in relation to African tourism in general rather than information from the text. Misreading of details in the text diluted evidence of understanding in some answers – for example, it was not correct to suggest that ‘wildebeest are moved each year to the Mara plains as a result of tourism’ or that a solution is to ‘pay camp owners depending on how many tourists visit’.

Where candidates had paid careful attention to the task as set, they aimed for concise and well organised answers using their own vocabulary where practicable and appropriate to help clarify meaning for their reader. They demonstrated their understanding of relevant ideas within the context of the whole text and avoiding lifting of more general comment such as that the ‘wilderness is at tipping point’ or that ‘the planet’s most varied mammal and bird population is facing a crucial decade’ and/or repetition of strings of similar examples in favour of clear, distinct points conveying the nature of the problems.

Strong answers did not repeat the separate details related to the effect on animal numbers but rather organised their response to connect and summarise that information. Competent answers showed they had focused on the specifics of the task as set and did not include detailed accounts of Boynton’s trek or the precise numbers of beds added to lodges since the early 80s. Candidates producing the most effective answers were able to demonstrate that they had understood a wide range of relevant ideas, explaining them in their own words and skilfully selecting and organising points to offer an overview. On occasion, potentially effective answers lost sight of the need for concision in a selective summary task and significant excess arose as a result of continuing to write way beyond the maximum of 250 words advised in the task guidance.

Where answers copied wholesale from the text with minimal or no modification, or offered a response which communicated only a few relevant ideas, candidates missed opportunities to target higher marks. The best responses showed that candidates understood the need to be accurate, clear and concise in the use of their own words when summarising relevant material from the passage. Stronger answers were careful to recast information, organise it helpfully, and use their own vocabulary where feasible without changing or blurring the original idea. For example, better answers reorganised the material rather than relying on the order of the text – avoiding repetition by doing so and establishing useful links such as that between the increase in permanent lodges and the permanent settlements of the Maasai. Stronger answers were able to offer their own vocabulary consistently, though in the mid-range some lifting of phrases was common with fewer candidates offering confident alternatives for ‘camp owners guarantee payment every month to local people’, or ‘soaring visitor numbers have severely damaged roads and grasslands’.

In low to mid-range answers, incomplete awareness or understanding of why they might want to avoid lifting meant that some candidates tended to concentrate on substituting words and/or altering word order without careful selection of the central idea – diluting evidence of understanding of both task and text. Candidates need to be aware that simply moving word order around within a sentence or replacing just one word is not a short cut to providing secure evidence of their reading skills and understanding. Candidates need to work to show understanding of ideas rather than simply track the passage making minimal changes and/or slotting in substituted words. The best answers were clear, concise, largely accurate and well organised.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify the potentially relevant content points
- you can use spare pages in your answer booklet to plan your ideas ahead of writing your response – draw a neat line through your planning afterwards
- identify and discard any ideas or extra details which are not relevant to the focus of the question
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to check they are distinct and complete – for example, whether there are repeated ideas which could be combined or ideas which need further explanation
- check you understand each idea you use and aim to explain it in your own words
- organise and sequence your ideas helpfully for your reader – do not rely on repeating ideas in the order of the passage
- write informatively and accurately, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- do not add details, examples or comment to the content of the passage
- avoid repetition of points
- when checking and editing your answer, consider whether each point you are making could be easily and precisely understood by someone who has not read the passage
- though you do not need to count every word, you should keep in mind the guidance to write ‘no more than 250 words’ as a reminder in the selective summary of the need for concision.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/23
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- used their own words appropriately and precisely when explaining, using and interpreting ideas
- avoided copying and/or lifting from either passage
- considered carefully the evidence of skills and understanding they needed to show for each of the three tasks
- paid attention to the guidance and instructions for each task
- returned to the text when necessary to clarify an idea or reconsider an important detail
- planned their ideas and the route through their answer before writing
- gave equal attention to all aspects of each question
- selected only the material that was most appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition
- edited their responses to correct any careless slips, incomplete ideas or unclear points
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose.

General comments

Candidates' responses indicated some familiarity with the format of the paper and the general demands of the three tasks. On occasion, opportunities to target higher marks were missed where candidates offered a restricted range of ideas, misread details and/or dealt unevenly with each part of the task. Stronger responses demonstrated an awareness of the need to use, rather than repeat, the material from the passages in order to answer the questions. Successful answers were able to modify the material in the passages and use it to show understanding, remaining focused on the specific demands of each task. Less successful responses were often over reliant on the wording and/or sequence of the text(s). Some paid limited attention to the details of the question, providing less convincing evidence of skills and understanding as a result. Centres are reminded that simple paraphrasing and/or copying of the text should be avoided and that candidates should take note of key words in the task instructions.

Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible, though there were a few instances where all or part of a task had not been attempted. Occasionally, achievement was limited by a failure to follow the rubric and/or complete all aspects of a task – for example, adopting an inappropriate register or stance in **Question 1**, explaining fewer than 4 choices in each/either part of **Question 2** or writing far more than the maximum of 250 words advised for **Question 3**.

Most **Question 1** responses attempted all three bullets of the task and were aware of the need to interpret the recent events, reactions to the blockade and the incident at the Aljafars' from the wider perspective of a journalist writing the newspaper report. Many candidates were able to respond appropriately to the passage, with the best demonstrating a particularly strong sense of purpose and approach to create thorough and engaging reports. Responses across the cohort covered a wide range of levels of achievement, with mid-range responses often missing opportunities through more mechanical treatment of the text. Less successful responses sometimes repeated the narrative with minimal modification. Along with unselective copying, reliance on the language of the text/introduction to communicate ideas is an indicator of less secure understanding and to be avoided.

For **Question 2** candidates need to consider relevant examples of words and phrases from each of the two specified paragraphs and offer precise, focused comments in relation to these choices. To target higher bands, candidates should explore and explain in some detail the meanings and effects of the examples of interesting or powerful language selected to demonstrate sound understanding of the writer's purpose. Most were able to identify potentially useful selections for analysis, though a number of candidates were not sufficiently clear or careful in the examination of their choices to evidence secure understanding, for example suggesting that "sluggish" means to be like a slug'. Where answers repeated the language of the choices and/or offered generalised comments evidence of understanding was diluted a result. A small number of candidates selected from an incorrect paragraph or focused only on one rather than both paragraphs.

In **Question 3** most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of some relevant ideas. Though all points on the mark scheme were covered over the range of answers seen, opportunities were missed to target higher marks, often as a result of repetition of aspects of the same idea from the early part of the text, such as 'people think bottled water is healthier than tap water', and/or inclusion of material not relevant to the focus of the question. Where responses were most successful, candidates had made a consistent attempt to use their own words, to keep explanations concise and to organise their ideas helpfully. Less well focused responses were over reliant on copying from the text, with minimal / no rewording or reorganisation of the original. Candidates are not expected to change all key words or terms in their prose response, and did not need to search for synonyms for terms such as 'recycled'. They should not however lift whole phrases and/or sentences from the text, or rely on simply listing ideas in the order of the passage. Indiscriminate copying of the passage, repetition and adding comment or example should all be avoided as these do not allow candidates to successfully address the selective summary task.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to keep in mind that 20 per cent of the available marks are for Writing, divided equally 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, errors that impede communication of ideas and awkward expression. Candidates should be aware that unclear style will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. It is advisable for candidates to leave sufficient time to edit and correct their responses.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

You are a journalist writing for the local weekly newspaper reporting on recent events and reactions to them. Two days after the incident at Aljafar's property, it is announced that the blockade has been lifted and water rationing is no longer required. Meanwhile, Aljafar and his wife have complained to the authorities.

Write the newspaper report.

In your newspaper report, you should:

- describe conditions during the blockade and the effect on the population of the island and its economy
- outline how the incident at the Aljafars' came about – what happened and why
- explain the nature of the Aljafars' complaints and how far they are justified.

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

Begin your newspaper report, 'Recent events ...'

The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate that they had understood the passage and task in at least general terms. Many offered extended responses, reworking and attempting to develop the material with their audience in mind and engaging with both task and text. Where responses relied too heavily on simply tracking through the text, replaying the passage, answers were less well focused and often repeated ideas without development. The least successful responses copied sections of the text, particularly from the italicised introduction in the Reading Booklet Insert, with minimal modification and/or included inaccuracies as a result of misreading key details and information, such as suggesting that 'the blockade had resulted in a high number of deaths' or 'the residents had left the island'.

The most convincing responses to Question 1 showed evidence of candidates having returned to the passage to select appropriate details to describe the impact of the conditions during the blockade, the circumstances surrounding the incident at the Aljafars', and the extent of the Aljafars' complaints. Many made good use of the guidance in the bullets to help them identify and then organise the ideas they might include and used the prompt offered as a helpful starting point for their response. Some invented useful headlines. 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 focused on more generic points, offering for example extended descriptions of the Aljafars' house, including the cellar, at the expense of other more relevant ideas. This limited 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.

The first bullet of the question invited candidates to describe conditions during the blockade and the effect on the population of the island and its economy. Almost all answers recognised that the island was suffering from a shortage of supplies and water rationing. Similarly, most answers included the effects on human health, particularly regarding the tiredness of the children. However, where answers relied on simply paraphrasing the passage rather than reworking ideas to address the task many missed opportunities to show evidence of close reading by developing ideas linked to the conditions during the blockade. Stronger answers recognised implications and were able to develop ideas in relation to a loss of revenue. Less successful answers showed signs of not having read closely or planned out their ideas by using details incorrectly – for example by referring to the blockade as a 'blockage' or reporting that it was still on-going.

Many candidates did make good use of the guidance within each bullet to help focus their response and in bullet two were able to include a range of potentially relevant ideas. Most had understood that the narrator and Marchand had met Aljafar and recognised his non-compliance with the request to conserve water. On occasions, there was a lack of attention paid to the sequencing of events, particularly regarding the two visits to the Aljafars' house and when the blockade was lifted. For example, the second visit to the Aljafars' house was often described as being the night of the first visit, rather than 'days later'. The reference to 'two days' was also often used to refer to the time between the second visit and the Aljafars' complaints being made. Those who relied on mechanical lifting from the text sometimes diluted evidence of reading skills and understanding through incorrect copying, for example by reporting that Marchand and the narrator were laying 'on the dead grass' and pushing their 'lips against the cool water', despite the fact the water had been removed from the pool by Aljafar.

When dealing with the third bullet of the task, most answers focused on the theft, trespassing and damage to the Aljafars' property. These were often covered superficially or misread, with candidates commenting on the questionable morality of the Aljafars' actions, rather than explaining what their complaints were. Some candidates referred to these when addressing bullet two in a narrative style as part of the neighbours' visit to the house, rather than discussing them in terms of the nature of the Aljafars' complaints in relation to bullet three. Weaker responses tended to offer some general justification for the actions of the villagers and Aljafar and his wife, occasionally offering some supporting detail, though were unable to develop their answers beyond this. Conversely, a common feature was for many candidates to adhere to the prompts of the question, but then to continue to offer a judicial review of the case and the merits and actions of both sides, including what courses of action should be taken against them. There was some evidence of confident, plausible development of ideas, such as how Marchand spoke respectfully to Aljafar during his first visit, and that Aljafar had also committed a crime by ignoring the water rationing.

Stronger answers showed evidence that candidates had decided beforehand on a voice for their journalist and kept their readers in mind throughout, although a few candidates wrote as either Marchand or his neighbour, and in both cases, in the first person, so the style and structure of a newspaper report was not consistently maintained. On occasion less effective writing contained some awkward expression, for example as a result of insecure vocabulary choices. In the weakest answers lifting in relation to all three bullets was an issue, with copying of sections of text not uncommon and affecting evidence of both Reading and Writing skills. Most candidates chose to follow the order of the bullets to structure their response, though needed if doing so to guard against the danger of repetition. Efficient planning allowed stronger answers to address this and to adopt a convincing and consistently appropriate style from the start.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- read the whole text carefully, more than once, identifying the key ideas and details you can adapt for use in your answer
- consider how the response to reading task is asking you to adopt a different perspective to that of the passage – for example by writing from a point in time after the events described
- decide on the voice and style you want to create and maintain in your answer
- consider the audience and purpose for your response before you begin writing
- give equal attention to ideas relevant to each of the three bullet points
- express ideas from the text which are relevant to your answer using your own words
- do not simply repeat details from the text – try to extend and develop relevantly a number of the ideas you include, for example by reflecting on events and making judgements
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response
- do not waste time counting the exact number of words in your response – the number of words suggested by the question is a guide and not a word limit.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a) the city and people in paragraph 12, beginning ‘Days later, ...’
(b) Aljafar, the cellar and its contents in paragraph 30, beginning ‘We heard him ...’

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

Responses in Question 2 needed to identify a range of relevant, precise examples of language for discussion and provide sufficiently focused and clear analysis of these in order to evidence understanding of how the writer was using language in each case. Where the meaning of words was considered carefully in context, candidates were often able to go on to suggest something of the effect and better answers ensured that they had considered all key words within choices. Opportunities to target higher marks were missed where meaning was not explained and/or selections had not been carefully considered beforehand. Rather than selecting the first four choices in each half they came across or the most ‘obvious’ literary devices, successful answers often set out to explore those words and phrases they felt best able to explain. Some of the strongest answers showed evidence of candidates having identified many of the potential choices from each paragraph in a planning stage before beginning their response and then selecting from their original list those they wanted to tackle.

Candidates are reminded it is the quality of their analysis which attracts marks. Answers which simply list literary devices used and/or copy from each paragraph without careful consideration of the examples to be discussed are not likely to evidence the skills and understanding necessary to target higher marks in a language question.

A number of weaker answers relied on simply spotting literary devices and as a result struggled to interpret meaning or effect. For example whilst many candidates who selected it were able to offer credible interpretations of ‘attached ourselves to lips-first like ticks to a sheep’ and what that suggested, others struggled to comment as a consequence of having simply identified it as an example of a simile ‘because it used the word like’ with little understanding of how the image was working. Taking time to select from the full range of potential choices those about which they felt most able to comment, rather than simply feature spotting, would have helped a number of candidates who offered only thin or inappropriate comment.

Repeating the language of the original in their explanations was a feature of some partially effective explanations. Likewise, potentially relevant comments were offered in general terms rather than linked to/evidenced by precise quotation from the text. The best answers were able to explore connotations and suggestions of words within the choices they had selected as well as go on to consider how exactly those created a particular image/effect for the reader.

Many candidates were able to provide satisfactory evidence of skills and understanding in either one part of the task or the other and might have aimed for higher marks by extending their explanations to consider ‘how’ or ‘why’ the words chosen were creating the general or basic effect they claimed. The majority of candidates were able to show that they recognised at least some potentially interesting examples of language use and could begin to offer some relevant comment. 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 exploring and explaining each of their choices in detail, offering some high quality analysis in each half of the question. They avoided repetition of very similar comments in relation to more than one choice and did more than simply identify features, with the best recognising and explaining imagery with some imagination. There were various alternative explanations offered for example when dealing with ‘as if its unlubricated gears and belts had seized up’. Comments likened the town to an unoiled machine that was not functioning and the futility of the situation. Many referred to ‘crumbling, turning to dust and salt’ as representing the fragility of the people and linked it to the weakness of the people as ‘a strong wind could scatter them into clouds of dead skin’. Others missed opportunities to profit from their general understanding and go on to explore and explain each choice specifically, instead offering only partial or very weak effects, for example in repeated comments such as ‘this shows they were tired/lacked energy’.

There were plenty of potentially useful choices relating to both the description of the city and people in paragraph 12, and Aljafar, the cellar and its contents in paragraph 30. Where candidates had not paid close attention to the detail of the task less relevant choices were sometimes considered. In relatively rare cases, candidates selected from the wrong paragraph and/or offered only two choices from each paragraph rather than the four from each suggested and consequently offered more limited evidence of Reading skills. At times, potentially useful choices were not fully explored or explained and opportunities missed as a result. For example, ‘ghostly’ was frequently explained in relation to the deserted town, rather than applying it to its inhabitants. ‘Torpid’ was rarely explained, and ‘cavernous cellar’ was commonly simply related to a cave.

Selections in Question 2 need to be clear and deliberate – helping to focus the analysis which follows. Long quotations with only the first and last words identified are less likely to be useful and often result in very thin general comments at best. On occasion, candidates selected phrases containing a few words and then went on to unpick the separate elements of these with some success. Others narrowed the focus down to single words and then reassembled the image. Both were potentially useful approaches where careful explanation was offered and replaying of the language of the original as part of the commentary was avoided. Repetition of the words of the choice within the explanation offered was a feature of a number of lower range answers – often an indication that the meaning of the vocabulary selected had not been fully understood.

Opportunities were missed in some answers, such as 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. For example, a number of answers discussed the use of ‘fumbling’ but missed the chance to consider the effect of ‘theatrically’ and how Aljafar unconvincingly attempted to deceive the neighbours.

Planning of relevant ideas ahead of writing would have helped some candidates to avoid general phrases such as ‘the writer’s use of interesting adjectives sets the scene’. Unless the answer goes on to suggest exactly how and in what ways the writer is doing this, such comment can offer a false sense of security and take up valuable examination time unprofitably. Stronger responses, offering considered and careful analysis focused on language use in both parts of the question, were often able to build to a useful overview of how the language was working and evidence clear understanding.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- once you have identified the potentially relevant choices to answer part a and part b, select your strongest four from each paragraph to explore and explain
- make sure your choices are precise and accurate – do not copy out lines of text, miss out key words or include only part of the choice you wish to discuss
- if you are unsure of effect, start by explaining the precise meaning in context of the word(s) you have identified
- show your understanding in full – consider each of the key words within your identified choice
- avoid general comments such as ‘the writer has used great imagery’
- avoid repeating the wording of the text as an explanation of effect, for example, ‘this shows that the adults were dehydrated’

- try to explore and explain the connotations and associations of the words within choices to help you to suggest the precise effect the writer might have wanted to create
- allow time to edit your answer – for example to add in further detail and/or correct errors to help show you have read carefully and understood.

Question 3

Why has drinking bottled water become so popular and what problems does the consumption of bottled water cause, according to Passage B?

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

Your summary should not be more than 250 words.

Candidates who addressed the task successfully often showed evidence of having planned beforehand both the content and route through their answer. They had identified those points that were potentially relevant to the focus of the question (why drinking bottled water has become so popular and what problems the consumption of bottled water causes) and reflected on their potential answers to refine their ideas and avoid excess. For example, they were able to group examples usefully together under one umbrella point, identify implied points and/or avoid repetition of ideas or inclusion of unnecessary detail. Successful answers did not rely on the structure or language of the text to communicate ideas and considered carefully the evidence of skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate for the selective summary task. Less effective responses had often relied on trying to offer a précis of the whole text and/or tried to paraphrase the original or shadow it, substituting (sometimes inappropriate) vocabulary for individual words. The weakest answers adopted a cut and paste approach, copying sections from the original and/or were almost entirely reliant on the language of the text.

On occasion, incorrect and/or incomplete lifting from the text also served to dilute evidence of understanding in potentially stronger answers which would have benefitted from careful editing. Reading back through their answer afterwards to make sure that it would both make sense as a piece of informative writing for a reader who had not read the original passage and summarised the key information that reader would need to know in relation to the increased popularity and problems associated with water bottles would have helped a number of candidates achieve higher marks. Often answers began well and showed some understanding of relevant ideas but lost focus, for example by repeating information and/or the inclusion of unnecessary detail, such as writing about water being transported from Helsinki to Saudi Arabia, or writing out statistics in full. A few less successful answers showed evidence of having misread details of the task – for example by offering comment from outside the text in relation to environmental issues or effects on wildlife, rather than information from the text. Misreading of details in the text diluted evidence of understanding in some answers – for example it was not correct to suggest that ‘bottled water’ was the cause of every issue, but the bottle itself, rather than the bottled water that was polluting the oceans.

Where candidates had paid careful attention to the task as set, they aimed for concise and well organised answers using their own vocabulary where practicable and appropriate to help clarify meaning for their reader. They demonstrated their understanding of relevant ideas within the context of the whole text, for example avoiding giving a personal response to environmental issues. Competent answers showed they had focused on the specifics of the task as set and did not include polemical discussions of environmental issues and recycling problems, but instead kept their sights clearly on the increased consumption of bottled water and its effects. Candidates producing the most effective answers were able to demonstrate that they had understood a wide range of relevant ideas, explaining them in their own words and skilfully selecting and organising points to offer an overview. On occasion, potentially effective answers lost sight of the need for concision in a selective summary task and significant excess arose as a result of continuing to write beyond the maximum of 250 words advised in the task guidance.

Where answers copied wholesale from the text with minimal or no modification, or offered a response which communicated only a few relevant ideas, candidates missed opportunities to target higher marks. The best responses showed that candidates understood the need to be accurate, clear and concise in the use of their own words when summarising relevant material from the passage. Stronger answers were careful to recast information, organise it helpfully, and use their own vocabulary where feasible without changing or blurring the original idea. For example, better answers reorganised the material rather than relying on the order of the text – avoiding repetition by doing so. Stronger answers were able to offer their own vocabulary consistently, though in the mid-range some lifting of phrases was common with fewer candidates offering confident alternatives for ‘driven by fear’, ‘chic, exotic’, ‘farmers, fishers’, and ‘take over 100 years to bio-degrade’.

Candidates need to be aware that simply moving word order around within a sentence or replacing just one word is not a short cut to providing secure evidence of their reading skills and understanding. Candidates need to work to show understanding of ideas rather than simply track the passage making minimal changes and/or slotting in substituted words. The best answers were clear, concise, largely accurate and well organised.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- read the question carefully and underline the key words
- re-read the passage after reading the question, to identify potentially relevant content points
- you can use spare pages in your answer booklet to plan your ideas ahead of writing your response – draw a neat line through your planning afterwards
- identify and discard any ideas or extra details which are not relevant to the focus of the question
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to check they are distinct and complete – for example, whether there are repeated ideas which could be combined or ideas which need further explanation
- check you understand each idea you use and aim to explain it in your own words
- organise and sequence your ideas helpfully for your reader – do not rely on repeating ideas in the order of the passage
- do not add details, examples or comment on the content of the passage
- avoid repetition of points
- write informatively and accurately, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- when checking and editing your response, consider whether each point you are making could be easily and precisely understood by someone who has not read the passage
- in the selective summary, keep in mind the guidance to write ‘no more than 250 words’ and the need for concision.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0524/04
Coursework Portfolio

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- Wrote original and interesting assignments which reflected their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them in a mature and sensible way
- Structured the content of their writing in order to clearly guide the reader from one section of writing to the next
- Sequenced sentences within paragraphs in a way which maintained clarity of arguments or events
- Wrote with confidence using a wide range of vocabulary with precision and for specific effect
- Adapted their writing style to demonstrate an understanding of the needs of different audiences and contexts for each of the three assignments
- Revised, edited, proof-read and corrected the first drafts of each assignment
- Wrote accurately and made few errors with spelling, punctuation and grammar.

General comments

Content of folders:

The majority of centres are working hard to meet the requirements of the syllabus and apply the mark scheme accurately. Moderators reported that, in general, they tended to be more in agreement with centres' marks than in previous moderation sessions. Many centres set a good range of appropriate and varied tasks, which provided suitable challenge and resulted in the production of coursework portfolios containing engaging and thoughtful personal writing in three different genres. Task setting was less successful when candidates responded to a limited range of tasks that offered either too little, or too much, challenge for the range of candidates in the cohort.

Administration:

Administration by many of the centres continues to reflect the improvement commented on in previous Examiner reports. Many centres followed the direction of the syllabus and carried out effective internal moderation, and completed the Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF) and Individual candidate Record Cards (ICRC) appropriately and accurately. When Moderators experienced difficulty it was often because the marks on the CASF, ICRC and MS1 did not match. It is important to make sure that these marks match, especially if changes to the original marks have been made during internal moderation.

The majority of the samples of work arrived in Cambridge in good time to meet the deadline for the submission of coursework. This was very helpful for the smooth running and despatch of work to the Moderation Team.

A significant number of centres are still submitting work in plastic wallets instead of securely attaching the ICRC to the coursework portfolio with a treasury tag or a staple. Moderators commented that they saw an increase in the amount of centres using paperclips to secure portfolios of work. This is not a secure method of attaching work because the paperclips become loose during processing. Moderators also noticed a small, but significant, rise in the number of centres submitting portfolios in which the individual pieces of paper for the whole cohort had been placed in the despatch envelope; the individual pages of each assignment had not been attached to each other, or to the ICRC. In addition, many of the individual pieces of paper did not indicate which candidate the work belonged to. This is quite a worrying trend because the chances of work

becoming lost or mislaid during the moderation process are significantly increased if the individual assignments are not all securely attached to the ICRC and the owner of the work cannot be identified. It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that folders of work are presented in accordance with the instructions in the syllabus and the Coursework Handbook. Both these documents can be found on the School Support Hub.

Drafts:

Most centres met the syllabus requirement of including one first draft for each portfolio of work. Teachers are advised to make general comments at the end of drafts as to how a candidate might improve their work. Teachers are not allowed to make specific suggestions for improvement in the body or the margin of the draft. Whilst a significant majority of the centres followed the correct procedures for the annotation of drafts, moderators noticed an increase in centres submitting drafts which contained no evidence of revision or editing of work by the candidates, or too much annotation by teachers. Centres should be aware that too much specific annotation by teachers on candidates' first drafts has the potential to be considered malpractice by moderators. Guidance on the drafting process can be found in the syllabus.

Assessment:

The moderation team reported that the standard of assessment of writing was generally accurate and an improvement on previous moderation sessions. Many centres had followed the syllabus guidelines with their provision of informative summative comments related to the mark scheme at the end of each completed assignment. These helped moderators to understand how and why marks had been awarded. Where adjustments of marks were made, it was often because centres had not taken into account structural insecurity or inaccuracies in the candidates' work.

It is important that teachers understand that all errors should be indicated in the final version of each completed assignment. These errors, when typing, include: the incorrect use of commas, confusion of tenses and the incorrect word where spellcheck offers an incorrect solution. Where centres had not indicated all errors in the final versions of their candidates' work, a tendency towards leniency was often noted in their marking.

Moderators also reported an improvement on previous sessions with the accuracy of the assessment of reading. When there was disagreement, it was usually because there had been some misinterpretation of the nature of Assignment 3, where the text used was inappropriate, or the candidates engaged in a general discussion about the subject of the text instead of evaluating and commenting on the ideas and opinions found within the text.

Comments on specific assignments

Assignment 1:

Candidates in many centres responded to a wide range of topics and subjects. Successful responses discussed current issues such as plastic pollution, green energy, electric cars, factory farming or whether the football manager of a local team should be sacked. When candidates engaged in topics of personal interest such as these, their engagement and interest was clear and resulted in thoughtful, mature and considered discussion and arguments. Where candidates responded to broad and frequently debated topics, such as the death penalty, legalising cannabis and school uniform, there was less evidence of the thoughtful, mature and considered arguments mentioned above. Moderators noticed that there was a significant reduction in the 'rant' style tasks, such as 'Room 101' and 'Don't get me started'. Moderators also noticed a reduction in the setting of charity leaflets and film reviews for this assignment. Centres seem to have taken note of comments in previous Examiner reports about the limitations and issues related to these types of tasks.

Moderators commented that majority of candidates responding to Assignment 1 tasks presented original ideas and thoughts and used their own words, phrases and expressions. This is welcome and should be encouraged. Where candidates had carried out research in preparation for writing Assignment 1, Moderators noticed that there was a tendency by a significant number of candidates to over-rely on the ideas, words and phrases they had seen in their research. This reliance on using words, phrases and ideas from research documents resulted in loss of originality of thought and of fluency in writing. Sometimes Moderators were not confident that the work presented was a true reflection of a candidate's language skills or understanding of a topic. Guidance on how to approach and set tasks for Assignment 1 is given in the syllabus.

The best Assignment 1 pieces had a strong sense of audience, and the genre and form selected for the writing was clear to the reader. When writing Assignment 1, candidates need to be clear and sure of their intended audience and be consistent in their application of their chosen form and genre throughout the piece.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 1:

- write about a subject that is of importance and/or of interest to you
- be aware of the audience and purpose of your response and adapt your style accordingly
- try to develop your points to create a detailed and clear line of argument or discussion
- try to use your own words instead of quoting chunks of text from your sources
- acknowledge your use of quotes.

Assignment 2:

Moderators commented on the number of excellent narratives and descriptions they read and that candidates had been allowed to respond to a wide range of topics. Successful writing was when candidates used language carefully and for specific effect, and structured their work to clearly match the requirements of either descriptive or narrative writing.

The most successful descriptive writing was when candidates provided well sequenced and cohesive work which conveyed a realistic and credible sense of atmosphere, place, or person. Some of the more successful topics for Assignment 2 were descriptions of a place the candidates knew well, a much loved person, or a significant family event or celebration. When candidates responded to events that were beyond their personal experience, such as describing events as a soldier in World War I and World War II, or as a bystander during the 9/11 terror attacks, the writing tended to be less realistic and credible and limited the candidates' opportunity to meet the higher level assessment criteria. There was a tendency with some candidates to try too hard with their descriptive writing, or select vocabulary that did not quite match the context in which it had been used. It is important that teachers and candidates understand that an indicator of successful writing is not the frequency with which high level vocabulary is used, rather, it is the ability to engage the reader by their creation of realistic and credible ideas and images. Moderators noticed that with some centres there was a tendency to award marks from the highest band of the assessment criteria because high level vocabulary had been used, even when the overall effect was not wholly convincing or realistic for the reader.

With narrative writing Moderators reported a continued reduction in candidates producing unrealistic and incredible zombie, gothic and dystopian style stories. Centres seem to have taken note of the comments in previous Examiner reports that candidates often produce their best work when they write about personal interests or experiences. Moderators reported that they read many successful and interesting narratives about important personal events in candidates' lives. Accounts of the arrival of a new sibling, overcoming personal challenges such as illness, or the return to the family of a much loved relative provided some moving and engaging writing. With other narrative writing responses, the concept of a short story seemed to have been well taught and clearly understood by many candidates. Moderators saw a good range of well-structured short stories in which setting, character and plot were developed in order to produce cohesive and entertaining stories.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 2:

- when writing to describe, try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of ideas and images
- when writing to describe try to avoid writing in list-like paragraphs which are unconnected
- write about something that you are familiar with, or something that you know well
- when writing narratives remember to structure your writing carefully
- choose vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects
- make sure that the images you create match the context and content of your writing.

Assignment 3:

The assessment of writing for Assignment 3 was generally accurate. Moderators also noted a reduction in the number of centres over-rewarding marks for the reading part of this assignment. Whilst this is an improvement on previous moderation sessions, there are still some continuing issues related to this assignment. The most common issues are:

- the use of a limited number of texts to which candidates can respond
- candidates write about the subject of the text instead of the ideas and opinions contained within the text
- candidates attack the author instead of evaluating and analysing their ideas and opinions
- candidates analyse the use of language and presentational devices instead of analysing the ideas and opinions contained within the text
- texts are old and outdated and public opinion and technology has changed since the time in which the texts were written
- candidates refer to research they have carried out in relation to the topic of the text instead of referring to the text itself.

Whilst centres are clearly working hard to allow candidates to choose a text that is both suitable in terms of depth of ideas and opinions and on a subject in which they are interested, sometimes this balance proved difficult. With some centres the texts selected were mainly informative, or news reports which contained limited ideas or opinions with which the candidates could engage. Such texts do not offer candidates the opportunity to respond in the depth and detail required to meet the higher band assessment criteria.

Moderators noted that they are still seeing unsuitable texts such as 'I see a killer die', 'Educating Essex' and 'SeaWorld'. Previous Examiner reports have highlighted the limitations of these texts and they should not be used. Moderators also commented on the age and lack of originality of other texts. Articles written up to 10 years ago by journalists such as Katie Hopkins, Jeremy Clarkson and Janet Street Porter are still being used. Ideas, public opinion and technology have changed over time and texts such as these do not necessarily reflect the world in which candidates now live. The most successful texts are ones that are up to date, no more than one to two sides of A4 writing, interesting and relevant to the candidates, and contain ideas and opinions to which the candidates can argue for or against.

To achieve Band 5 marks candidates need to evaluate and analyse a good range of ideas from the text to provide an extended overview, or write an overall, structured response that assimilates many of the ideas and opinions presented within the text. The issues listed above can limit the opportunity for candidates to fully engage with this process and therefore limit their ability to meet the higher level assessment criteria. Guidance on how to select appropriate texts for this assignment is given in the syllabus.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 3:

- give an overview of the main points or arguments contained within the text
- aim to cover most of the ideas and opinions presented in the text
- make sure that your ideas and responses are tightly linked to the ideas and opinions you have identified in the text
- be aware of your audience and adapt your style accordingly.

Good practice for the production and presentation of coursework portfolios was where:

- Centres set a range of appropriately challenging tasks, which allowed candidates to respond individually and originally to topics and subjects that they were interested in, or of which they had personal knowledge or experience
- A wide range of appropriate texts were used for Assignment 3, which contained ideas and opinions to which candidates' could respond and were relevant to their interests
- Centres set tasks which allowed candidates to respond in three different genres of writing
- Candidates' responses were within the recommended 500 to 800 word limit
- Teachers gave general advice for improvement at the end of the first drafts
- Candidates revised, edited and carefully proof read their first drafts in order to improve their writing checking for errors with:
 - basic punctuation such as missing full stops, the incorrect use of commas and semi colons and the correct use of capital letters

- typing errors
- spelling, especially any words selected from spellcheck
- Teachers provided informative summative comments relating to the mark scheme at the end of each completed assignment
- Coursework portfolios were securely attached and presented as indicated in the syllabus
- The CASF included all the candidates in the cohort and candidates were listed on the form in numerical order, with the candidates in the sample being clearly indicated by an asterisk.

Overall, the majority of the centres entered into the spirit of coursework with candidates of all abilities producing folders to be proud of, and which contained a variety of work across a range of contexts. These folders demonstrated that the candidates had the flexibility and facility to adapt their work for a range of audiences and purposes.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0524/06
Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

Key messages regarding administration

It is most important that centres enter candidates for the chosen component using the correct component code. Entering candidates using an incorrect code causes delays to the moderation process and possible maladministration issues that are best avoided.

Cambridge International requires a centre to provide four different items in the package sent to the moderator. These are:

- All the recordings of **Task 1** and **Task 2** for the whole cohort entered for the series. It is recommended that these are sent on one CD or one USB drive wherever possible
- All the Coursework Assessment Summary Forms for the whole cohort entered. If more than one teacher/examiner is involved in the process then a separate form completed by that teacher/examiner should be included. This allows the moderator to cover within the moderation process the range of teacher/examiners used by the centre
- The Individual Candidate Record Cards for all the entered candidates in the cohort
- A copy of the marks that have already been sent to Cambridge.

It is essential to successful completion of the moderating process that all the required items are present in the packet sent to Cambridge. Of equal importance is that the addition and transcription of marks is accurate and that the marks on the separate forms tally against each other. The moderator will undertake a check of the centre's administration before moderating and any discrepancies found can cause a delay in the process.

The following guidelines may prove helpful in completing the sample successfully:

- Centres should generate audio files in a recognised common audio file format such as mp3, wav and wma (but not AUP) that can be played by standard computer software. It is helpful if, for each candidate, a separate track is created and its file name is the candidate's name and examination number. Where possible, the recordings should be transferred to a single CD or a USB drive. It is highly recommended that the quality of the recordings is checked regularly during the recording sessions. The final CD or USB drive should also be checked before despatching to Cambridge
- The teacher/examiner should introduce each recording 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 as to who is speaking 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
- 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. 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
- Where there are multiple teacher/examiners in a centre, internal standardisation and moderation is required. If, as a result of this internal moderation, the marks for candidates' tasks are changed, please indicate on the Summary Forms exactly where these changes have taken place. Changing just the total marks is unhelpful for the moderator.

General comments

Generally, across the entry, the standard of administration and accuracy of assessment continue to be of a high standard. Centres and their candidates continue to be fully committed to the component and produce work of a very good quality. A wide range of topics were chosen in response to **Task 1** and some inventive literature-based paired discussions were evident in response to **Task 2**.

Centres are reminded that the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form are specific to Component 6 and cannot be substituted by forms from any other component, such as Component 5.

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-based activities is encouraged where it will benefit the candidates' performance.

Comments on specific tasks

Across all three tasks, the most successful examples were those where the candidates enjoyed a personal interest in the topics chosen. Candidates who were genuinely interested in the topics they had chosen often had more to say and in greater depth, leading to more interesting and developed responses.

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. This is a perfectly valid response to the task and one candidates often feel most comfortable in performing. Some centres chose to be quite inventive and their candidates responded to this task by delivering dramatic monologues in a chosen character. Again, this is a perfectly valid response to the task.

When preparing a response to **Task 1**, whether it is a presentation or a monologue, candidates should consider the length. It is recommended that a response of 3 to 4 minutes is a reasonable expectation if a mark in the higher bands is being targeted.

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

- An important event in my life
- My love of a personal interest/hobby (that moves beyond the purely descriptive and is reflective and thought-provoking)
- An in-depth and evaluative review of a movie, piece of music or work of art
- Being an introvert
- Colours
- The rise of Artificial Intelligence
- Why you should visit my city
- Did we really journey to the Moon?
- My inspiration
- Role models.

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

- Should cannabis be legalised? (This has potential safeguarding issues)
- Football (Most often too generic and unfocussed)
- Travelling (Where too generic and lacking focus)
- 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 rarely 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. Coupling a more able candidate with one who is weaker normally stifles the stronger one, by not allowing a sufficiently taxing springboard for development of the ideas expressed and limits the contribution of the weaker one because she/he is dominated by their partner.

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 are unsure of their opinions.

Generally, entirely scripted responses, be they discussions or role plays, do not allow candidates to access the higher attainment bands. The lack of spontaneity usually reflects an adequate response to the task.

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 moral implications of cloning
- Discussing a text or author both candidates know well
- Planning a special event – either at school or for a more personal joint function
- Discussing a favourite painting or other work of art
- ‘Introducing the News’ – a simulated radio broadcast with two presenters
- In-character discussions between two literary personalities focussing on a specific point(s) in the text
- Arguing for and against the existence of zoos
- Discussing a moral dilemma
- ‘High End Fashion Goods’ – Desirable or not?
- How to spend a specified amount of money on school improvements.

Some examples of less successful Task 2 activities include:

- Should cannabis be legalised? (This has potential safeguarding issues)
- Interviews where one of the candidates acts solely as the interviewer (This is limiting for the candidate)
- Disagreements between neighbours – a role play that is rarely developed
- Customer complaints regarding faulty service – another role play rarely developed
- 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 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.

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 more accurately.

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 the 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.

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
- An interview panel discussing potential candidates for a job
- Planning a special event – either at school or for a more personal joint function
- How to spend a specified amount of money on school improvements.

Some topics work equally well for either **Task 2** or **Task 3** but this is not always the case so caution is advised.

General conclusions

Component 6 remains a successful and enjoyable vehicle for candidates to express their opinions, demonstrate their oral skills and genuinely engage with speaking and listening.

The standard of assessment by centres is accurate and easy to follow.

As in all examinations, candidates clearly benefit from clear instruction, careful planning and thoughtful practise.