

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/11

Writing

Key Messages:

- It is essential to read the question carefully and follow all the instructions given.
- In **Section 1** tasks it is important to develop the bullet points as evenly as possible and ensure that all required information is included.
- Register, style and tone are important aspects of Directed Writing and need consideration.
- In **Section 1** carefully consider purpose, situation and audience when planning a response
- Avoid joining individual words together, such as 'aswell' or 'eventhough'.
- Greater focus on the accurate punctuation and layout of speech would improve performance.
- Concentration on correct tenses and agreement would improve candidates' writing in both sections.

General Comments:

The overall standard of the vast majority of responses this year seemed to be on a par with that of previous years. **Section 1** was done well by most candidates but some underestimated the demands of the question. There was a pleasing spread of responses in **Section 2**, although the narrative questions were generally more popular than the others and this is a sensible approach for many candidates who are clearly comfortable writing narratives. The vast majority of candidates used the time well, wrote appropriate amounts for each question and avoided rubric infringements, all of which demonstrated how well they had been prepared. The strengths and weaknesses of the linguistic ability were similar to previous sessions: there was a great deal of very fluent, imaginative and accurate writing. Very few prepared openings to essays were used and this worked to the benefit of candidates. There were very few instances of prepared essays, although occasionally a candidate found it challenging to include a prescribed sentence in a natural way. There were few examples of the inclusion of text messaging language, abbreviations and expressions such as 'gonna' and 'wanna', which can sometimes suggest the wrong register and are best avoided. There were still some examples of unnecessarily offensive language, or violent/explicit content designed to shock, in Section 2: candidates are reminded that this is never appropriate, even in direct speech.

Comments on Specific Questions:

Section 1

The Directed Writing task is assessed with equal marks given to **Task Fulfilment** and **Language** criteria. Candidates had to write a letter to the parents of their classmates to outline plans for a visit to celebrate the end of the school year. The candidates were asked to write the letter as the class prefect. In particular, the candidates had to offer details of when and where the class would be going, including the travel arrangements, why the class had chosen the destination and what they would do while there, and how the class would benefit from the trip. This was a scenario that was within the experience of the candidates, the majority of whom responded well to the task. The scenario allowed use of a range of real and imaginary information and this contributed greatly to the success and interest of the responses.

Section 1 is Directed Writing and so involves more reading than **Section 2**. In this task candidates had to be aware that they were focusing on writing a formal and informative letter for the specified audience, the parents of their classmates, in addition to the content of the letter. Candidates were also instructed that they were *explaining* the plans for the trip. In order to satisfy the requirements of the bullet points this year, responses needed to include:

- when and where the class would be going **and** details of the travel arrangements
- why the class had chosen the destination **and** what they would do there
- how the students would benefit from the trip.

In the first bullet point it was essential to offer a clear date and specific destination as well as a method of transportation, whereas the second and third bullet points offered more scope to develop ideas and explanations. Candidates were expected to offer a clear rationale behind the choice of destination, a full itinerary of activities and clearly explain what benefits the trip would offer the students.

The descriptors for **Task Fulfilment** in the syllabus make it clear that candidates will be judged on:

- clear understanding of purpose, situation and audience
- a correct format for the piece of writing
- appropriate tone and register
- the use of information to justify opinion
- the sensible development and organisation of the bullet points.

As far as **Task Fulfilment** was concerned this year, the highest marks were awarded to responses which kept their focus on the context and purpose of the letter and shaped their writing according to the descriptors. There were few candidates this session who misunderstood the situation, although a few suggested a trip that sounded like a community project rather than a celebration of the end of the school year. This led to some irrelevant considerations at times.

In **Task Fulfilment** it is the development of the ideas that will gain most marks. The first bullet point was relatively clear and did not pose problems for the majority of candidates who offered a clear date, destination and mode of transport. There were a number of candidates who were vague about the date, offering 'next Saturday' or 'at the beginning of the school holiday' as alternatives, but clearly this would not provide very helpful information for parents. Usually the destination was clear, although occasionally a candidate would make a rather wide suggestion, for example, the USA or France, without offering a more specific destination in the country. There were also a number of candidates who did not specify a mode of transport, simply requesting that the students meet at school to be taken to the destination. It is crucial that candidates read the bullet points very carefully to ensure that all the required information is offered. The second bullet point was usually explained fully; many candidates demonstrated excellent knowledge about their choice of destination, offering details of cultural opportunities and excursions that the students would enjoy. The best responses offered a full itinerary for the trip with full justification of their decision to visit the place of interest. The third bullet point was often less developed than the first two, with many candidates omitting to offer thoughtful benefits for the students. Many responses just referred to having a good time with their classmates, or having a rest at the end of the examination period. The more successful ones usually alluded to the cultural benefits of the trip, or the learning opportunities that the students would be offered, fully developing the ideas. Weaker responses often repeated the reasons for choosing the destination in response to the third bullet point.

Therefore, the stronger candidates usually were able to amplify all three bullet points, using relevant and imaginative ideas to develop the response. Other responses needed to incorporate more detail in the second and third bullet points. The bullet points do not always have to get equal treatment but it is also true that the answer should not be too unbalanced because otherwise a bullet point might not be adequately developed.

Generally, there was a good awareness of audience and most candidates were comfortable with the concept of writing a letter to parents. However, some candidates missed the finer detail in the task, therefore not addressing the situation and purpose fully, resulting in a letter which the parents would have found unhelpful. The register was kept suitably formal in most responses. Others occasionally were too informal, referring to the students as 'kids', or adopted a rather pleading tone, begging the parents to allow their child to attend the trip. However, the vast majority of candidates employed an appropriate format following the guidance given in the rubric by adopting a polite and informative tone. The best responses were able to balance the need to inform the parents about arrangements and details, while also fully justifying the trip as one which would benefit their offspring. Less successful answers were a little confusing as important details had been missed out, or occasionally there was too much emphasis on just having fun, which did not offer scope for outlining convincing benefits and would be unlikely to attract parental support. The majority of responses adopted an appropriate format for a letter, opening with the salutation specified in the task and an appropriate valediction with a signature at the end. Organisation varied, with some candidates following the bullet points chronologically and others grouping their ideas as effectively in another order. Candidates are advised that they need to organise their writing in appropriate paragraphs in order to improve performance.

Overall, the vast majority wrote a suitable amount for **Section 1** and captured the polite but informative tone very well. Other responses were rather short, only just reaching the lower word limit. Candidates need to ensure that they address the word length requirements in their responses. Linguistically, candidates were

generally at ease with vocabulary associated with school and student excursions, although there was some confusion with the use of the future tense when discussing a proposal for future implementation. Most candidates found little difficulty in addressing the task to produce a convincing piece of work.

Section 2

Question 2

Describe something that your family owns that you really value and love and one thing that you would like to get rid of. Explain why you like or dislike these things.

This was a less popular title. The vast majority of candidates who chose this title were able to clearly identify two specific items to describe, one loved and one loathed. Others were broader in their interpretation of 'ownership' and considered more abstract ideas about quality family time, or relationships. Some suggested a relative or family member as an example of something to get rid of. The best responses were more personal, employing convincing details about the items chosen, focusing on family history, items with sentimental value, or favourite childhood toys. Many focused on the television or electronic gadgets as items to get rid of, focusing on their negative influence on family life and quality leisure time. A few alluded to hideous family heirlooms or ornaments that took pride of place in their living rooms. Most remembered to describe their feelings about the items, some drawing interesting contrasts between their feelings of attachment, and their feelings of loathing for the chosen objects. A few responses were a little imbalanced, often finding it easier to focus on the item valued.

Question 3

'All the problems in the world, large or small, are caused by selfishness.' Do you agree? Give reasons and examples to support your view.

This was a popular title and proved to be an attractive topic for candidates of all abilities. It was often approached by candidates who had interesting ideas and opinions on the subject. Most expressed great support for the statement, citing economic crises, conflicts and poverty as evidence of selfishness and greed around the world. Some candidates took a very balanced view and argued that many natural disasters cannot be blamed on human selfishness, but also pointing out that the inequality that exists in many societies could be blamed on the selfishness of the few. Many referred to the younger generation having less selfish attitudes in terms of ecological issues and awareness, and they argued that we are becoming more aware of the impact of our selfishness on our planet. Again, it was impressive to see how many candidates were well informed about world issues, but also how many could utilise their personal experiences in their responses to this question. Many candidates could explore their ideas with convincing evidence over a number of paragraphs rather than merely repeating a strong but limited view.

Question 4

Write a story which includes the sentence: 'Because of what I discovered, the return journey seemed a lot shorter and happier.'

This was a popular title. Favourite themes included long arduous car journeys to relatives, long-haul flights, or sometimes abductions, or mysterious journeys to unknown destinations. The best essays were those that built up to the prescribed sentence effectively and explored the discovery fully. There were some really intriguing and well developed plots involving journeys that were reluctantly undertaken for various reasons, then a situation resolving itself to lead to a much more light-hearted attitude on the return. Such responses focused on building up suspense for the reader. Less successful responses spent a great deal of time building up to the required sentence in their narrative, but failing to really explore the potential in terms of the plot. These responses often ended with the prescribed sentence and the reader was left unsure of why the return journey seemed shorter or happier, or exactly what had been discovered before it was undertaken. The weakest responses were those which simply told a narrative story which lacked any development of tension or drama, or those where the situation was so mundane that there was no reason for a change in emotional state on the journey back. Very occasionally the journey back was just tagged on to a general story. It was noticeable at all levels of response how well the majority of candidates integrated the given topic sentence into their writing without any sense of awkwardness.

Question 5

Patience.

This was a less popular topic inviting a very small number of responses. Any approach to this question was possible. The best responses either treated it as a reflective title exploring the importance of patience in today's frantic world, or wrote a narrative where patience (or a lack of it) featured as an important attribute (or flaw). There were some thoughtful explorations of why patience is of such importance in the modern world and why we so often fail to exercise it sufficiently. Other successful responses considered how patience could be a more valued virtue in the world today, or considered our greed in a throw-away society where we are always so impatient for the next version of the latest gadget that we fail to appreciate what we have or the beauty of the world around us. Weaker responses found little to say on the topic and tried to define the word 'patience', often resulting in rather repetitive and unconvincing responses.

Question 6

Write a story in which meeting a total stranger changed someone's life.

This was by far the most popular title, inviting some really moving stories about complete strangers stepping in to help a less fortunate individual, often orphans or street children with terrible lives, and offering them a new life through funding their education, or offering them a home and shelter. Some stories were less positive, focusing on a chance meeting which led to the downfall of the protagonist through involvement in crime or dishonesty. The better responses explored thoughts and feelings fully as well as developing a convincing plot, with some showing a good lexical range to highlight the drama and tension. Many responses were more reflective, exploring how meeting a stranger could completely turn a person's life around and whether that could be attributed to fate or good fortune, or whether it should be viewed as a reward for virtues such as patience and stoicism in trying circumstances. Less successful responses were wholly narrative, focusing on events but not developing the thoughts and feelings of the characters.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/12

Writing

Key Messages

- The use of dialogue is effective in creating character but proper paragraphing of it is essential.
- Concentration on correct tenses and agreement would improve the performance of most candidates.
- An awareness of the proper use of full stops (not just commas) is a crucial part of the descriptor for Language Band 3 and above.
- The use of 'And', 'But' and 'So' as repeated sentence openings should be avoided, as well as 'Moreover' when wrongly used.
- 'As' and 'When' are often confused, especially as sentence openings.
- In letters, it must be remembered that an appropriate valediction and a signature have to be added and that they should be properly punctuated.
- Candidates should be aware of the increasing and incorrect use of the word 'got'.
- Candidates should be aware of the difference between 'fell' and 'felt', 'him' and 'her'.
- Slang words such as 'chill', 'guys', 'kids', and 'cute', should be avoided in any formal writing and have only a limited use in speech to suggest character.
- The construction 'Me and my friends...', etc. should be avoided.

General Comments

The overall standard this year seemed to be very much as it has been in recent years. **Section 1** was done well by most candidates and, if anything, there was another improvement in the overall Task Fulfilment marks. There was a spread of responses in **Section 2**, although the narrative questions, with their more obvious structure, were generally more popular than the others. The vast majority of candidates used the time well, wrote appropriate amounts for each question and avoided rubric infringements, all of which demonstrated how well they had been prepared. The strengths and weaknesses of the linguistic ability were similar to those of previous sessions, with a great deal of very fluent, imaginative and accurate writing in evidence. Candidates were better at using original rather than prepared openings to narrative essays but are advised not to use whole sentences from the task in **Section 1**. There were some examples of text messaging language, abbreviations and expressions such as 'gonna' and 'wanna', which can sometimes suggest the wrong register and slang should also be avoided, especially that derived from watching films. Lengthy first drafts are increasingly rare which has helped with timekeeping but some candidates need to be aware that writing a draft in pencil and copying over it in ink may make it extremely difficult to read.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Question 1

The Directed Writing task is assessed with equal marks given to **Task Fulfilment** and **Language** criteria. This year, candidates had to imagine they were writing a letter to a newspaper editor, praising a young person who had helped an elderly person who had fallen while shopping. This topic was an extremely successful one in that there were very few major misinterpretations of the overall situation and there were virtually no examples of candidates not attempting the question. Candidates clearly had first-hand experience of, or had witnessed, such an incident. To demonstrate the necessary reading skills required in the **Section 1** task, candidates had to be aware that an elderly relative of theirs was in a shopping environment and had suffered a minor mishap. This resulted in their falling, and requiring assistance from a young person who left the scene soon afterwards. In order to satisfy the requirements of the bullet points this year a perfect answer had to have:

- the date of the incident **and** exactly how it happened
- details of what injuries were suffered **and** how the young person helped
- why this event was important to the wider public.

The descriptors for **Task Fulfilment** for **Section 1** in the syllabus make clear that candidates will be judged under headings of clear understanding of purpose, situation and audience; a correct format for the piece of writing; appropriate tone and register; the use of information to justify personal opinion and the sensible development and organisation of the bullet points. In **Task Fulfilment** it is the **development of the ideas**, often the distilling of clear points, which will gain most marks. Furthermore, it is vital to remember that candidates are not supposed to be writing a narrative essay although there will be a need for some explanation. Therefore, the most successful candidates clearly stated the date of the event and how the accident happened. Usually the latter was because of slipping on some stairs or on a wet floor. Sometimes it was the result of a faulty escalator catching some clothing, or carrying too many bags. Quite often, the relative had not eaten and therefore fainted or what they wanted was on a very high shelf. A large number of candidates chose to exaggerate the circumstances of the fall, so that they wrote about robbers trying to steal from the relative or sometimes it was the result of a speeding car or other traffic accident. While not exactly 'wrong', it suggests a misreading of the task which put all the emphasis on merely falling awkwardly. A more significant misreading was when a few candidates made the relative young, sometimes very young, as with one example of 'my younger cousin' which then called into question whether help would have been given so enthusiastically by another young person. Quite a large number of candidates had difficulty providing the date properly and it is necessary here to repeat the advice given in the same circumstances last year. In general, when asked for the date (as opposed to just 'When'), it is not enough to copy from the scenario and say 'recently'. Nor is it enough to say 'last Friday' when candidates are not asked to supply a date above 'Dear Sir'. Obviously, if they do supply a date above 'Dear Sir,' then an expression like 'last Friday' becomes an adequate one. Otherwise, if a date is asked for, then candidates should give an actual date or refer to a festival or occasion which has a universal, fixed date. There was often some good elaboration when candidates said the relative had been buying for a particular occasion, such as a forthcoming wedding or birthday and all this helped produce a solid paragraph. However, this elaboration only worked well when kept brief and relevant. Weaker candidates sometimes lost focus by providing over lengthy introductions and details of the shopping trip before the main incident.

The details given for bullet 2 regarding the injuries and the help from the young person were extremely wide ranging. Some candidates gave inadequate answers by repeating the expression 'minor injuries' but there were also very realistic details of injuries which suggested the candidates had thought about the nature of the accident and its consequences. Such injuries included cuts and bruises as well as sprained ankles, all of which had the ring of truth about them. As with bullet 1 though, some candidates misread the requirement for 'minor injuries' and exaggerated unnecessarily as if writing a narrative. So there were broken limbs (often several at a time), paralysis and even a number who were close to death. This may have appeared more exciting but candidates needed to remember that they were supposed to be responding to a given scenario and not making one up. The help given by the young person was mainly in line with the injuries received and so the victim was lifted to a nearby bench, and water and medication were purchased from a nearby shop. Very often, the young person took the victim to hospital and even paid for all the treatment received before vanishing. Stronger responses amplified the first and second bullet points with what appeared to be personal experience of local establishments which added tremendously to the apparent authenticity of the responses this year. The better responses chose fewer injuries, and focused on realistic help, whereas weaker responses merely listed as many injuries as possible.

Bullet point 3, about the importance of the episode, proved to be well done by many candidates and often became the discriminator. Candidates correctly felt the need to thank the young person for the help given (as suggested in the task) but then went on to show how this example of good behaviour was a lesson to the general public in how such kindness could benefit society as a whole. This was perfectly captured by one candidate who wrote, 'I would like readers to know that small acts of kindness can mean the world to someone else and that everyone should perform their duties as a good citizen with alertness and vigilance'. Much was made of the fact that one generation had helped another when very often the younger generation had been thought to lack such altruism. Less successful responses did not respond fully to the idea and simply thanked the younger person or offered a meal as a means of thanks.

Generally, there was a very good awareness of **audience** and **situation** throughout the task. Successful answers showed a clear awareness of the Editor as the audience; it is worth remembering that phrases like '...you, as the Editor...' help to reinforce this awareness. A few candidates were less than clear about the audience and, having addressed the Editor for the first two bullet points, suddenly started addressing the helpful young person for the third bullet point. A handful of candidates, despite the instruction to start 'To the Editor', addressed the whole letter to the young rescuer and so found themselves telling the young person

about events they already knew about. Although some responses were too passionate or conversational for such a letter, the **tone/register** was kept formal by most, which was as expected, and virtually everyone remained 'polite and informative' as instructed. Most candidates employed a satisfactory **format**, mainly by ensuring that their letter was a formal one and providing a suitably formal ending with signature. A small number of responses were too informal (using 'From' in place of a suitable valediction) and some were far too friendly ('Regards'), given the formal nature of the writing. Some candidates relied simply on a first name rather than a full name as a signature which was too informal and such small points took the gloss off an otherwise worthy effort. There were also some examples of the valediction and signature being left out altogether, and one or two examples of candidates writing about this incident as a report. **Opinion and justification** were easy to cover in responding properly to bullet point 3. Organisation varied only occasionally with virtually everyone following the logical and chronological structure of the bullet points.

Overall, the vast majority had no difficulty in writing full answers for **Section 1** and they captured the sense of gratitude very well. Linguistically, candidates were at ease in talking about a relative and there were enough references to medical matters to enhance the register. Spelling was generally good. Most candidates also found little trouble in maintaining the proper tense sequence. Paragraphing was much improved this year but there is room for further improvement. Candidates are advised to remember that paragraphing is as essential here as in **Section 2**. The advice remains, as last year, that a useful rule for this section is one paragraph for each bullet point plus a brief introduction and conclusion. It is also worth repeating that it is better to avoid copying sentences from the scenario. As far as vocabulary was concerned this year, there were many candidates who relied too heavily on the wording of the task scenario to form (with minor changes) their own first paragraphs to explain why they were writing. Such candidates are advised to start afresh, using their own words. From the introduction onwards, for most, the vocabulary relied less on the original and was more authentic as a result. However, many candidates overused the verb 'rushed' to suggest the seriousness of the situation so that the rescuer variously 'rushed' to the victim, the nearest pharmacy, and the hospital. Also, there was, this year, a noticeable increase in the confusion between 'as' and 'when' to denote the urgency, for example 'As the young man arrived on the spot, he bandaged my aunt's arm and gave her water...' as if all these actions were taking place at once. Finally, there was a significant increase throughout **Sections 1** and **2** in the use of the word 'got'. This sometimes took the form of a rather inelegant main verb as in '...she got bruises...'. Also, the word was increasingly seen as an auxiliary verb to suit all situations, as in '...my mother got admitted to the hospital...' so that, all in all, the word 'got' seemed to crop up everywhere, including in situations where it was very awkward indeed ('...this event got a setback for the family...').

Section 2

Question 2

Describe the neighbourhood where you live and the most interesting person who lives there.

This was a much more popular question than the descriptive essay normally is, even though it was still some way behind the narrative titles in this respect. The subject matter was of immediate and crucial relevance to candidates and a large number took the opportunity to talk about their surroundings and a person of interest. When done by the most competent candidates, there was usually a fairly equal balance in the content given over to the neighbourhood and the neighbour. The vast majority of candidates who attempted this question were understandably pleased and proud to live where they did and the chance to praise the area was a strong motivation in choosing this. Most started by saying how long they had lived in the particular locality (usually all their lives, although some had moved in more recently because of a parent's employment). Houses, streets and parts of the country were described, often lyrically by the most able. Most candidates took the opportunity of talking about the amenities of the area, such as shops and medical centres, and very often a park was in evidence. This led naturally to talk of the various activities in the neighbourhood – jogging, sport and local gossip – as candidates moved from the physical neighbourhood to the neighbours themselves. As this suggests, the better candidates were very clear about the difference between the neighbourhood as place and the neighbours as people, and both of these elements made for very interesting reading as the different cultural norms of various regions were described. Some candidates seemed less clear about 'neighbourhood' as a place and the weakest often wrote about people while referring to them as the 'neighbourhood'. Limiting though this was, the content was generally acceptable in whichever case. The most interesting people described were many and various and, while the majority of candidates chose a close friend in this respect, it was noticeable how many older people were described, people who had lived all their lives in the one place and now served as mentors to the locals. Certainly, a very strong sense of community emerged. The descriptive language of the better candidates made good use of adjectives, as well as more literary devices, to conjure up the sights, smells and sounds of an area. Linguistically, the most obvious common weakness was to use the word 'neighbourhood' in rather an awkward way, as in '...blessed to have a very generous neighbourhood who are more like a family...'.

Question 3

What do you most admire about visitors to your country and what do you least admire? Give examples and reasons to support your view.

This was a popular title and proved to be an attractive topic for candidates of all abilities. Most were well versed in the attractions of their country and the subject of tourism was clearly one they had thought about. Strong responses were very clear about there being a positive and a negative side to having visitors to the country. On the positive side, many felt that it was beneficial to have visitors arrive both for leisure and business pursuits. Holidaymakers brought money to boost the local economy whereas business people brought a financial boost to the wider economy and helped to underpin the infrastructure of the country. Ideas were exchanged with both groups of visitors and so the country developed. Most leisure visitors were seen as being friendly and eager to learn about their new surroundings and culture, whether it was the customs or the cuisine in particular. Knowledge of what really was true of a country (rather than a view from outside) was then taken back by visitors and a greater spirit of understanding and co-operation was fostered. On the negative side, visitors could sometimes be seen as not interested in learning and tourism brought only litter and pollution, excessive drinking of alcohol and inappropriate dress. The vast majority of candidates saw both sides of the argument and provided many, often first-hand, examples to explain their views. Some weaker candidates slightly misinterpreted the topic, thinking that it was about what the visitors would most or least admire and they drifted into essays about the pros and cons of tourism. These essays tended to be more pedestrian and were largely about listing the tourist attractions available in an order of merit according to how they would be appreciated by visitors.

Question 4

Write a story which includes the sentence: ‘When I thought about it, I couldn’t ignore the fact that we had been dishonest.’

This was by far the most popular title. There were many and varied storylines, with well-structured plots and good characterisation. Use of brief but significant dialogue was also a feature of the better responses. A good number of the narratives centred on school and plots usually involved gaining access to question papers for exams that were imminent. The narrator alone, or with friends, would decide that the exams were approaching too quickly for comfort and that success could only be gained by having prior knowledge of the questions. Somehow, the protagonist(s) in such stories always found it possible to break into a school office where the question papers were stored and get away undetected so that exam success was assured. There were also very many stories about the narrator (and friends) misleading their parents so as to go on a trip or to a party or the cinema. Other storylines involved people giving out false information about others or selling business secrets to a rival firm, as well as accounts of infidelity. Whatever the cause of and the circumstances of the dishonesty, the truth tended to prevail in the end. Those who had stolen secrets or exam questions or misled parents invariably confessed and were praised for their honesty. Similarly, those who betrayed others could not live with the guilt and made it up to the injured party. The title highlighted a weakness in the use of tenses amongst weaker candidates, particularly when flashbacks were used. Also, candidates are advised to use the given sentence in such titles exactly as it is and not manipulate the pronouns and tenses to fit what they have already written.

Question 5

Leisure.

This was not a very popular topic with only a small number of responses. Any approach to this question was possible but they tended to fall into two types. Most candidates who attempted the topic wrote about leisure in a discursive way, although there was very often an overlap between leisure, pleasure and relaxation. Leisure was seen as beneficial in virtually every case. Mostly it was seen as an antidote to the pressures of life, be they the stress of school work or of the business world or of household chores. Everyone felt that human beings deserved leisure time as some kind of reward for their efforts in whatever field. This leisure time was either of the non-productive sort, largely being a matter of quiet relaxation, or it was productive, some kind of active pursuit. Sport was extremely popular in this sense; it normally took the form of highly active sport, as with football or cricket. On the other hand, more contemplative pursuits such as yoga were recommended as an activity. Home-based hobbies were also favoured. These tended to form the second type of response to this topic where the candidate outlined in some detail how he or she spent leisure time. Most candidates were also aware of the negative aspects of too much leisure time which can lead to a lack

of fulfilment. Linguistically, some weaker candidates were confused about whether to use the word 'leisure' as a singular or plural noun, as in 'these leisures...'

Question 6

Write about a brother and sister who are always trying to be better than each other.

This question was fairly popular but far less so than the other narrative title. Candidates were equally divided between writing about their own siblings or a pair of siblings they knew about. Whichever was the case, the rivalry between the brother and sister was invariably fierce and often metaphors of battles were used, sometimes to comic effect. It took the form of rivalry at school in academic matters and in the sporting field. Slightly older brothers and sisters were competitive about universities and business opportunities. Another feature which was obvious in a very great number of essays was the rivalry to secure parental love. Brothers and sisters routinely sabotaged anything to do with the other sibling and there were some extremely amusing accounts of clothes being shown off and subsequently spoiled by the rival sibling. Similarly, school homework and projects were destroyed. A feature of all such essays was the feeling in the end that such rivalry was never more important than the love that the brother and sister shared. Linguistically, because a brother and sister were involved, it highlighted amongst many candidates the uncertainty over the pronouns 'he' and 'she'.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/21

Reading

Key Message

- In **Question 1a**, where candidates are advised to use note form, there were very few who reproduced lengthy extracts from the text, choosing rather to use the bullet point format suggested by the given point in each box. This helps to structure the responses. Candidates need to recognise the necessity to complete each point within one bullet; marks may be lost because the point is split across two or more bullets, with no sensible contextual link between them.
- In **Question 1a** it is essential that candidates read precisely the requirements of the rubric. The two box writing frames ask for distinct information and there were several instances of that information being entered in the wrong box. It was noticeable, particularly in the second box frame, that many points were incomplete because, while the 'uses' of gold in modern times may have been stated, there was often no reference to the different qualities which 'attract' people to use it in these ways.
- In **Question 1b** candidates are advised to take greater care over the use of capital letters. They need to ensure that every full stop is followed by a capital letter, but that they should not be inserted randomly elsewhere in the body of writing. Instances of a capital following a comma which should have been a full stop suggested that some candidates would benefit from practice in basic sentence structure.
- When dealing, in the second text, with inferential questions, i.e. those which require answers to be distilled, or derived from the text, it is essential that candidates read again the whole of the paragraph to which the question directs them. This will ensure that all relevant material will be considered before an answer is attempted.

General Comments

Most scripts were presented neatly, within the guiding parameters of the question paper booklet and all questions were completed fully by the vast majority of candidates. Most had been guided and well prepared by their teachers for the types of questions to expect. Particularly noticeable was the improvement in candidates' ability to identify, from the first text, the writer's opinions, something which reports had previously flagged up as requiring more work.

Questions were to be answered on two texts, and the variety offered by, first, a non-fiction passage and, second, a fiction passage, catered for and engaged the interests of all candidates. The subject matter allowed for questions which stretched and differentiated between candidates, the best responses demonstrating an ability to deal with the some challenging questions of interpretation.

The first passage, 'Gold', explored the candidates' ability to read for ideas; the second, the story of 'Griet' and her encounter with future employers, tested their reading for meaning. 20 marks were available for the summary question, with 15 of these marks being awarded for the assessment of the candidates' ability to select content points from the text of 'Gold' and 5 marks for the assessment of their ability to express these points fluently in their own words. Further questions also tested candidates' ability to read for ideas: first, to respond to the text by drawing on their personal knowledge or experience; next, to decide which of three given statements was true; finally, to recognise two opinions, distinguishing them from the surrounding facts.

The second passage tested the candidates' literal and inferential comprehension, their understanding of vocabulary, use of own words and their appreciation of the writer's craft. The remaining 25 marks for the Paper could be gained here.

In **Question 1(a)** the majority of candidates followed the bullet point style of the first (given) point, producing a list of selected ideas separated into the two boxes, as instructed, except where a number of candidates confused the requirements of the rubric for each box. A noticeable number of candidates chose to copy directly from the passage rather than create their own notes, but usually still separating the points under bullets. Few filled the boxes with continuous prose lifted from the text, a practice which can result in lack of space for all necessary points.

As ever, care is necessary, when writing in notes, to ensure that the subject of the point is clear. A bullet point which begins with no subject, or with the pronoun 'It', will always refer to the subject of the rubric; here it was 'gold'. If the subject of the point was something else, for example 'gold leaf' or 'a gold coating', there was a need for explicit mention of these subjects which was not always met. For example, 'It is used in luxury cooking' was imprecise; it is gold leaf which is used this way. Similarly 'It is used to keep buildings cool' makes no sense without explaining that this is achieved by using gold 'as a coating' on windows.

In **Question 1(b)**, candidates were to write up their note form content points, using their own words, in continuous prose. There were some commendable efforts among those who made a sustained attempt to use their own words and original structures, and there were several assured and stylish writers who gained full marks. These candidates used a variety of carefully crafted and punctuated sentences. Others needed to include more originality of expression in order to achieve high marks. Some are very skilled at moving text around but offer no original vocabulary. Those candidates who simply lifted blocks of text often included irrelevant material in the process. Centres could advise pupils of the need to consider the content of lifted material to ensure that it addresses the question.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Reading for Ideas

Question 1(a) was the first part of the summary question, carrying 30% of the total marks for the paper. Candidates were asked to identify the information in the passage which described the ways in which gold was important down through the ages, and to explain the uses and attractions of gold in modern times. Using material from the whole passage, they could present these points using either the words of the text or their own words. One content point under each heading of the rubric was given by way of illustration, although these given points were not rewarded with a mark. Several candidates repeated the given points, an unnecessary practice which used up space in the box frames.

Excluding those supplied, there were a further 18 content points, of which candidates could identify any combination up to a maximum of 15 points, carrying one mark each. The full range of marks was seen, a small number of responses being awarded the maximum and many scoring half marks and above. Those weaker candidates who scored only a few points had usually started a point but left it incomplete: 'Gold coins were used to conduct transactions' and 'It was used to make jewellery' are examples of unfinished points which lacked the defining explanation as to why it was important to use gold for these things. Similarly, 'It is used to manufacture spacecraft', 'It is invaluable in modern electronics', and 'Surgical instruments are made of gold' do not describe the particular qualities of gold which make it attractive for such uses.

Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 described the ways in which gold was important, down through the ages, from ancient times, and offered a possible 10 points which the candidates could make. The first of these, apart from the given first one, was in Paragraph 1, and explained the importance of gold coins which were minted as a way of conducting transactions. Many candidates picked up the fact that these coins were minted but did not always mention how their portability and the ease with which they could be counted were what made them commercially important, compared with the earlier use of the 'pieces of gold' mentioned in the given point.

Paragraph 2 provided the next 3 possible points, all concerning the use of gold *for medicinal purposes in ancient times* and many candidates opted for that generalised way of expressing the first of these points. Alternatively, they could have made reference to its use in medicine by the *ancient Chinese* or in *traditional Indian medicines*. The idea of an early era needed to be included, as the passage later tells us that gold is still used in medicinal ways. Some candidates chose to record all three ways of expressing the same point but could only score for one of them. The next mention of a clinical use was that by Etruscan, or 'early' dentists; some went on to explain the dental procedures, but that was not necessary. The final medical point was its use, in molten form and mixed with crushed emeralds, seen in Europe as a cure for plague. This reference to plague gave the necessary 'ancient' or 'early' context.

In Paragraph 3 the passage moved on to describe the important association, in former times, of gold with religion and 3 points could be selected from this information. The first two described its link with the sun gods of the Egyptians and the Incas; the first ancient civilisation believed that gold was the skin of their sun god, Ra; the second that it represented the glory of their own sun god. If neither of these points was attempted, a candidate who made the generalisation that gold was associated with religion in ancient times could gain a

mark. The third important association with religion was that proved by the fact that there are over 400 references to gold in the books of the Jewish Testament.

From Paragraph 4 candidates could select a further 2 points about the ways in which gold can be seen as important in ancient times. The first was its use for making jewellery, because it does not tarnish; this reason for its importance in the making of such items was frequently omitted. The last point in this section was the generalised, but clearly stated, mention of gold being 'so important ... to people' that the practice of alchemy began. Candidates could score this point in one of three ways: they could refer to the Greeks, or 'people' practising alchemy, or could simply mention 'alchemy', the rubric providing the introduction of it as a way 'in which gold was important'; they could define alchemy, wording their response as 'the attempt to turn cheap metals into gold'; alternatively they could recognise and state the importance of alchemy as the foundation of modern chemistry. Candidates could not score with any suggestion that gold was 'used' in alchemy or that ancient people 'made gold' from base metals as both of these show lack of understanding.

Paragraph 5, beginning 'In more recent times ...' signalled to candidates that here began the information which they would need to complete notes in the second box writing frame: 'The uses and attractions of gold in modern times'. Paragraph 5, introduced two points, apart from the given first one, which concerned its recent medical applications. As with the corresponding reference to 'medicinal' uses in the first box, candidates could gain the first of these points by a general reference – this time to 'medicine'. Alternatively, and quite acceptably, many chose to give one or other of the specific uses described: as a drug to alleviate swelling caused by arthritis, or as radiation therapy to treat certain cancers. It was necessary to include mention of its being an ingredient in a *drug* or as part of radiation *therapy*, thus distinguishing the way in which gold is now used from the flaking and crushing which occurred in centuries past. Those who offered all three alternatives for this point, which many did, could only score 1 mark. The second point available in this paragraph was the medical use of gold as a constituent in surgical instruments. Many candidates went this far but did not mention that the great attraction of gold in this case is its non-corrosive quality, or the fact that it is easily sterilised.

Candidates could select two more points from Paragraph 6, which concentrated on the use of gold in modern technology: in electronics because it conducts electricity, or is 'easy to work with'; in the manufacture of spacecraft because it is a dependable material, or is a material which requires no maintenance or repair. Both of these aspects were frequently given though once again they were often incomplete, lacking mention of those qualities which attract engineers to employ gold in their work.

The final 5 points appeared in paragraph 7. The first 2 concerned the aesthetic uses of gold leaf, in particular, for decorative purposes. While the better candidates made specific reference to that particular form of gold, or its definition – 'gold hammered into thin sheets' – the majority said that 'It' was used to decorate, or gild, various objects. Without making the necessary distinction, 'It' could only refer to the subject of the question rubric: 'gold'. This was imprecise and did not score. There were quite a number of responses which gained the mark for this point but which went on to say, for the following point, that 'It' was used in luxury cooking, luxury desserts, luxury confectionery or Mithai for auspicious or special occasions. These candidates did not recognise that a use of gold leaf, specifically, was still being described and that they should have repeated the term or begun the next point with a clear link to the previous correct one, such as 'This form was also used to....', or 'And this was used to...'. 'Gold' became the subject once again for the next point which was its use to adorn or decorate buildings. Specific examples of particular buildings were unnecessary additions. The penultimate point concerned the manufacture of glass – not 'glasses', the common term for spectacles. The particular attraction of this use is that the addition of gold in the manufacturing process results in beautiful glass, or glass of a rich or ruby or red colour. Very many candidates were successful with this point by lifting the clear statement: 'Beautiful glass can be manufactured with gold'. The final available point was the practical use of gold as a coating on windows which keeps buildings cool by reflecting the sun's rays. To gain the mark candidates needed to specify that this was gold in 'coating' form and to make clear that the major attraction of that use is the resulting climate control.

A smaller number of candidates than usual were awarded maximum points though many scored half marks and above. Those others who scored very few marks had usually recognised the required information but did not adequately extend each point, or else split it across more than one bullet. Typical examples of this were:

It is used in electronics
It conducts electricity
and
It does not corrode
Surgical instruments are made with it.

Without linking each pair with 'because' or 'so, the points were incomplete. Noticeably, candidates were not always consistent, sometimes seeing the necessity to link the use of gold to the reason *why* it was an attractive element in some points, but not in others. There were those who listed a number of uses together, perhaps for economy of space in the box. Such a list needs to be carefully constructed to avoid the inclusion of unconnected ideas. Thus, saying that 'Gold is used to decorate furniture, objects, buildings and glass' actually only scored the point for 'decorating buildings'. Gold leaf was required for the decoration of 'objects' and 'furniture'; 'manufacture' or 'production' was required for the point about 'beautiful glass'.

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were asked to use their notes to write a summary, in their own words, describing the ways in which gold was important down through the ages, and explaining the uses and attractions of gold in modern times, as outlined in the passage. They were to write no more than 160 words (the first 10 of which were given), within the space available in the answer booklet. All candidates attempted the question and most did so comfortably within the given writing frame.

The passage contained a few expressions which were quite scientifically specific in meaning, for example 'conduct electricity' and 'radiation therapy', and examiners would not expect candidates to try to recast such technical terms. However, the best candidates showed a marked ability to use their own words for other challenging words and phrases, such as gold being 'a highly dependable material' that it does not 'tarnish', is 'malleable' and has 'aesthetic properties'. As suggested above, others needed to include more originality of expression in order to achieve high marks. Many candidates attempted to rework the relevant details from the passage, substituting their own words occasionally. The weakest lifted patches of text fairly randomly, and found it difficult to link these into a well-structured piece; fractured syntax and loss of meaning resulted. Linking words and phrases such as 'however', 'moreover' and 'on the other hand' should be used with care; if used inappropriately, they can destroy the sense. 'To add on', seen in a number of scripts, is not an accepted connecting phrase; it is perhaps an awkward attempt at 'in addition', which should be used instead.

Apart from the misuse of capital letters, referred to in '**Key Messages**', there was sometimes difficulty in maintaining appropriate tenses. The rubric required candidates to write about the importance of gold 'down through the ages' and then to move to 'modern times'. For a fluent response, this necessitated a change from the past to the present tense. Some candidates securely controlled the move from one tense to the other and back again, when comparing the uses across the two eras. Others were less successful and the result was somewhat muddled, as in 'Ancient people used it in medicine and it was used for radiation therapy', and 'Etruscan dentists *use* it.'

Use of the intrusive article was an issue for some candidates, as in 'Gold is used in *the* modern medicine' instead of simply 'modern medicine', and 'It was used to make *the* jewellery', rather than '.to make jewellery'.

Care with spelling was clearly in evidence in scripts from the better candidates; in others it was not sometimes as careful as it might have been, especially when it was copied inaccurately from the text. Spelling of basic words such as 'there' and 'their', 'were' and 'where', 'to' and 'too' would benefit from more practice.

Short answers were very rarely seen. Candidates have taken the advice given previously that very short answers can never justify a high mark because sustained use of own words or completely accurate English cannot be demonstrated. A number of candidates were innovative or original in their use of English; their style was accurate and included original complex structures. Others wrote accurately but within the limitations of simple sentence structures or 'and' linked compounds. Those who are competent and comfortable with such syntax could now work on the use of relative pronouns and participial phrases to improve their style.

Questions 2, 3 and 4 tested 'Reading for Ideas', where candidates were to demonstrate their ability to respond to the ideas of the whole text or a section of it. **Question 2** asked candidates to give two ways in which, from their own knowledge or experience, they know that gold has been used to symbolise power, beauty or happiness. While it was not essential to specify which of 'power, beauty or happiness' their answers demonstrated, most were linked clearly to one or other of them e.g. 'Because it marks 50 years of marriage, we call the anniversary a golden anniversary'; 'Kings wear a golden crown'; 'Women in my country adorn themselves in gold'. A varied range of uses from both past and present was offered by candidates who considered the question carefully, including: gold as bride price; golden statues; the gold reserves of a country; gold clothing; body paint and make up; golden eras; gold weapons – and many more. There were many other candidates who, not having read the question completely and responding with 'jewellery' of any kind, decoration of buildings, or any other use mentioned in the passage, could not score; the question clearly stated 'Do not use examples from the passage'. The 'wearing of gold on special occasions' was an acceptable answer as this did not necessarily suggest jewellery and could have meant clothing, make up,

crowns and so on. General or vague comments such as 'Having gold means you're rich', 'Gold is very expensive so only those with power and money can afford to buy it', or 'Gold can describe some good things' were not sufficiently specific to be credited.

Question 3 asked candidates to indicate, from their reading of paragraph 2, which of three given statements was true. The majority were correct in ticking the third box: 'The writer thinks that Etruscan dentists were less skilled than modern dentists.' The use of the adverb 'simply', to modify how the Etruscan dentist worked with gold, was the clue to the comparison.

Question 4 required candidates to select and write down two of the writer's opinions from Paragraph 4. Teachers had clearly been encouraging pupils to practise this skill as many more candidates than in the past were able to earn both marks by identifying the opinions precisely: that gold is a beautiful bright yellow colour – or simply that it is a beautiful colour or a beautiful yellow; secondly that everyone loves gold jewellery. Most candidates used the words of the passage while a few confidently used their own words to say the same thing. No scripts offered a candidate's personal opinion and only very few lifted in excess, from the passage, something which blurred the precise opinion, as in 'Gold is a beautiful bright yellow colour *and does not tarnish in air or water*'. The most frequent answer given which was a fact rather than an opinion was that alchemy is seen as the foundation of modern chemistry. Very rarely did a candidate select what he considered was an opinion about worship of a golden calf being 'one of the worst betrayals'; this could not be a correct answer as that reference was in Paragraph 3, not Paragraph 4.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 2

Reading for Meaning

Candidates usually find the fiction text more challenging than the first, non-fiction passage, as they have to deal more figurative language and narrative style. Questions on the writer's craft require that candidates learn how to recognise and decode figurative language; inferential questions demand that they focus on what lies beneath a literal interpretation. This was the case in a number of questions in this section.

Question 5(a) asked what Griet's mother was worried about. This straightforward opening question in Section 2 was generally very well answered, using the information in lines 1- 2: she did not want Griet to appear, or to be, nervous. A few candidates fell into ambiguity over the use of the pronoun 'she', as in 'That she would appear nervous'. Given the wording of the question, this could have meant the mother did not want to seem nervous herself; that answer required the inclusion of 'her'. 'That she did not want *her* to appear nervous' would have made a clear distinction between the two females mentioned in the question.

Question 5(b) was the first of several inferential questions in this section. Candidates were to show understanding of the contrast between Griet's family and the couple, implied by the fact that the visitors had 'the kind of voices rarely heard in our house'. The passage enlarged on this in the following sentence, describing the riches of their lifestyle which their voices conveyed. Here was an example of the necessity, mentioned in '**Key Messages**', of candidates re-reading the whole paragraph in which the quoted words appear. Doing so would have provided the information which could be distilled to suggest the richness implied, in contrast to the rarity of such richness in Griet's world. It was a two mark question and required both sides of the contrast. Some candidates suggested that Griet's family were poor without adding that the couple were rich, or vice versa. Many used a comparative form of expression, as in 'The couple were richer than Griet's family' or 'Griet's family were poorer than the couple'. Such comparisons are relative: Griet's family could still have been rich, the visitors merely being much richer than they; or the couple could have been poor, Griet's family being that bit more so. A small number of better candidates made two simple statements to gain the two marks: 'Griet's family was poor and the couple were rich.'

Question 5(c), again inferential, asked what candidates thought was the meaning of the 'warning' that was flashing in Griet's mother's eyes. A high number suggested the same answer as they had given to **Question 5a**, that Griet should not be nervous, though it has been reported in the past that different questions are unlikely to require the same answer. Several responses suggested that the mother warned Griet to 'prepare herself' or to 'prepare the kitchen' or 'tidy up' before the visitors came into the room. As we are told that the woman and the man were 'behind' Griet's mother, these things would have taken too much time. The best answers saw the more likely reason to be that Griet should be polite, respectful or well-behaved, that she should behave well, correctly or formally.

Question 5(d), referring to the fact that the woman ‘had to duck her head’, asked what this showed about the design of Griet’s family home. The correct inference was recognised frequently, but was not usually expressed correctly. Once again, a re-reading of the whole paragraph would have reminded candidates that it was as she came through the doorway to the kitchen that the tall woman had to ‘duck’. This showed that the doorway, the door or the ceilings were low, or too low for tall people. Frequently, the use of the word ‘small’ gave an imprecise description: the doorway, the door, or even the house or roof were described as small. Other popular misconceptions were that the house, the doorway, or the door were ‘built for small people’ or that ‘Griet’s family were all small’. The precise difference between ‘low’ and ‘small’ was not often recognised. The use of ‘short’ or ‘not high enough for tall people’ were acceptable alternatives for ‘low’.

Question 6(a) examined candidates’ ability to recognise the picture created by the writer’s use of the simile which compared the woman’s curls to ‘a swarm of bees’. Many gained, from this example of the writer’s craft, an impression of her curls being ‘numerous’, ‘many’ or ‘a lot’, like the number of bees in a ‘swarm’. Alternatively, a smaller number chose to say that the curls were ‘flying around’ or ‘moved about’, once again imagining the correct image. A third possibility was that given by others who imagined the formation of a swarm of bees rather than their number or movement, offering answers such as ‘they were clustered’ or ‘were close together’. The mark was not credited when candidates suggested that the curls were ‘messy’ or ‘all over the place’; the comparison with bees was lost in such answers. Those responses which spoke of her ‘hair’ rather than her ‘curls’ were inexact.

In **Question 6(b)** candidates had to pick out and write down the single word used later in the same paragraph which continued the comparison with a swarm of bees. ‘Swatting’ was correctly identified by the vast majority of candidates, only a few quoting ‘elaborate’ or ‘spun’, or spoiling the correct answer with the addition of a second or third word.

Question 6(c) Another inferential question, the responses were quite frequently successful, at least in part. Asked why the woman was corrected by Griet’s mother, candidates had to show an understanding of two things: what the woman had said or done to warrant a correction and the way in which Griet’s mother perceived her daughter, which caused her to make that correction. Candidates did not always mention distinctly that the way in which the woman had referred to Griet - ‘This is the girl, then’ - was ‘abrupt’, or rude, disrespectful or dismissive. These were good alternatives which were used by very few. A small number expressed the rudeness of the woman’s manner: she looked down on Griet; she thought she was unimportant; she didn’t bother to ask or use her name. Any of these gave the correct inference regarding the woman’s rudeness about Griet in this situation. To show understanding of why the mother corrected this rudeness it was not enough simply to quote the mother’s words, ‘This is my daughter, Griet’. This answered the question ‘How?’ did she correct the woman, not ‘Why?’ did she correct her, which is what the question asked. Reference was needed, for that second part, to the mother being annoyed or offended by the labelling of her daughter as ‘the girl’. Alternatively, it could be phrased in terms of her wanting Griet to be treated with respect, to be treated as her daughter, to be called by her name to show she was a person and not an object. Several candidates showed a complete understanding of the situation and gained both available marks; more frequently, one or other aspect was offered alone.

Question 7(a) again required candidates to respond to the writer’s craft. It asked what the writer wished to convey about the man’s feelings when he spoke his wife’s name ‘as though he held honey in his mouth’. At least half of the answers were in the right area: the words showed that the man ‘loved’ his wife. Those responses which were similar were credited, even if they were not quite so strong, such as ‘he cared for his wife’, ‘he was fond of her’, ‘he had affection for Catharina’. Those who said that he ‘spoke sweetly’, ‘spoke lovingly’, or even that ‘he was romantic’ or ‘was caring’ were not quite there; the question asked how the man’s words represented ‘his feelings’ for Catharina, not for the manner in which he spoke. There was a large number of candidates who appeared to misinterpret the image, suggesting that the man was embarrassed by, ashamed of, or angry with his wife. They may still have been thinking of the previous question and his wife’s rudeness, though such responses bore no relation to the simile and could not score.

Question 7(b) This was the first question which required candidates to answer in their own words and, encouragingly, almost everyone did so, recognising the key words which suggested the two different ways in which the man and his wife looked at Griet, and attempting to recast them. A few of the best candidates found synonyms for both the man’s ‘steady’ look and the woman’s look which ‘flickered’. A larger number substituted competently for ‘steady’, with ‘calm’ or ‘unchanging’ being the most popular words and ‘attentively’, ‘as if examining’ or ‘studying her’ being good alternative phrases. That the look or expression in the woman’s eyes ‘flickered’ was less well attempted. Very few offered a ‘distracted’ look or said that her look ‘was not fully concentrated’ or ‘focused’, or that it was ‘changing’. Very many said that she looked at Griet with varying degrees of disgust, anger, hatred or even loathing. Those whose answers relied on the notion of *facial* expression, rather than the look or expression in the eyes were not credited with the mark.

In **Question 7(c)** candidates were asked for the two features of the pattern in which Griet always laid out the vegetables she had chopped. The answer booklet gave two separate lines, one for each feature, and both were required for the single mark. The more obvious one was that Griet always laid the vegetables out 'in a circle', which was defined again as being 'like a pie'; these phrases both described the same feature. A large number of the candidates offered these separately, ignoring the feature mentioned immediately before this, whereby 'each type (of vegetable was) in its own section'. The best responses showed evidence of reading again the whole section devoted to the vegetables and, recognising the two distinctive features, gained the mark.

Question 7(d), a straightforward, literal question, was answered well by most candidates. Asked why Griet's sister had shaken her head, the fact that Griet had just lied was usually correctly offered. There was occasional difficulty if an ambiguous pronoun was used as in 'Because she had lied'; the subject, here, might have been the sister rather than Griet. A small number reworked the text words to answer: 'She shook her head *at Griet's response*', without stating what it was about the response that provoked the head shaking.

Question 7(e) was an inferential question, recognisable as such by the four introductory words in '*How do you think Griet was feeling when she looked down?*' The majority of candidates correctly suggested that she was 'ashamed', 'embarrassed' or 'disappointed in herself' with most adding 'because she had lied and she didn't lie often', though that was not an essential extension. The expression 'She felt bad' was seen here and elsewhere (in **Question 7(a)**, for example) when a 'feeling' was to be described. The word is colloquially used with so many meanings - from 'evil' to 'ill', from 'sorry for' to 'guilty', from 'embarrassed' to 'uneasy' - that it has become imprecise in nature and should be avoided in favour of something more appropriate, according to context. Here, the examples above are more precise.

In answer to **Question 8(a)** candidates had to explain fully why Griet's mother was 'hunching her shoulders as if against a winter chill'. Hardly any thought it was because she was cold, and most realised that the writer was trying to evoke the emotions resulting from a difficult situation rather than any physical feeling. Reading the mother's words to Griet, following this description of her appearance, gave the clue to what she was feeling. A number of responses showed that these words represented the mother's shame, sadness or guilt, or that she felt beaten, powerless or had no choice about the situation. Here, again, the word 'bad' was used without any indication of exactly what was meant by 'She was feeling really bad'. The second mark was gained by those who went on to explain what that situation was in order to answer 'fully'. She was feeling upset that she had bad news to give Griet; she felt guilt or shame that her daughter must go to work as a servant or maid; she felt unhappy that she was going to lose her daughter because of this. Any of these ideas were reasonable deductions given the hunched shoulders and defeated attitude of Griet's mother, which candidates needed to understand. Many answers gained just one mark – more frequently the second than the first; the best candidates gained both. Very occasionally, the image of the hunched shoulders was seen as a jubilant response to Griet having 'got the job'. 'Pissed' or 'pissed off' were, unfortunately, seen a number of times, here. Candidates should be made aware that this is not acceptable English.

In **Question 8(b)** the vast majority realised that if an explosion had 'taken his eyes', Griet's father was blind. Nearly all candidates answered correctly, many with a succinct expression for the disability they were asked to give: 'blindness', 'he was blind', 'he had lost his sight' were typical responses. A few gave the acceptable lift, that 'the kiln had exploded, taking his eyes'. Those who used the term 'visually impaired', or said that 'he had lost *an* eye' were among the small number who did not earn the mark as neither of these means that someone is completely 'blind' as Griet's father must have been.

Question 9 required candidates to say, 'without using the words of the passage', why the neighbours would not gloat when they watched Griet passing by. Candidates needed to focus on and re-phrase the words 'compassionate' and 'similar position', and there were many scripts which earned at least one of the two marks. Here, once more, it appears that teachers have advised their pupils wisely, following comments in previous reports, that they should not simply offer a word and its synonym, but should provide a reasonable context for their answer. Thus, there were no answers such as 'Compassionate – sympathetic / similar position - same situation'. 'Compassionate' appeared to be the more challenging of the key words, with many responses offering alternatives which were rather too weak such as the neighbours being 'nice', 'kind' or 'understanding'. Much more accurate were the descriptions of those neighbours as 'sympathetic', 'feeling pity or concern for', and even 'empathetic'; these summed up their characters well and were seen in a number of the best scripts. More candidates proved successful in recasting the phrase 'similar position', frequently saying that the neighbours could find themselves in the 'same situation' or giving the equally acceptable notion that 'the same thing could happen to them'. Many of the weaker candidates seemed to have the right idea and only spoiled their recasting of the two word phrase by substituting just one or other of the key words, as in 'they could find themselves in the same *position*', or 'in a *similar* situation'.

Question 10 was the customary vocabulary question. Candidates were required to show their understanding, in context, but not necessarily in direct synonyms, of five words or phrases from a choice of eight. Candidates did not fare as well, here, as in previous examinations, full marks being extremely rare, 1 or 2 being common, and 0 being seen several times. This shows the need for practice in vocabulary building, through dictionary work and wider reading of a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts.

Apart from the last two in the list, candidates selected most of the other words in about equal numbers. *rarely* was successfully recast with 'once in a while' and 'seldom' (or the inaccurate but clearly understood attempt at an adverb 'seldomly'); 'hardly' was frequently seen but, without the addition of 'ever', the meaning was changed to suggest the voices could only just be heard. *Duck* was one of the better choices, most candidates substituting it with 'bend' or 'lower', while 'crouch' and 'put down' (rather than 'move down' were imprecise as descriptions of the action. Better candidates offered 'obvious', 'pronounced' or 'exaggerated' for *elaborate* while the contextually unsuitable definitions 'to explain' or 'to make clear' suggested that some candidates had not looked properly at the word in context before offering a synonym. Those who selected *abruptly* were most often successful with 'rudely' or 'sharply', while 'harshly' and 'suddenly' were popular wrong answers. *icily* was quite frequently selected and scored for the obvious synonyms 'coldly', 'in a cold manner' and 'coolly'; 'without feeling' and 'with no emotion' were not credited. 'caught off guard' was seen a few times as a good synonymous phrase for *thrown*, with 'taken aback' and 'surprised' also correctly given; 'caught', alone, was not acceptable and 'shocked' was too strong for the context. *Reproachful* was one of the least frequently attempted words and was only adequately paraphrased once or twice by 'blaming' or 'accusing'. The final word in the list, *shuffled*, was another rare choice and when substituted correctly was usually replaced with 'dragging your feet' or 'dragging your legs'; 'moving a little' required the addition of '... at a time' to avoid the suggestion that it was just one small movement; 'moved slowly' was a popular wrong answer.

Correct grammatical form was not insisted on in this question, as understanding of the word is what was being tested. The practice of including the chosen words in sentences has all but disappeared though the attempt to offer more than one synonym or phrase, for any given word, still exists. Candidates often give alternatives, separated by the word 'or', a slash, or a comma. This is of no benefit to candidates as only the first attempt will be marked.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/22
Reading

Key Messages

A thorough reading of the whole passage is recommended before beginning to answer the questions, particularly of the fiction text. Closer reading of the whole text before tackling the questions would help to clarify the narrative and the sequence and logic of events described in the text. As in past years, many candidates showed a good understanding of the summary passage, but some experienced more difficulty in responding to the detailed demands of the comprehension questions. In both summary and comprehension exercises, close reading and careful attention to detail were the attributes which brought the best results.

As in the past, many candidates were challenged by questions in which they were required to answer in their own words. In this type of question, candidates should couch their synonyms of key words in sentence form. Responses such as 'ruse - trick, delight – happiness' in **Question 10(c)** were seen as not answering the question.

Candidates are advised to work on vocabulary or dictionary exercises, as well as increased reading of both fiction and non-fiction material.

More instances than last session were recorded of candidates writing the content points in **Question 1(a)**, or answers to other questions in pencil, before writing over the pencil in pen. This led to writing which was difficult and, in some cases, impossible to read. This is a method of tackling the examination which could potentially disadvantage candidates.

In **Question 1(a)**, candidates are advised that content points cannot be scored if they are spread over two bullets with no obvious link, or if they are put in the wrong boxes, although there were fewer instances of this than in the past. Candidates should also focus in this question on making the *whole* point.

There were fewer cases than last session of the use in **Question 1(a)** of ellipsis, as in ... , instead of writing out the points in full. Use of ellipsis led to the loss of points and it is important that teachers continue to draw their pupils' attention to the fact that this is not an acceptable form of communication, even in note-form, in an examination.

In **Question 1(b)**, candidates can improve on the problem of noun-verb agreement, the omission of definite or indefinite articles, or intrusive use of the article where none is required. Further work on the use of connectives such as 'however' and 'furthermore' would help ensure that these are used appropriately. Candidates need practice in recognising the difference between opinion and fact in the first, non-fiction passage, although there was much more success with this type of question this session than last.

General Comments

Candidates were to answer questions based on two passages of around 700 words each, the first being non-fiction and the second being fiction, with answers written in the Question Paper booklet. As in previous sessions, Passage 1 seemed to be more accessible than Passage 2, as Passage 2 required understanding of implied meanings and some aspects of imagery and writer's craft.

There were very few incomplete scripts and even the weakest responses engaged with the tasks and the texts. Most candidates appeared to have been well prepared by their teachers, showing themselves to be familiar with the types of questions likely to be asked.

Both passages, the first entitled 'Social Networking Sites' and the second entitled 'Monica', seemed to engage the interest of the candidates and to stretch and discriminate amongst them, and this was reflected in a very wide range of scores ranging from single figure to almost full marks. The first passage explored the

candidates' ability to read for ideas and the second tested their reading for meaning. 20 marks were available for the summary question, with 15 of these marks being awarded for the assessment of the candidates' ability to select content points from the text of 'Social Networking Sites' and 5 marks for the assessment of their ability to express these points fluently in their own words. Further questions tested candidates' ability to read for ideas, in this case to give examples from their own knowledge or experience which linked to ideas in the passage, to glean the writer's attitude to the topic of the passage, and to distinguish fact from opinion.

The second passage tested the candidates' literal and inferential comprehension, their understanding of vocabulary, their use of own words and their appreciation of the writer's craft.

There were some, but not many, instances of 'no response' i.e. questions which candidates did not attempt to answer.

In **Question 1(a)** occasionally marks were lost because candidates confused the contents of the two boxes. However, there were fewer responses which offered points split across two bullets than has happened in the past: perhaps the more practice students are getting with the points boxes on the question booklet, the less this is happening.

The format of the summary question, both **Question 1(a)** and **Question 1(b)**, largely prevented candidates from writing to excess, copying verbatim at length or producing both fair and rough copies. Because of the contemporary nature of the passage, there was more irrelevance noted and evidence of candidates diverging from the rubric into areas of their own knowledge or experience of social networking sites.

In **Question 1(b)**, where candidates were to write up their note form content points in formal, continuous prose, there were some commendable results among those who made a sustained attempt to use their own words and original structures. Others needed to include more originality of expression in order to achieve high marks. The majority of candidates made at least some attempt to use own words and almost all wrote to the required length. Better responses took ownership of the text without straying from the content. These responses were secure in expression and had a real overview and understanding.

Linking words were sometimes used in an arbitrary or inaccurate way. For example, 'however' and 'hence' were sometimes used when what followed did not support this use. 'Although' was also frequently misused at the start of a sentence.

Both spelling and punctuation were good.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 Reading for Ideas

Question 1(a) was the first part of the summary question, carrying 30% of the total marks for the paper. Candidates were asked to identify the advantages and disadvantages of social networking sites, as outlined in the passage. The summary was based on the entire text, and candidates were to write their answers in note form, where they were free to use either the words of the text or their own words. One content point under each heading of the rubric was given by way of illustration, although these given points were not rewarded with a mark. Where marks were denied it was usually because key words or phrases were missing. Some responses were able to reach the maximum 15 marks. The exercise was fully discriminating as almost the whole range of marks could be found.

Excluding the provided content points, which were not rewarded with marks, there were 18 content points, of which candidates could identify any combination up to a maximum of 15 points, carrying one mark each. Most candidates expressed the points either in note form or in short sentences; some responses presented long, verbatim copies of the text for each content point. Candidates were not instructed to use bullet points, although the sample points given to assist them used bullets; however, most candidates used bullet points, seeming to realise that it would help them to focus more clearly on identifying content points if they were presented under bullets.

Paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 referred to the advantages of social networking sites, and there were 9 points (excluding the first, which was given) which the candidates could make. In Paragraph 1, there were 3 content points, (excluding the provided first point) outlining the advantages. People can keep in regular or

daily contact, messages can be posted at any time of the day or night which allows instantaneous updates, and maintaining relationships with friends or family in faraway places becomes easier, with an alternative to this third point being that using social networking sites is cheaper than long distance travel. Where marks were lost in this paragraph it tended to be because of incomplete points being made: mention of contact without its being daily or regular, or reference to instantaneous updates without reference to messages posted at any time, or vice versa.

There were 3 content points to be found in Paragraph 2, which were that social networking sites are a useful way to utilise down time, and that they provide opportunities to make new friends, as well as an opportunity to greatly increase one's circle of friends or to have many or a hundred friends. There was much success with the second of these points but less with the other two. Sometimes reference was made to 'time' rather than to 'down time', which means something different, and some candidates failed to distinguish between 'new' and 'many' friends, or omitted 'greatly' from the reference to increasing one's circle of friends.

In Paragraph 3, there were a further 3 content points, all of which concerned the role that social networking sites play in the business world. Business people, or employees, can keep themselves up to date with developments, people wanting new or better jobs, or unemployed people, can advertise themselves, and employers can recruit the best employee by examining information posted about them on social networking sites. Many marks were denied in this paragraph because of points incompletely made: employees kept themselves up the date without reference to 'developments'; people looking for jobs advertised without reference to 'themselves'; employers recruited employees without reference to their being the 'best' employees.

In the second section of the summary, the rubric asked for the disadvantages of social networking sites. In Paragraph 4, candidates could make 3 points (excluding the provided first point): having a large number of cyber friends devalues true friendship; real meetings with friends become trivial, or you have nothing to talk about when you meet friends; information overload is a disadvantage. Where points were incompletely made in these first two points, it tended to be because the focus of 'friends' was lost. 'Contacts' was not rewarded as meaning 'friends' and there was an insistence on 'real' meetings to distinguish them from virtual ones. Most candidates made the point about information overload, but wasted their time by going on to make the point again in one of the other ways in which it could be made by referring to intimate facts posted, or inappropriate facts posted, or the fact that some information posted is boring.

In Paragraph 5, it was possible to find 4 content points: people become addicted to checking for updates; some people are more interested in online contacts than real ones; people can't relax because they are wondering what their social networking contacts are doing; people can't enjoy social occasions because they are wondering whether it would be worth posting on a social networking site. Some candidates were confused and wrote that people become addicted to social networking sites, rather than to checking for updates; others omitted to write that people were wondering what their contacts were doing, writing instead that they couldn't relax because they were thinking about their social networking contacts; others wrote that people can't enjoy social occasions because they are wondering what to post about it on a social networking rather than whether or not to post it. Very few candidates made the point about people being more interested in online contacts than real ones.

In Paragraph 6, candidates could make 2 points, both connected with the business world. In the business world there is often pressure for instant responses, and trivial information posed might have repercussions in the world of work. These points were sometimes incompletely made; the 'instant' nature of the responses was omitted, and 'repercussions' alone was insufficient, as mention of 'work' was necessary, although this second point could also be made by giving the specific example from the passage, i.e. that people's friends might like to see them having fun at a party but their boss might not be so impressed.

A large number of candidates scored 9 marks and above. Although points could be made by producing a list of notes or short sentences in bullet point form, as indicated above, rather than in continuous prose, these points nevertheless need to be fully made with appropriate detail and extensions which affect the meaning or fullness of the point.

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were asked to use their notes to write a summary, in their own words, of the advantages and disadvantages of social networking sites, as outlined in the passage. They were asked to write no more than 160 words (the first ten of which were given), within the space available in the answer booklet.

It appears that the task set in **Question 1(a)** of reading to seek out the most relevant information proves helpful to candidates when they set about writing their summaries in **Question 1(b)**. However, there were a few occasions of irrelevance and digression about cyber bullying and hackers. Some responses became irrelevant by adding too much information, for example about Facebook, or giving examples of advantages or disadvantages which were not in the text.

Most candidates completed the exercise and most were able to do so comfortably within the given space. There were a number of candidates who used their own words in a sustained manner and in a style which was always accurate, containing original complex structures. The general use of own words was noticeable, with many candidates being innovative or original in their use of English; many others selected from, edited and restructured the text well, while others moved blocks of text around rather than re-wording detail, or copied from the text. There were occasional examples where attempts at use of own words proved unwise in that the over-ambitious vocabulary did not entirely match the meaning of the original. There is still an attempt, frequently, to use connectives or adverbs with little understanding of the meaning. 'Hence' is ubiquitous and rarely used correctly. There are differences in meaning and use between such phrases as: 'on the contrary' and 'on the other hand'; 'although' and 'however'; 'as well as', 'although' or 'also'.

Nearly all candidates attempted the question. Candidates are advised that very short answers cannot justify a high mark, since they cannot demonstrate a sustained use of own words or a range of original complex sentence structures.

Although Examiners were not checking the number of content points in **Question 1(a)** against the number produced in **Question 1(b)**, if many fewer points were made in **Question 1(b)** than in **Question 1(a)**, this would be reflected in the language mark. Writing only, for example, 6 content points would be unlikely to be described as 'sustained' use of own words whereas writing 15 content points might be sustained use of own words, though not necessarily. The best responses came from candidates who were competent and confident enough to grapple with the original text, re-shaping and re-casting it in original complex sentences, and therefore able to gain many, or full, marks for style.

The most common types of errors in English which occurred were: agreement issues, e.g. 'internet have more details' or 'friends who lives faraway'; absence or intrusive use of the definite article, e.g. 'internet' instead of 'the internet'; misspellings of words given in the passage, most commonly 'freinds' for 'friends' and 'occassion' for 'occasion'; incorrect and fractured lifting; comma splicing. Also common were 'more cheaper' and 'more easier'. 'Way' seems to be creeping in, as in 'way cheaper'; this is imprecise and informal, and candidates are advised not to use this in the examination.

Question 2, Question 3 and Question 4 were the questions testing Assessment Objective 4 in the syllabus, Reading for Ideas, where candidates are being tested on their ability to respond to the ideas of the whole text or a section of it.

Question 2 asked candidates to give two examples of 'down time' as defined in the passage as 'time which might otherwise be wasted', with two examples provided in the passage. This was generally well answered with sensible responses such as 'waiting for food in a restaurant', or 'waiting for a friend' or examples related to travel. Some candidates provided an example from the passage despite the clear instruction not to do so in the question. Some did not have a clear idea about 'down time' and gave examples about the benefit of the internet, such as online shopping or ordering tickets. Some candidates thought of ways in which devices can be used, rather than examples of 'down time' as accepted in the passage. Here reading the rubric was essential. Many candidates did not check the passage for the meaning of 'down time', often guessing wrongly that it meant 'free time' or 'leisure'. There were several answers where tedious social duties, such as visiting relatives, looking after younger siblings, helping in household tasks, and shopping with family members were incorrectly equated with 'down time'.

In **Question 3** candidates were to select and write down two opinions from Paragraph 4. The key to answering this type of question is to home in on words or phrases which are subjective rather than objective, and these words were 'nonsense' and 'boring'. What is nonsense or boring to one person may not be nonsense or boring to another, and so they form the basis of opinions. Correct answers had to be put into a context which made sense, while at the same time not including so much information that the opinion ceased to be an opinion and became a statement. One correct answer therefore was '(Certainly) to describe a hundred people as your friend is (absolute) nonsense' and the other was '(In fact) most information is (utterly) boring'. A common misconception was 'a large number of contacts devalues true friendship'; this was not an opinion because it was prefaced by 'they argue that', which made it a statement. Other common misconceptions and ideas related to face-to-face meetings becoming 'trivialised'; this was not an opinion

because its verb was 'might', which made it a statement. Some candidates identified the writer's view that posts can be boring but failed to include the qualifier 'most'; some candidates identified the writer's view that describing a hundred people as your friend in nonsense but failed to include the qualifier 'best'. A common difficulty is being unable to distinguish between opinions of the writer and the opinions of others.

In **Question 4**, candidates were to tick the box which correctly defined the writer's opinion of social networking sites, the correct answer being Box Two: the writer thinks that the disadvantages of social networking site outweigh the advantages. Although the passage discussed both advantages and disadvantages, the final sentence of the passage, along with 'more importantly' in line 27, pointed to the writer being against these sites. Where a wrong answer was given, it tended to be Box 3, given by very many candidates, presumably because they felt an impartial view was more appropriate rather than because they were responding to the tone of the passage.

Section 2 Reading for Meaning

Most candidates seemed to find this narrative text more challenging than the non-narrative Passage 1, as is usually the case.

Question 5(a) asked for the obvious explanation for Monica's odd behaviour, the answer being 'old age' or 'she was old'. This was a straightforward question designed to ease candidates into the examination and in that respect it worked well.

Likewise, in **Question 5(b)** many candidates gave the correct answer, which was that the real reason for Monica's odd behaviour was her desire to get her own way. Errors occurred when a lifted answer did not quite work because of lack of understanding: 'to get her own plan' or 'no more than her way'.

Question 5(c) asked why it was difficult to cope with the strands of Monica's conversation, and was the first of the questions on the Paper which required candidates to answer in their own words, the key words being 'memory' and 'forgetfulness' for the first available mark, and the key words being 'crossed' and 're-crossed' for the second mark available. Candidates tend to find own words questions challenging. Acceptable synonyms for 'memory' were 'remembering' or 'recalling' and for 'forgetfulness' acceptable synonyms were 'not remembering' and 'loss of memory'. Although 'memory' was being tested in the first part of the answer, 'memory loss' was seen as an acceptable answer in the second part. Although there were many acceptable synonyms for 'crossed and re-crossed', including 'mixed', 'overlapped', 'changed places' and 'alternated', few candidates answered correctly. Often two synonyms for 'forgetfulness' were offered, alongside no attempt at 'memory'. Some candidates lifted text in the area of the answer, and others clearly did not understand the question or talked about her old age. Two marks could be gained for the succinct answer 'sometimes she remembered and sometimes she didn't'.

Question 6(a) asked for the two ways in which Monica's method of crossing the road was eccentric, the answers being (i) that she did not look to light or left, or where she was going and (ii) that she meandered, or zigzagged, across the road. There were many correct answers for (i). Lifting needed care as a few marks were lost due to 'with looking' or 'with glancing from side to side' instead of 'without looking' or 'without glancing from side to side'. Those who did not get the first mark generally didn't understand the construction 'without so much as'. Answers to (ii) was less successful since excess lifting denied a mark, as in any reference to drivers braking, tyres screaming or lorries coming to a halt.

In **Question 6(b)**, candidates were asked to pick out and write down the single word which continued the idea of 'eccentric' the correct answer being 'idiosyncrasies'. There was a fair degree of success with this question, but also several common wrong answers, the most popular being 'accentuated' and sometimes 'meandered'.

Question 6(c) asked what the writer thought she would never do again, the answer being to take Monica to a concert. Although this was a relatively straightforward question which needed only a little working out, some candidates wrote 'her' instead of 'Monica', as in 'she would never take her to a concert'; some candidates did not specify the 'concert', writing instead 'she would never again take Monica out' or 'she would never again take Monica anywhere'.

Question 7(a), was one which many candidates did not appear to understand. Several responses focused on not being able to argue with Monica, not letting her take her knitting again, or that knitting in a concert is not common. A few candidates seemed to read 'remonstrate' as 'demonstrate' and shifted the focus to a knitting demonstration. Although many candidates identified the link between hindsight and knitting, not

many got the correct time frame, i.e. what they should have done rather than what they failed to do. A small minority (with confident understanding of verbs and tenses) gave the correct answer with the important words: 'should have', as in 'they should have remonstrated with Monica not to take her knitting' or 'they should have told Monica not to take her knitting'. A generalised response was also acceptable, as in 'they learned that you shouldn't take knitting to a concert'.

Question 7(b) was the second of the questions on the Paper where candidates were asked to answer in their own words, the key words to be re-cast being 'conspicuous' and 'mortified'. Acceptable synonyms for 'conspicuous' were 'obvious', 'noticeable' and 'prominent', although the idea could be expressed in a longer version, such as 'everybody was looking at her'. Acceptable synonyms for 'mortified' were 'embarrassed', or 'ashamed' or 'self-conscious'. There was much more success with the second of these words ('mortified') than with the first ('conspicuous'). Many candidates offered words linked to fear for 'mortified' such as 'terrified'. 'Awkward' and 'uncomfortable' were often given, but were not considered to be acceptable as they lacked the force of 'mortified'.

In **Question 8** candidates were asked to explain fully why the pianist was offended and embarrassed by Monica's comment. The first piece of evidence was that Monica said the pianist had made her dress out of old curtains, or the more succinct rendering of that as she made a rude, or nasty, comment about the pianist's dress, or way of dressing or dress sense. The second piece of evidence was more difficult to locate and was that the comment was heard by everyone. Some candidates did not make this second point because they wrote that the remark was made in front of everyone, whereas the key was its audibility. Several responses indicated that some candidates had not understood this section of the text, although they were not penalised for gender confusion: they indicated that Monica, or the pianist, was male, or that all the orchestra wore dresses.

Question 9(a) asked for the feature in the atmosphere in the room that made the occasion different from other occasions when Monica did her knitting, the answer being that the room was silent. Very few candidates answered this correctly, and in this respect it was an excellent discriminator for those who thought about the text and what it was implying, rather than directly saying. Most candidates referred to the needles clattering on the wooden floor, the opposite of the answer being looked for.

Question 9(b) was a question on writer's craft, asking for the effect, and not the meaning, of the word 'hissed'. Very many candidates did not notice that this was a question on writer's craft, settling for meaning such as 'whispered' or 'spoke in a low voice', whereas the effect of the hissing was to indicate anger or irritation. Thus the common answer focused on the volume of the voice, not the mood/attitude of Monica. 'Pissed' or 'pissed off' were, unfortunately, not uncommon. Candidates should be made aware that this is not acceptable English.

Question 9(c) asked why the pianist hit a wrong note, the answer being that she was distracted by Monica's hissing or talking. A link between the distraction and Monica had to be made, but the cause of the distraction, i.e. the hissing, was not necessary; however, if candidates wrote that the cause of the distraction was linked to knitting or balls of wool rolling or the floor, or general mayhem, then this denied an otherwise correct answer.

In **Question 10(a)** candidates were to say why the writer didn't tell us that Monica wasn't deaf. Few candidates answered correctly that the writer wanted to suggest that Monica was only pretending to be deaf, or that she wanted to cause a scene or to draw attention to herself, or that she was speaking loudly intentionally and not because she was deaf. A lot of answers recycled the question by repeating that she wasn't deaf, or slipped into narrative about the attendant, repeating that he had asked Monica to be quiet. Some candidates seemed to be looking for proof that she wasn't deaf by writing that she had come to listen, or that she replied.

Question 10(b) was a subtle question which asked candidates why the audience applauded loudly when Monica left, the answer being that they had found her amusing or entertaining, or that they admired her nerve.

Question 10(c) was the third of the questions on the Paper where candidates were asked to answer in their own words, the key words to be re-cast being 'ruse' and 'delight'. There were many acceptable synonyms for 'ruse' including 'trick', 'pretence' and 'plan'; the key idea was trickery, and so words like 'drama' or 'excuse' were not acceptable. There were also many acceptable synonyms for 'delight', such as 'pleasure', 'happiness' or 'joy', although it was often interpreted as 'what she did', 'the way she behaved', or 'she didn't care about anyone'. There was more success with the second of these words ('delight') than with the first ('ruse'), although there were many candidates who scored both marks for the question.

Question 11 was the customary vocabulary question, in which candidates were required to show their understanding in context, not necessarily in direct synonyms, of five words or phrases from a choice of eight. Candidates did not score particularly well here, showing the need for candidates, as with own words questions, to work on vocabulary building. Most candidates who attempted 'inadvertently' scored the mark for synonyms such as 'accidentally', 'not on purpose', or 'unintentionally'. A reasonable degree of success was gained by candidates who correctly offered 'looked angrily', 'looked coldly' or 'looked unhappily' for 'glared'; 'stared' could be substituted for 'looked' but 'looked' or 'stared' without a qualifying word such as 'angrily' did not convey the force of 'glared'. For 'mayhem', candidates scored a mark for writing 'chaos', 'commotion', 'anarchy'; in fact there were many acceptable synonyms which conveyed the forces of the word, but 'disturbance' or 'disaster' were considered to be too weak, although they were frequently offered. For 'sailed' a mark could be scored for 'glided' with 'moved or walked smoothly' or 'moved or walked gracefully'. Synonyms for 'paraphernalia' were 'equipment' or 'accessories', or even 'things', 'items' or 'stuff'. Correct synonyms for 'accentuated' were 'highlighted', 'pronounced' and 'noticeable', and correct synonyms for 'tumultuous' were 'noisy' or 'enthusiastic'; a popular wrong answer for this latter word was 'loud' which was considered to be too weak, although 'very loud' was acceptable. 'Prerogative' was almost never attempted, where acceptable synonyms were 'right' or 'privilege'.

Because understanding only is being tested in the vocabulary question, grammatical form was not insisted upon. Candidates can improve their performance by ensuring that they select five words only and explain the meanings of those words. Only one synonym for each word or phrase should be offered as, where more than one is given, only the first will be considered.