

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0524/11  
Reading Passages (Core)

## Key Messages

Candidates are advised to note carefully that:

- **Question 1 g (i)** requires that they only explain the meaning of the italicised word or words as used in the context of the passage.
- **Question 1 g (ii)** requires that they comment on how the language of the complete phrase quoted in the question helps to convey a particular effect to the reader and to ensure that they focus their comments closely on how this effect is achieved.
- This paper tests reading and that it is important to read both the passages and the questions closely and carefully.

## General Comments

Overall, candidates managed the paper well. There were only very few who did not attempt at least most of the questions. There were very few rubric infringements, and handwriting and presentation were generally of a satisfactory to good standard.

### **Question 1**

The majority of candidates were able to answer most of the comprehension questions and their responses indicated a secure understanding of the main details of the passage. The question testing understanding and appreciation of the writer's use of language (1 g (i) and 1 g (ii)) was the least well answered overall. This point will be considered more fully later in this report.

### **Question 2**

Candidates responded well to this question and there was little evidence, across the whole range of marks, of any lack of understanding of the passage. The most successful responses showed good understanding of the requirements of the question and did their best to observe and elaborate on all three bullet points. Less successful responses tended to be those lacking detail from the passages and failing to develop the explanation of how the narrator survived the shipwreck. Many responses in this category achieved high marks for their Written Expression. Less successful candidates failed to obtain higher marks for both reading and writing because they depended too heavily on the wording of the original passage.

### **Question 3**

Some less successful candidates were distracted by the details about Gordon Lightfoot's song about the tragedy and the final paragraph about the anniversary. This meant that their notes and summary missed some key facts and, as a result, they were not able to gain as many marks for either content or writing as they might have. There is also an important point about the use of the answer box for **Question 3 (a)** which is covered in the more detailed commentary below.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

- (a) Most candidates understood clearly that the answer was the word 'monstrous' and gave either the appropriate one-word answer or used a phrase in which this word was very clearly indicated. Some candidates did not gain a mark as they answered with more than one word and the key word was not highlighted. Hence: "monstrous waves" would not gain the mark, but " 'monstrous' waves" or "monstrous waves" would. As stated in the 'Key Messages' above it is important to identify exactly what the question is asking before attempting to answer it.
- (b) Candidates gained one mark for this question if they identified the lack of excitement/panic/fear of the sailors. They obtained two marks as this required some explanation of the writer's use of repetition. The question asks for comment on the writer's use of language which requires the answer to go some way beyond explaining the meaning of the phrase or sentence chosen.
- (c) Most candidates showed understanding of the narrator's being too tired to be concerned with the prospect of dying or that he did not seem to be concerned. Some further comment, for example about the use of understatement, was required to obtain the second mark on this question.
- (d) As with both (b) and (c) this question required the candidate to go beyond literal explanation of a phrase or sentence to gain the two marks available. In this case good answers successfully explained that a great deal of water was entering the boat, coming from all around. However, fewer candidates gave much attention to the word 'swarmed' – those who did commented on the sense of hostility, of being surrounded or under attack and this successfully met the requirement of comment on the effect of the sentence.

- (e) This question was dealt with very successfully by the great majority of candidates who obtained both of the available marks. Details that were most frequently identified were:

- the sailors were struggling in the sea
- they were swimming strongly and rapidly
- the captain was holding on to the overturned boat.

The question clearly refers to paragraph 12 in the passage. Hence there was no mark awarded for reference to the narrator using a piece of life-belt.

- (f) Candidates gained one or two marks by referring to the sense of stability or safety the narrator observes in the shore while in the sea. Some commented successfully on the contrast between the sea and the land. Most of the unsuccessful responses to this question seemed to focus on writing about the state of the sea and this suggested that these candidates had not read the task carefully.
- (g)(i) Candidates generally answered g (i) better than g (ii). As stated in the 'Key Messages', it is important that candidates understand that g (i) focuses primarily on vocabulary (and the explanation of the meaning of one particular word) whereas g (ii) focuses on the whole phrase. The failure to appreciate this frequently resulted in responses in which the definitions given to g (i) were simply repeated in (g)(ii) which meant that no further marks could be awarded for the latter question.

- (1) '*Boiling*' – good answers understood that use of this word was metaphorical and explained that it suggested a violent, bubbling sea. Some wrote about the boiling point of water which illustrates that words in this task cannot always be explained by literal translation or use of a synonym.
- (2) '*Whirled*' – successful answers in explaining this word chose synonyms such as 'spun' or 'turning' abruptly or violently.
- (3) '*Snuggled*' – in a number of cases this was understood to refer to the boat sinking. Good answers explained that it meant 'shrank' or 'settled' or moved down into the wave'.
- (4) '*Implacable*' – virtually all responses clearly identified the word as meaning unstoppable. Less successful explanations tended to respond to the phrase as whole, hence to give a

response more appropriate to g (ii) and sometimes not making any specific reference to the word 'implacable'.

- (ii) The most obvious preparation which can be undertaken by candidates for this question, is to keep in mind that their explanation of the words and language within each phrase should be related to the wording of the question: in this instance, how the language used helps to convey the power of the sea. It is important that, as far as possible, candidates should attempt to express this understanding in their own words rather than by copying the words of the phrases that are to be explained. It is also important for candidates to be aware that their explanations in g (ii) need to go further than just repeating details given in g (i).

**(Phrase 1)** Weaker responses simply repeated the point they had made about water boiling in g (i). More successful responses were those that referred to the water seeming to be full of energy (like boiling water) or being angry or moving vigorously.

**(Phrase 2)** Good answers identified the sea as being powerful enough to lift and change the direction of a heavy boat full of people.

**(Phrase 3)** Good answers understood the idea that the boat was struggling to find security or stability in the sea. Some missed getting marks by suggesting that this phrase referred to the boat filling with water and sinking.

**(Phrase 4)** Good answers, having given a clear explanation of the word 'implacable' in g (i) went on to give a clear explanation of the phrase in terms of it suggesting the size, violence and brute force of the waves.

One final point to be made about responses to this question is that it is important that candidates write in the correct number of the phrase they have chosen to explain. For example, writing in '3' to identify the phrase and then proceeding to explain phrase 2 in the space immediately beneath this number will not be rewarded.

## Question 2

### READING

As stated earlier in this report there were many good responses to this question which were both linguistically well written and also effective and convincing creative pieces based on the material in the passage. Middle range responses tended to omit or only just about manage to refer to the third bullet point relating to survival. Of those responses which made little mention of 'survival' it was often the case that the Narrator passed out, only to be washed up on the shore without having drowned or simply ended with the narrator being at the point when further movement was not possible. Less successful responses adopted the wrong narrative viewpoint and wrote the account from the perspective of the Captain of the ship or related only very few details of the situation and of the other members of the crew. A small number of candidates thought that the word 'narrator' was someone's name rather than a designation

Even though there were some less than convincing accounts, most candidates made genuine attempts to write using their own ideas and interpretations of the passage, rather than being over-reliant on lifting material from it.

### B WRITING

In general, the standard of writing was of an, at least, satisfactory standard. Incorrect sentence separation was the main cause of blurring of meaning, but overall the structure of accounts, together with the use of an appropriate register and thoughtfully chosen vocabulary, contributed to a large number of accounts that were enjoyable to read.

## Question 3

### (a) Notes

Marks were most frequently lost through imprecision with answers. It is worth stressing that, in preparing for this task, candidates should clearly understand that there are 10 spaces in the answer box and that only one point can be credited in each space. Some candidates identified a very good range of points, but did not get 10 marks because they had crammed too many points into one line and irrelevant detail into another. Other

less successful responses included points which were irrelevant – such as details about Gordon Lightfoot's song and about the anniversary of the sinking. A clear focus on the task and what information is required is essential. A minority of responses offered more than 10 answers and it should be noted that in such cases, only the first 10 points made will be marked - even if those that follow contain what would otherwise have been creditable points.

**(b) Summary**

The rubric for this question states that responses should use all the points made by candidates in their responses to **3a**). Less successful responses, however, tended to go back to the original passage and summarise that, rather than expand their own points in their own words. More successful responses remained focused on relevant material from the passage and expressed appropriate points listed in 3a) in a concise and focused way, either using their own words or re-casting the words of the original in such a way as to show clear understanding of the passage and the demands of the question. The most successful responses focused very clearly on the two aspects required in the task: the details of what happened when the boat sank and the possible causes of the sinking. The least successful included much inappropriate information (as noted above) and a few were distracted by making personal comment or putting too much emphasis on trying to write the response as another article.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0524/21  
Reading Passages (Extended)

## Key Messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read the passages carefully, not forgetting any information at the top of each passage
- read all questions carefully, paying attention to the specific guidance offered
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- planned the structure and sequence of each answer, making each point once only in a response
- allowed time to address fully each section of each question
- avoided copying whole sentences or sections from either passage
- used their own words in **Questions 1** and **3b** and when explaining choices in **Question 2**
- ensured that ideas were developed and fully explained in **Question 1** and **Question 2**
- checked their responses carefully to correct errors of spelling and grammar affecting meaning
- used a range of appropriate vocabulary.

## General Comments

Candidates' responses to this paper indicated at least some familiarity with the basic demands of each task, along with an awareness of the need to select and use relevant material and ideas from the passages to answer the questions. There were some responses which were over-reliant on the wording and the sequence of the passages. Candidates are expected to adapt and modify the material in the passages for higher band marks, and copying from the text is to be avoided.

Many candidates were able to respond appropriately to the passages, some with real engagement. Responses covered a range of levels of achievement, often varying over the three tasks. Responses to the tasks suggested that candidates had found the passages equally accessible, had planned their use of time helpfully and had finished within the two hours. Instances where candidates had missed all or part of a question were rare. Most candidates had paid attention to the guidance offered with respect to the length of their answers and many appeared to find the numbering of the bullet points in the answer grid for 3a) a helpful reminder of the need to offer 15 points, one per line.

There were very few significant misunderstandings of the general content of the passages, though some candidates needed to read and interpret the detail of both texts and tasks more carefully. Careful attention to detail, including revisiting the passage to refine understanding, is essential if candidates are to offer convincing evidence of their reading skills at higher levels.

In **Question 1**, most responses were generally appropriate to the form of a journal written by Kaarlo Vatanen, the journalist, and most used the three bullets as a framework for their answer. In order to demonstrate the skills necessary for higher levels, candidates need to use and interpret the evidence in the text, both explicit and implicit. Revisiting the passage in the light of the question to look for useful hints and details which might then be used to inform and support their ideas, might have helped a number of candidates to provide more convincing evidence of understanding. Lifting phrases and sections word for word is to be avoided as this suggests incomplete understanding of both text and task. Similarly, repeating ideas mechanically and leaning on the language of the original can at best produce answers in band 3, missing opportunities to target higher marks. Candidates need to change the language of the passages in response to **Question 1** and **Question 3b** in order to demonstrate achievement in both Reading and Writing in the higher bands.

Answers to **Question 2** showed at least some awareness of the need to identify relevant choices, to consider and explain meaning and to suggest intended effect. Those who had taken careful note of the instruction to select four choices in each half appeared to have benefitted from that advice – taking time to consider which four choices they would offer in each half. Consequently, they were able both to offer a range of potentially interesting selections and to begin to discuss each of their choices at some length. For higher marks, candidates need to ensure that they are making appropriate choices of words and phrases in both parts of the question, exploring and explaining each choice in some detail to show understanding of how the writer is using language in the particular instance under consideration.

In **Question 3** responses, many candidates had understood the need to identify 15 distinct points from Passage B in part **3a)** and then organise these points into a fluent, concise prose response using their own words in **3b)**. There was evidence that the instruction that they did not need to use their own words in **3a)** had been understood. Candidates may choose to use their own words when it helps to clarify a point and select ideas in the language of the text for any other points. For higher marks, candidates need to capitalise on the opportunity when planning their prose response in **3b)** to revisit and refine as required their points in **3a)**, for example to avoid repetition of ideas and to correct any careless slips in spelling which might affect the meaning and accuracy of points such as writing 'years' rather than 'ears'.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to keep in mind that 20% of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1 and 3**. Candidates did best when they planned and edited their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, imprecise meaning and awkward expression.

Whilst writing is not assessed in **Question 2**, candidates should ensure that they consider carefully their own choices of vocabulary when attempting to describe the effects and meanings of the selections they are discussing. In some instances, candidates might have been able to demonstrate more convincingly understanding of the language used by the author had they used vocabulary more precisely themselves. Likewise, checking and editing all three answers more thoroughly might help some candidates to ensure they are offering more secure evidence of their skills.

A clear focus on the instruction and wording of a question during the planning of an answer will allow candidates to work to identify relevant detail in the text, cover all aspects of the task and target marks at the higher levels. This aspect cannot be over-emphasised, in order to avoid errors such as giving insufficient attention to one of the bullet points in **Question 1** or selecting without consideration of the specific focus for each part of **Question 2**.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

Having read through the passage, candidates needed to understand that they must manipulate the viewpoint, so that Kaarlo Vatanen could recount and reflect in his journal the events of that day from his perspective. Occasionally a candidate failed to focus clearly on the need to write as Vatanen and replayed the events of the passage with little modification. Many were able to write as Kaarlo Vatanen, the disillusioned journalist, showing his disapproval of his colleague's self-centred behaviour and going some way towards explaining his own subsequent 'change of direction' brought about by the encounter with the hare. A number missed opportunities to go further through uneven focus on the bullets – for example not detailing the experience with the hare sufficiently carefully in bullet two in order to explain how and why it had affected Vatanen and/or failing to identify details and hints in the text that might suggest relevant ideas for the third bullet. Where candidates had missed the accident with the hare in the first place, Vatanen's reactions were less likely to be well developed. Where the third bullet had not been read carefully, answers suggested reasons for why Vatanen might not be able to go home – for example, lack of transport – rather than consider those reasons for him not wanting to go which were implicit in the narrative. Careful readers of both text and task were able to discover a more convincing range of ideas and pick up on hints in the passage for development and use in their 'journal.'

In response to the first bullet point about the photographer's behaviour, mid-range answers offered ideas in reaction to the initial argument and ensuing silence, as well as basic comment on the photographer's impatience, cold-heartedness and disloyalty. Better answers developed some of these ideas and had often understood that the accident could have been avoided had it not been for the childish sulking and dull reactions of the driver. When outlining ideas in relation to the second bullet point, the encounter with the

hare, candidates were often able to mention finding the hare, picking it up and treating its wounds, sometimes developing the sense of responsibility felt for the animal's predicament. Better answers moved on to think about how Vatanen interpreted the hare's reaction, often as a show of trust, and how that affected him and his life view.

In third bullet point: why he could not face home or work, comparisons between the behaviour of the hare and that of his colleague provided a starting point for further ideas related to Vatanen's life-course. Candidates were able to mention for example the stress of his life in the city, work problems and health worries as well as 'the call of the wild.' Better answers offered development rooted in the text – for example suggesting that Vatanen might not want to return to the office to be laughed at by his workmates because of caring for the hare, rather than drifting into long recollections involving his lack of confidence due to an event in his early life. Candidates sometimes lost sight of the passage completely as they moved into the realms of creative writing. The most frequent examples of such pitfalls developed unsupported past histories of tragic events such as being abandoned as a child or the death of a loved one, at best only very tenuously linked to the suffering of the hare. Others used the failed 'hopes of their youth' the 'worldly worries' of the 'busy capital' or being 'dissatisfied' and 'cynical' to decry world events without firmly rooting these ideas in the passage. Words and time were sometimes wasted in such speculation at the expense of reference to those ideas and details in the reading material and required by the question.

The best answers balanced content over the three bullets. They could suggest something of the character of Kaarlo the journalist who had depended on and/or despised his colleague the photographer. They were able to offer sensible suggestions as to how and why the encounter with the hare had caused him to respond as he did, developing those as the basis for the third bullet point and using the cues in the text to interpret what Kaarlo might do next. Stronger responses were able to absorb the material and integrate the ideas into a fairly convincing journal entry with ideas of Kaarlo's new life-course.

Mid-range responses were able to use the passage reasonably well but missed opportunities for range and/or development; they relied more on the order and occasionally the wording of the passage. Here, it was not unusual for the second section to dominate, suggesting compassion for the injured hare, with typically fewer ideas presented for the first and third bullet points. Opportunities for development linked to details were rarely taken. For example, the argument and 'sulking' led to the photographer not concentrating on his driving (detail: 'motored mindlessly'); the collision shocked Kaarlo out of his sulky silence (detail: 'sickening thud') and the stress of working in the busy capital caused Kaarlo health problems (detail: 'stomach ulcers were on the way.').

The least successful answers retold some of the events unselectively or were thin in content; perhaps the third section was not addressed at all. Conversely, candidates might write their entire response about why Kaarlo cannot go back to his old life without explaining the events that caused the change. There could be confusion of events and details due to careless reading. For example, the collision of the car with the hare was omitted completely or the protagonists were introduced as husband and wife.

#### **Advice to candidates on Question 1:**

- read the passage carefully and return to check key details as you plan your answer
- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- plan ideas to deal with all aspects of each bullet
- adapt material from the passage to make it an appropriate response to the specific task set
- plan a route through your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- take account of the given persona, audience and purpose for your response
- answer in your own words
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response
- extend and develop relevantly a number of the ideas you include – do not just repeat them.

#### **Question 2**

The response is written in continuous prose thus enabling the candidates to have sufficient opportunity to explore and explain their ideas about the words and phrases used. Marks are given for the relevance of the words and phrases selected for discussion and the quality of the overall analysis. Credit is given in **Question 2** for the ability to select with precision a range of interesting or unusual examples of words and phrases relevant to the focus of the question in each section. Responses that go on to explore and explain

meanings of the words are awarded further marks. Responses that explored the effects that the use of particular words and phrases have on the reader scored up to the highest mark of ten. Recognising devices such as metaphors or assonance only showed understanding at satisfactory level, higher level was reached where the candidate went on to explain their specific usefulness in context. The majority of candidates found this question the most demanding of the three, as it requires a wide vocabulary, close reading, and an ability to relate to subtleties of language beyond explicit meaning

Careful selection of appropriate phrases in both sections of **Question 2** is important. Lengthy quotations were usually not explained with precision and often resulted in general comment at best. Similarly, selecting single words divorced from the parent phrase led to incomplete or partial explanation. General comments not tied to specific choices earned little credit. For example, comments about the childish behaviour of the middle-aged men, tension in the car or the light-heartedness of the young hare needed to be accompanied by selected words or phrases to illustrate the point. Ideas beginning, 'This gives the impression that...' need to include how and why the impression is given in order to progress the answer further.

Mid-range responses gave a mainly suitable selection with a mixed range of explanation, touching on effects at times. The least successful answers offered a sparse selection often mixed with unsuitable phrases. This was caused by lack of focus on the question, so, for example, 'the lovely summer evening' was used in **(a)** and 'his dusty city shoe' in **(b)** was frequently cited. Explanations were often slight, sometimes repeating the words of the text such as, 'the men were stubborn and self-absorbed.' Some words were rarely explained convincingly, for example giddy, rehearsing, pranced and twirled. Spring was sometimes incorrectly referred to as the season and errors in copying from the text meant potentially relevant choices provided less convincing evidence of understanding – for example one candidate explained the hare 'refreshing its lips' rather than rehearsing its leaps.

#### Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- take time to revisit each of the two paragraphs to first identify the potential choices, then select the strongest four from each for your answer
- make sure your choices are precise – do not copy out whole sentences
- make sure your choices are complete – do not offer only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase or image
- do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle
- to explain effects, think of how the reader's understanding is enhanced by the use of language when reading the word or phrase, because of its connotations and associations.
- when offering a phrase as a choice, discuss how each of the words within it is working
- try to explain both how and why a particular word or image might have been used
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them
- avoid generalised, 'empty' comments, such as 'the words help us to imagine it more clearly'
- if you are unsure about effects, start by offering a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- do not just label choices, discuss them in some detail.

#### Question 3

The majority of candidates had understood that in a question testing their ability to 'select for specific purpose' they needed to identify just 15 points in **3a)** and that further answers added on after the 15 would not be credited unless replacing a crossed out answer earlier on. In **Question 3a)**, up to 15 marks are available from a possible 17 and most responses were able to identify a convincing number of those points, with many well into double figures. The vast majority were aware of the need to identify ideas clearly and chose various ways to communicate ideas effectively in note form. Some addressed the difference between rabbits and hares through explanations such as 'hares have larger ears' or rabbits' ears are generally smaller' and were careful to explain their ideas as differences between the two. Occasionally, points were less well focused and/or notes were incomplete – for example suggesting that rabbits hopped straight when faced with danger was a misreading, similarly suggesting that hares are independent at birth is not correct. Where ideas were not clearly linked to either rabbits or hares intended meaning at times was put into doubt – for example listing of 'larger ears' or 'reproduces underground' without indication of whether this was in relation to rabbits or hares could not be credited. Where candidates had not recognised the need for points to be made clearly in **3a)**, treating them as a form of shorthand only for their response in **3b)**, opportunity to secure marks was sometimes missed.

There are no marks to be scored for writing in **3a**); however, checking responses for accuracy in spelling and grammar is clearly essential if candidates are to avoid the potential danger of negating points through careless slips and ambiguous answers. Candidates should pay particular attention for example to correct any errors that might change or cloud meaning. For example, spelling errors resulting in suggestions that 'hares years are longer', that 'hears are larger' or that hares ate 'bugs' could have been avoided.

Passage B contained plenty of information not required for the answer. Using underlining or highlighting in the text is a good way to focus on potentially useful information and discard distractors and repetitions. Some candidates detailed as fact that hares were tricksters and shape-shifters, and did not get on well with modern farming methods, neither of which are firm differences between rabbits and hares.

Precise selection of each point was required as passage B contained examples of the same point, hence candidates needed to focus on the central meaning without repeating the point in a slightly different form. Whilst the majority of the candidates scored well in **3a**), duplication of hares being fully furred and being born with eyes open was common.

In **Question 3b**), the majority of candidates demonstrated at least some awareness of an appropriate style for a summary, though a number were list-like and/or relied on the language and sequence of the original passage. The most successful responses re-ordered and re-grouped the relevant information from the text, with a clear focus throughout on how rabbits and hares were significantly different. The very best answers had considered carefully both content and organisation, writing in mostly fluent sentences and using own words as far as possible. They connected ideas with some care and avoided long explanation, repetition and/or comments.

#### **Advice to candidates on Question 3:**

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

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0524/04  
Coursework Portfolio

## Key messages

Successful candidates:

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

## General comments

Varied, lively and individual work did well. In cases where Centres had set the same assignments for whole sets, even for all their candidates, work lacked some of the liveliness of writing that the Moderators were looking for. There were also instances where too much guidance had been given to candidates concerning the content of an assignment. This resulted in uninspiring writing and an unsatisfactory similarity from script to script.

In the first assignment more attention appeared to have been given to the level of challenge of subject matter than in previous sessions.

There was an increase in the submissions of descriptions for Assignment 2 and a decrease in original and engaging fiction. While some of the descriptions were excellent, others were presented as a series of unstructured images, and it seemed that the techniques of presenting a description had not always been studied sufficiently. Autobiographical episodes were generally successful because of their originality and the personal involvement of the writers.

There was a trend away from responding to the text in Assignment 3 and instead addressing the topic. Centres are reminded that the ten marks reward the ability of candidates to read for an overview of the text (including the writer's attitude) and to evaluate selected ideas and opinions from the text in relevant detail. The writing of a generalised commentary that included single words from the text was not sufficient for high reward.

Annotation of accuracy in final versions of assignments was generally not well done. In some cases a significant number of errors were disregarded. The use of full stops and commas was frequently poor and semi colons, colons and dashes were used too often and sometimes inappropriately. Exclamation marks and question marks were also sometimes used injudiciously. Faults in punctuation were usually associated with the lack of ability to construct and control complex sentences. Candidates sometimes did not take the opportunities offered by the second assignment to use a wide range of appropriate vocabulary. Some of the writing was spoiled by the use of over-ambitious vocabulary that prevented effective communication. Where a Centre's marks were reduced the quality of style (including register) and accuracy was generally the chief reason.

### **Good Practice:**

The Moderators recognised Centres that ensured that their candidates should

- write three assignments that clearly differed in the type of content, style, register and range of language and where the quality of all three pieces was consistent;
- express their own views and experiences free from undue teacher influence or repetition of ideas and content from the Internet;
- work on the first draft of their work, editing, revising and correcting so that it was clear to the Moderator how progress had been made;
- read final versions carefully, making their own corrections of simple errors.

### **Bad Practice:**

Candidates did less well because they

- did not structure their first and third assignments satisfactorily;
- were not able to sustain an assignment to the very end;
- did not control the register of their writing or, in the second assignment, the tense they had chosen;
- did not construct fluent sentences or punctuate them correctly.

## **Assessment of coursework**

### **Writing**

Coursework offers excellent opportunities for candidates to draft and to check their work for errors. They have time to check their work and are allowed to use electronic devices to help them with spelling and to identify stylistic shortcomings. Therefore, the expectation is that there should be fewer errors in Coursework than in work done in the Examination room.

The assessment of content and structure was generally correct, although one or two exceptions are noted in the comments on individual assignments below.

The commonest shortcomings in style were the use of repetitive sentence types, particularly short, simple sentences, and a limited range of language. A common fault was the repetition of key words in adjacent sentences. Some candidates had difficulty in handling complex sentences that proved to be exceedingly long and convoluted, so that the meaning became less clear as the sentence went on.

The commonest errors were

- putting commas at ends of sentences, or no punctuation at all. Pronouns were commonly mistaken for conjunctions;
- using semi-colons where commas or full stops were correct. Some candidates split up sentences by putting a semi-colon where no punctuation was called for;
- using question marks and exclamation marks for statements because it was thought that they would illustrate a certain tone of voice. However, these were frequently inappropriate, for example in sentences beginning with 'surely';
- spelling homonyms wrongly, such as 'there/their/they're', 'off/of', 'were/where'. Many spelling mistakes were the result of the careless use of a spell check, for example 'manor' for 'manner';
- making basic grammatical errors such as 'off of', 'she should of' and 'him and me'. There were frequent errors of singular and plural and of parts of verbs;
- simple errors such as missing words out of a sentence or a letter off a word.

## **Assessment of reading**

This was a test of reading. Centres were often careful to select a text or texts that presented a high enough level of difficulty to ensure that candidates could score marks of 7 and above. Such texts had to contain ideas and opinions that were complex enough to require candidates to understand not only the wording but also the implications. Many Centres were careful enough to ensure that candidates understood the main drift of the article and could appreciate the writer's attitude to the topic. They then ensured that a selection of ideas and opinions was made and that there was some evidence of evaluation. Evaluation consisted of understanding the difference between a fact and an opinion, dealing with inconsistencies in an argument and

detecting bias. Where there was an overview of the article and a consistent approach to a number of ideas and opinions the high marks of 8-10 were correctly awarded.

However, some marks were too high, significantly so where candidates addressed the topic and not the text. They used the text at least partly as a stimulus for their own ideas and drifted away from what had been read. This meant that there was insufficient evidence of reading other than a very general understanding of what the article was about.

### **Assignment 1**

The best of this work was where the topic was sufficiently challenging to produce work justifying a mark in Band 3 and above and where the argument was clear, presented in a logical sequence, and sustained until the end. While there were examples of interesting and well-presented factual content, the best and most secure work was argumentative and persuasive. Factual topics such as an introduction to the rules of a sport might result in competent work but are unlikely to generate work worthy of marks in Band 2 and above.

Film reviews sometimes produced weak pieces with little structure or argument. Where the films were the individual choices of the candidates, work could be competent enough, but where a whole Centre wrote about the same film, the scripts were too similar and did not appear to be the unaided, original work of the candidates. There was also a weakness in structure because, although each paragraph was secure, the connectivity between them was often weak.

It was appropriate to write the words of a speech and some of them were very good. However, the over-use of rhetorical devices, such as exclamations and questions, was sometimes disturbing to the flow, and candidates who considered their style and register were more successful than those whose work bordered on the colloquial.

This was particularly true of the 'rant pieces', many of which still went under the general title of 'Don't get me started...' The problem here was that they were often weak in content and structure. Candidates might not have much to say, so after two paragraphs, there was a good deal of repetition. Another problem was that of register. Some attempted to use an appropriate register at first but were unable or unwilling to maintain it and slipped into colloquial and sometimes inappropriate language. Candidates who ranted about year 10 boys, school skirts, teachers or Transport for London, for example, produced work that was immature and not typical of what a Year 11 candidate should be capable of.

Where the topic was a serious one, such as racism, and where the candidate controlled diction, the result was usually much better.

The following list of topics shows the wide range offered by Centres. All these topics produced good writing.

*The Syrian crisis*  
*Equal pay in sport*  
*Beauty pageants*  
*Cheerleading (personal)*  
*Being in a percussion band (personal)*  
*A secret guide to Hong Kong*  
*Forced marriage*  
*Votes for 16-year-olds*  
*Online learning*  
*One gender schools*

### **Assignment 2**

There was noticeably little good fiction. The best examples provided engaging stories with changes of focus, turning points and some clever endings. These were original choices and were the product of some careful teaching. Both descriptions and fiction need some careful handling and a good deal of preparation before a piece for the folder can be attempted. Unfortunately, a number of assignments looked very similar. There were too many haunted houses, and the content of some of these stories was predictable and immature. There were also a number of zombie stories which nearly always descended into a catalogue of blood and gore. Many of the stories were opportunities for candidates to write about violence with sometimes graphic descriptions of death and injury. On several occasions the amount of violence interrupted the flow of the narrative and became an end in itself. Matters such as these could have been addressed at the draft stage.

The best descriptions had structure. It was not enough just to give a series of images. In such cases it appeared that candidates were struggling to find new content as the piece continued. Where a single event or a short passage of time was built into the writing, the description had cohesion and often came alive.

There was plenty of writing from experience and this was typically very sound and engaging work. Candidates wrote about places they had visited, sometimes with perception, and about important moments in their lives ranging from auditions and performances on stage through football matches to sad deaths in the family or personal misfortune and illness. They were careful to choose content that was significant enough to engage readers, and the writing worked because of the vivid detail that memory conjured up and the genuine emotions that were expressed, often with commendable restraint and control.

There were many monologues, mostly through the mouths of literary figures. These too, needed shape and where the outpouring was confined to one event or situation it was difficult to structure without repetition. The emotion was sometimes well expressed, although this was more difficult than where personal writing was chosen. Some candidates found it difficult to climb convincingly into other people's shoes and walk about in them.

It is important to consider the language of this assignment. The aim is to communicate events, descriptions and emotions with conviction, and this is largely done through the arrangement of the content and the subtlety with which the unbelievable is made believable. Language plays an important part. The choice of words with their associations carries the reader along with the events that they describe. These words need to be suitably varied, attractive in themselves, and above all capable of creating pictures in the mind. Simple, repetitive vocabulary does not do this, but equally, over writing, using too complex vocabulary is just as bad because it cloy the mind. Some candidates tried to use too complex a vocabulary and at its worst this only led to a lack of meaning where the words were inappropriate. The Moderators looked for a wide range of appropriate vocabulary that suited the content of the writing.

Many assignments had no title, or the title did not prompt opportunities for original and developed writing. Examples of assignments are as follows:

#### Stories

*The humming*  
*The final breath*  
*The chimney sweep*  
*Paradise Lost*

#### Descriptions

*Meeting a legend*  
*Aurora Borealis*  
*The football stadium*  
*On the sea*

#### Experience

*Dismaland (a visit to a theme park invented by the graffiti artist, Banksy)*  
*Tornado*  
*A day that changed my life*  
*The day the earth shook (account of the New Zealand earthquake)*

### Assignment 3

The best approach was to give candidates a text no longer than two sides, with some very clear ideas and opinions. The text was not reportage or factual, and it was well written structurally. Many online texts were repetitive and were written in confusingly short paragraphs. Texts that worked were complex enough to provide a test of reading for Band 1 candidates, but controversial enough for candidates to be aware of arguments that were inconsistent or heavily biased.

The best responses showed by means of an overview that they understood the stance the writer was taking and the gist of the whole text. Having discussed this in what was often an opening section of up to two thirds

of a side, they then chose four or five important ideas and opinions from the text, explained what they meant and implied and commented on them as contributions to the theme of the text. Each of these evaluations would be in the form of one substantial paragraph which was entirely relevant to the chosen quotation.

It was not appropriate to feed in ideas that did not relate to the text as these did not constitute a response to the text itself. Still less was it appropriate to use the text as a stimulus for the candidate's own ideas. Candidates who provided a critique of literary and rhetorical devices did not respond to ideas and opinions. This is tested adequately in Papers 1 and 2 and is inappropriate here. It was not sufficient to feed in single words from the text as part of a generalised commentary except as part of an opening overview of the text.

Some texts were repeatedly used from Centre to Centre. The Flamehorse argument against the death penalty, although a good article, did not work well. Candidates tended to quote the headings as a very easy selection of ideas and opinions, but then did not deal adequately with the complex arguments that the headings gave rise to. 'I saw a killer die' was reportage and was a questionable choice for 16-year-olds. Little good analysis arose from this unpleasant article.

Some articles elicited good analysis and evaluation. They included

*Katie Hopkins on immigrants*

*Katie Hopkins on choosing friends for her children*

*Why I hate Facebook (although there were better alternatives to this well-worn article)*

*School sport*

*Tattoos*

*Bring back the cane*

*Stereotyping teenagers*

*Several different texts on video games and perceived links with violent behaviour and other problems*

The article on legalising cannabis proved difficult and many important arguments were ignored. Malala's speech was too long, although part of it could have been used. 'Casualties of class warfare' was confusing to candidates who did not really understand which side to take and found little in the passage to analyse. There was little content in the article on footballers' pay, which was not a good challenge for candidates seeking marks in Bands 1 and 2. The Educating Essex /Yorkshire articles confused because they were reviews of television programmes, but also had very little of any weight to select and to comment on. These articles are now very outdated.

### **Administration by Centres**

There were instances where internally moderated marks were not correctly transcribed on to the mark sheet. There were also some errors of addition. It was also important that the candidates' final marks should be written on the folders themselves.

Centres are reminded of the importance of the Candidate Assessment Summary Form (also known as the WMS). This is a record of the marks awarded for each candidate for reading and for writing, and any alterations to those marks that have been made at internal moderation. The Moderator expected to see the evidence of internal moderation on this form and expected the marks of a number of candidates to have been changed. However, the only evidence of internal moderation was often in the folders and in some cases there was no evidence that internal moderation had been carried out.

The internal Moderator used the CASF to check that the final marks had been correctly transcribed, to check which candidates belonged to which set, and to create a distribution of the reading marks. The CASF had to be completed for all candidates in all columns and sent to the Moderator.

Centres are asked to make sure that the work of each folder is securely fastened together to avoid the risk of lost work.

Most Centres submitted a copy of the text used for Assignment 3. Where this was not sent, the Moderator was put at a disadvantage in assessing the reading marks.

Otherwise, the administration was very good and Centres are thanked for the time they spent on these important tasks.

### **Summary of the contents of the folder**

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

### **Annotation**

Centres are reminded that final versions of each assignment should be annotated. Moderators were interested in the general comments on strengths and weakness at the end of each assignment. However, it was also important to annotate errors in the body of the text, since the number and types of these contributed significantly to the final mark.

### **Drafts**

Some Centres submitted drafts where individual errors were corrected by the teacher. This is strictly not allowed and can lead to a malpractice enquiry. Centres are asked to give general advice at the end of each draft, alerting the candidates to work that must still be carried out before the final version is submitted. No comments should be made in the body of the text or in the margin.

There was some excellent practice where candidates had obviously made considerable revisions to their first drafts. Best practice was when changes made in what was obviously the candidate's own handwriting were made to the draft.

Some drafts had no final suggestions for general improvement at all.

### **Authenticity**

There were again some cases of plagiarism. These should have been noticed before folders were submitted.

Moderators found it easy to discover websites where the wording of much of an assignment had been copied.

### **Choice of assignments**

Some Centres chose assignments that were immediately recognised by the Moderators. An example of an 'off-the-shelf' folder would be 'Don't get me started', a fictional episode related to 'Saving Private Ryan' and an analysis of the Flamehorse article on the death penalty. It was not clear where these assignments came from, although they were not CIE recommendations. The best assignments were those that were carefully guided by teachers to suit the individual interests and concerns of candidates. This frequently led to more lively and committed writing.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0524/06

Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

## Key messages

- Component 6 consists of three distinct tasks: Task 1 is an individual presentation; Task 2 is a paired activity; Task 3 is a group activity.
- The three separate tasks can be assessed at any time during the course. This flexibility allows a broader range of topics and skills to be assessed but requires Centres to fully embrace the concept that the Speaking and Listening tasks are an integral part of the overall course.
- Centres are required to record Tasks 1 and 2 and send all recordings.
- Candidates do best when their tasks are carefully planned and well prepared.
- Candidates achieve best results when they are given adequate time to demonstrate both speaking and listening skills.

## General comments

Successful Centres implemented the component efficiently and imaginatively. Candidates performed best when they selected tasks which matched both their ability and interests. Well planned and prepared responses to tasks were generally more successful. In each of the activities candidates needed to be given sufficient time to demonstrate a range of speaking and listening skills.

## Comments on specific tasks

In response to Tasks 1 and 2, candidates whose performance was lively and well developed met the high band criteria. Those candidates who relied heavily on written material were less successful as Tasks 1 and 2 do not benefit from over-scripted and seemingly 'artificial' performances where spontaneity is missing. Candidates who met the higher band criteria were able to react positively to changes in the direction of the discussion in Task 2.

It is very difficult to achieve the higher bands if the performances are heavily scripted and/or very short. A response which is too short does not allow the candidate to meet all the criteria and should not normally be considered as more than 'adequate' in Band 3.

## **Task 1 – Individual Activity**

Responses generally took the form of an individual presentation. This component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when topics are chosen.

*Some examples of productive Task 1 activities include:*

- A personal experience that is relevant, thought-provoking and developed beyond narrative
- Social issues teenagers feel strongly about
- A review where the candidate is thoroughly engaged and able to develop the presentation beyond a literal re-telling of the events
- An engaged reflection on a hobby or sport (though responses to football can be problematic).

### **Task 2 – Pair-based Activity**

There should be only two participants in Task 2. Where there is an extra candidate, a teacher or a candidate who has been assessed may make up the pair. Task 2 activity comprising of more than two candidates becomes a Task 3 Group Activity. As three distinct tasks are expected in response to Component 6, this becomes non-compliance.

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

Unlike Component 5, there is no specified time duration for Component 6 tasks but, given that both speaking and listening are assessed, it is important that the activities last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. Planned, rehearsed and developed performances will normally justify higher marks in the same way written examination practise encourages more successful outcomes.

Scripted responses have become more common but Component 6 is not an assessment of a candidate's reading skills. Heavily scripted responses normally do not meet the criteria of the higher bands when judged against the Speaking and Listening skills being demonstrated.

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

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

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

*Some examples of productive Task 2 activities include:*

- Topical social issues such as sexism in sport
- Which video game is the best? (One championed by each candidate)
- Analysis of set texts such as poems and novels focusing on specific events/characters
- The influence of social media in teenagers' lives
- Desert island survival techniques
- Are politics irrelevant to teenagers?

### **Task 3 – Group Activity**

Task 3 may take various forms but it is most important that each candidate in the group is allowed sufficient scope within the activity to demonstrate their strengths without being dominated by others. A group made up of candidates of similar ability levels is often more successful. In more diverse groupings the weaker

candidates are disadvantaged and do not have the opportunity to contribute to the best of their ability. The role of a group leader should be considered as a more successful outcome usually results from having one of the candidates directing the focus of the discussion.

*Some examples of productive Task 3 activities include:*

- Characters from a literary text participating in a televised debate
- Performing an extra scene from a play that has been written by the candidates
- Any discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- What to include in a time capsule/School newspaper, etc.
- Championing a character from a film or book where each candidate chooses their favourite
- Balloon debates

### **Administration**

There are many Centres where internal moderation has been successful.. Samples are well-prepared and aid the moderation process considerably.

### *Recordings*

- Centres are required to record and send all the Task 1 and 2 responses for the entire entered cohort.
- We strongly encourage the use of digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or USB drive in a recognised common audio file format that can be played by standard computer software.
- Please check the quality of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge and ensure that the CD, DVD or USB is securely packaged to avoid damage in transit
- Each track should be labelled with the candidate's name and number. For Task 2 both candidates' names and numbers should be included in the title of the track.
- Each track should be introduced formally using the rubric prescribed in the current syllabus. This is particularly important for Task 2 recordings where Moderators must be able to distinguish between the candidates. The ideal way to achieve this is for candidates to introduce themselves by their names and numbers at the beginning of their responses.
- Wherever possible, recordings should be made in a quiet, undisturbed environment.

### *Materials required by the Moderator*

- Please be aware that four different items must be included in the sample package sent to the Moderator: all of the Centre's recordings; all the Summary Forms; all the individual candidate Record Cards and a copy of the mark sheets showing the total marks awarded for each candidate entered.
- Moderators require Summary Forms detailing a breakdown of the marks awarded for the whole cohort entered.
- The accuracy of the Summary Forms should be checked thoroughly before submitting to Cambridge.

### *Recommended support material*

Centres are encouraged to use the current syllabus, the Speaking and Listening Handbook and online training course to ensure the requirements for the administration of the component are fully met.