

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Paper 1123/11  
Writing

## Key messages

- **Section 1** – candidates are advised to read the question carefully, especially where a bullet point has two requirements to be fully achieved.
- Candidates are advised to use any remaining time to read through their response, rather than counting words. This could help avoid errors, particularly with punctuation.
- Candidates are advised to avoid memorising sections of responses, uncommon vocabulary and clichés/proverbs. Inserting elements like these is rarely successful.
- A small minority of candidates are still including graphic violence and illegal acts within responses which should be avoided as inappropriate for the task(s).
- Candidates are advised to structure their response(s) in accordance with the question. For example, in **Section 1** there were several instances of lengthy narratives, which did not address the second and third bullet points clearly.

## General comments

- The overall standard of responses was similar to previous sessions. There was some high quality writing, evident control of structure, and relevance to task.
- **Section 1** had a range of responses with most candidates demonstrating that it was a speech through an opening salutation and closing remarks. Stronger candidates included rhetorical questions, asides to audience and attempts to retain audience interest. *'I know you all want to hear...'* *'Can you guess how I felt?'* Candidates are therefore encouraged to be familiar with the key features of the full range of text types.
- Almost all candidates were able to address both aspects of **Section 1**, bullet point 1. The second bullet point was sometimes implied or unclear and the third bullet point was sometimes only partially addressed, or used as a closing sentence rather than being fully developed.
- **Section 2** responses were generally relevant, with only occasional misunderstandings of the task. Candidates are encouraged to reflect on which task is most likely to engage them, rather than always choosing the narrative tasks, which can cause structural problems not seen as often in, for example, argument tasks. Less popular tasks (3 and 4) often produced higher quality answers.
- There were very few short answers or unfinished responses, suggesting time management is not an issue. Candidates should avoid writing very long responses as they are rarely well-structured and often compound errors through loss of focus or tiredness.
- Punctuation is still an issue, with run-on sentences being seen in many responses. Candidates are advised to write clear sentences, varying length for effect where appropriate. More complex punctuation, especially direct speech, should only be used if the candidate can do so correctly.
- Tenses appear to be improving with most candidates able to maintain past tense for **Section 1**. The narratives in **Section 2** sometimes showed a loss of tense control, switching between past and present.
- Weaker responses continue to show confusion with pronoun use and subject/verb agreement which can greatly affect clarity.
- A minority of candidates demonstrated limited knowledge of the English language which resulted in weak responses.
- Inappropriate language was rarely seen but candidates are advised to avoid slang unless used in direct speech and necessary for the task.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section 1**

#### **Directed Writing**

In **Section 1** candidates were asked to give a speech during a school assembly about a trip they had taken during which a surprising event had occurred. They were asked to describe how the surprising event had affected them and others on the trip.

#### **Bullet point 1:** *'when and where you went on the trip'*

Candidates were almost always able to answer both aspects of this bullet point. A minority did not mention when the trip happened. Many trips appeared to be actual events, with family holidays and school trips being the most popular choices. This sometimes affected bullet points 2 and 3 as candidates wrote from memory and surprising events do not always happen on real life trips. A minority of candidates described improbable 'fantasy' trips, generally involving meeting celebrities, riding on private jets and receiving unlikely prizes. This type of response was rarely successful or convincing as a speech. Candidates are encouraged to consider how the audience would likely have received such speeches. Most candidates were able to fully develop bullet point 1, often giving details of their journey, accommodation and the location.

#### **Bullet point 2:** *'details of the very surprising event'*

The majority of candidates described a *very* surprising event and had varying perspectives on how surprising an event would be. Answers ranged from travel mishaps, to accidents and the loss or theft of property, or highly surprising events such as meeting Presidents, partying with pop stars or classmates being eaten by crocodiles. A minority of candidates wrote about pleasant surprises such as reuniting with family members or seeing rare animals in the wild. Successful responses were able to describe the event in some detail with the very best responses creating a build up to the surprise. A minority of candidates did not mention a surprise, having been side tracked by writing their recollections of a trip. Some weaker responses referred to several surprises which created confusion and made it more difficult to move on to bullet point 3 smoothly. A very few candidates misread the question and wrote about a surprise trip.

#### **Bullet point 3:** *'how the surprise affected you and the people you were with'*

Responses ranged from practical to emotional effects, with stronger responses covering both aspects and going into some detail. Stronger responses often detailed both the immediate and lasting effects of the surprising event and how they/others had altered their perspectives and behaviour as a result. There were some poignant response describing realisations of the importance of familial bonds, environmental protection, and ethical beliefs. Many responses to this bullet point did not develop the ideas or go beyond 'we were shocked/surprised'. A significant minority wrote only about the effect on themselves, not mentioning others on the trip. 'Fantasy' style responses were often weak on this bullet point with candidates often not moving beyond, *'I was happy to win the World Cup/meet the President/party with celebrity'* and/or, *'I received a new car/money/fame on social media'*.

Generally, candidates structured their responses into paragraphs, opening with appropriate greetings to the audience, showing a clear sense of **purpose** and **format**. Most also remembered to close their speech with at least a sentence or two, *'Thank you for listening, I hope you enjoyed my speech'*. The less formal tone of a speech to peers appears to have aided candidates as most were able to adopt a suitable **register**. A very few appeared to forget that adults would be present in an assembly audience and used inappropriate slang which affected the **tone**. Stronger candidates were able to reference the audience throughout their speech.

A significant minority lost focus on the task and wrote a travelogue/narrative of a past trip. These sometimes included lengthy dialogue rather than the reported speech which would have been more appropriate to the task.

Spelling and grammar were mostly appropriate to the task, with paragraphing generally being appropriate. Vocabulary was sometimes an issue with candidates trying to use unusual vocabulary incorrectly. Similarly, the use of clichéd idioms and/or memorised sections is rarely successful as it interrupts the flow of candidates' usual writing style.

## Section 2

### Description

#### Task 2

*Describe two of your friends: the one who is most like you **and** the one who is least like you. (Remember you can describe their appearance, personalities and behaviour.)*

This was a fairly popular choice. Stronger responses were able to move beyond descriptions of physical appearance and illustrated their friends' characters and personalities with relevant and engaging examples. The majority of candidates listed physical features and character traits, leading to accounts which often did not fully address the similarities and differences between the friends and the candidate. Responses were often divided into two sections, one for each friend, repeating the structure of each section; 'He has curly brown hair and is tall, he has long dark hair and is short'. Candidates were able to use present tense correctly in most cases. A very small minority wrote about themselves plus one friend, or lost focus and wrote about their own personality with little reference to friends. Candidates are advised to read questions carefully to produce balanced responses which address all elements of the question.

### Argument

#### Task 3

*Should there be rules about what people can say on social media or is it more important for people to be able to say what they think? Give reasons and examples to support your view.*

This was not a popular choice but responses were generally carefully structured and engaging. Most candidates were able to write coherently, using appropriate devices; '*on the other hand, another aspect to consider is..., in conclusion*'. Candidates had strong opinions about concepts such as personal responsibility and freedom of speech and often considered wider political aspects in their argument, rather than stereotypical teenager concerns. A small minority of candidates could not express their ideas clearly.

#### Task 4

*Which new subject or subjects would you like to add to the School timetable? Why do you think this would be useful for people of your age? Give reasons and examples to support your view.*

There were very few responses to this question. Candidates who chose this question were usually able to suggest subjects and give clear reasons for their usefulness. Stronger responses suggested some form of financial management and were able to describe how this would be useful in adult life. Weaker responses did not expand on the subject's usefulness beyond very basic reasons; 'Cookery would be useful because everybody needs to eat and I like cooking'. Candidates are advised to consider if they have a sufficient number of ideas to provide a full response.

### Narrative

#### Task 5

*Write a story which includes the words: 'They both read their letters and then walked away in opposite directions.'*

This was a popular choice and almost all responses integrated the phrase effectively, many choosing to use it as the conclusion to their narrative. Relationship troubles were a popular theme, with conflict being resolved through the letters being read. A few candidates wrote about work or political situations, introducing an element of suspense into their narratives. Stronger responses used tense consistently, incorporated a wide and appropriate vocabulary and used dialogue to good effect. Weaker responses switched between past and present tense, did not use punctuation correctly (often resulting in lengthy run-on sentences) and could not use direct speech without losing clarity. Paragraphs were sometimes an issue in weaker responses. Candidates are advised to avoid memorised openings to narratives; '*It was a bright sunny morning and all the birds were singing*'. They rarely integrate well and can potentially highlight weaker sections. Candidates are advised to consider the plot of their narrative before starting to write: a minority of responses were very unfocused and lengthy with little sense of structure.

## Task 6

*Write a story about someone who became successful because of their determination and hard work.*

This was overwhelmingly the most popular choice with candidates often writing about famous public figures such as politicians and sportsmen. Responses were divided into narratives and more biographical approaches. Responses which used the second approach were sometimes rather list-like, producing encyclopaedia entry style responses. Stronger responses produced engaging and detailed responses for both approaches, often including negative events which their character was able to overcome. Weaker responses often focused on a journey from poverty to wealth, giving little insight into the emotional aspect of their subject; *'He grew up in a poor village... went to university... now owns a successful business'*. Tense was sometimes an issue with weaker responses and vocabulary was often limited, with frequent repetition of the vocabulary of the task. Candidates are encouraged to consider how their narrative will begin, develop and end before starting to write. Narratives about footballers in particular often lost focus, with lengthy sections devoted to actions within matches.

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/12  
Writing

## Key messages

- Attention should be given to the **full** requirements of each bullet point in **Section 1**, especially when the word **and**, in bold type, indicates there are two parts to the bullet point.
- Candidates should stay within the word limits and check their work thoroughly. Accuracy is as important as ambition.
- The correct use of tenses and agreement would greatly improve the work of the majority of candidates.
- Direct speech helps to improve a narrative but it needs to be carefully punctuated and paragraphed.
- The use of capital letters should always have a purpose.
- More practice in speech writing would help candidates to distinguish it from reporting on a speech.

## General comments

- The very best responses in this exam continue to demonstrate great ability. There are now few very short or no-responses. Equally, fewer and fewer candidates fall into the lowest bands, although tense, number and gender continue to cause problems for many. **Section 1** was done well by a large majority. Others needed to consider the requirements of a speech. This year, in **Section 2**, all of the titles were attempted, with more attempting the argument and the descriptive essays than in previous series. The best essays were fluent, accurate and always interesting. Vocabulary in particular was often a strong point with some impressive words being used. Basic punctuation was also mainly sound. There was improved paragraphing in the **Section 1** task this year. Sentence separation errors still gave cause for concern.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section 1**

#### Directed Writing

In **Section 1**, candidates were asked to imagine that it was their final week in school. They had to make a speech at the school assembly about an event from their school life which they would always remember. The vast majority responded very well to this **purpose** and **situation**. To satisfy the requirements of the bullet points a successful answer had to have:

- when **and** where the event took place
- details of what happened at the event
- how the event affected the candidate **and** other people.

It was important to recognise that in **bullet 1** it was necessary to give **both** the location and timing of the event. The location proved to be very straightforward for most. Responses gave either a specific location away from their school or used the school itself as the place. Often the location was implied by naming an area in the school, usually the hall, the gymnasium or the school yard. The nature of this speech meant that saying when the event took place could be less specific than on previous occasions so *last year*, *in Form 1* or *in the second term of this year* were as acceptable as saying the actual date. Some responses assumed that by mentioning a certain kind of event, like an athletics meeting, it was obvious where this took place and they omitted to say where it was. Others gave the location but were not convincing about when it took place. It was not enough to say *at a sports meeting* or *when we went on a camping trip* because such statements did not narrow down the event to a precise occasion.

**Bullet point 2** asked for some of the important particulars of the event. *Fun and Food Day* was very popular, as were various sporting achievements, *Music Day* and award ceremonies. There were also some quite unusual responses, for example about visits to orphanages and other charity work. Details of the event varied according to the event itself and many responses gave full attention to the preparations for these events as well as the events themselves. There were very many interesting details about decorations and the food produced. A weakness this year was that some candidates did not focus on a specific event which meant a lot to them, choosing to write about several events throughout their school life. Others used the speech to praise their school and teachers in general for all they had done for them throughout their time in the school.

**Bullet point 3** was also in two parts and asked for how the candidate **and** others were affected by the event. This was usually a matter of saying both were affected in the same way as in: *we all realised how fortunate we were compared to others*. Such brief answers were satisfactory. Other responses went further and referred to being affected in different ways, for example, being relieved that their hard work for examinations had paid off, while the parents were extremely proud of the achievement of their son or daughter. Another impressive answer of this sort saw both the speaker and his teammates affected: *I finally understand that if we want to achieve something great we need to do our best, not only to win but also to have fun doing it. My teammates and I even learned to accept defeat....*

In most cases, *affected* was interpreted as an emotional response (usually sadness or happiness) rather than a learning process but there were also those who claimed they were *better people; more confident, and caring*. Overall, this bullet proved to be the greatest discriminator for Task Fulfilment this year as some candidates said only how they themselves were affected.

Candidates who were clear about the other requirements for Task Fulfilment produced appropriate and convincing speeches. The **purpose** was to speak about a past event in an interesting and informative way which was achieved by the vast majority. A very small number of candidates misread the rubric as being about an event in the future, a forthcoming celebration to which all were invited. Candidates are advised to avoid writing an introductory paragraph which is a lift of the scenario in the question. The proper **audience** for this task was a mixed one of adults and students at an assembly and almost everyone did this well. The register was a mixture of polite formality and informality, in keeping with the mixed audience, and again this was mostly well done. The terminology appropriate to any particular event was a helpful addition when used correctly.

Most responses this year succeeded in giving the correct **format** for a speech. They did this by using the opening which was given in the question and usually by thanking the audience at the end for their attention. Some responses added to this by mentioning that they were making a speech or by saying they were *standing before you*, all of which added to the feeling that a spoken text was being presented. Most candidates restricted themselves to such references at the beginning and end of their text which made these speeches sound like narratives or magazine articles. The most successful speeches included, in the body of the text, some rhetorical questions or references to people in the audience. This was made more effective when candidates used expressions such as *Do you remember that?* or *We all enjoyed it, did not we?* or *You will all remember when..* so that there was a constant feeling that the audience was part of the speech. Most candidates appreciated that, because this was a fairly formal occasion, slang words such as *gonna* and *wanna* were not appropriate. A few responses did not sustain the format to the end and included a letter ending to the speech. Others mixed the speech in with a narrative framework and wrote about delivering a speech instead of writing one. Candidates are advised that when the task asks for a speech, they should write the actual words of the speech. They should not include stage directions, such as (*applause*), or inverted commas.

Even though a speech is a spoken text, paragraphing was required to maintain the formality of the occasion and most candidates understood this. There was some merging of material between **bullets 1, 2 and 3** which was understandable. Overall, the vast majority wrote a suitable amount for **Section 1** and captured the **tone** and approach very well. **Opinion** and **justification** arose naturally when bullet point 3 was answered.

Linguistically, candidates needed to remember that they were speaking to a mixed audience of adults and students. Most produced a convincing piece of work by writing as accurately and naturally as they could. The better responses were able to balance successfully the need to demonstrate linguistic ability – *My friends, on the other hand, enjoyed his antics and his well-mannered yet humorous personality* – and at the same time ensure that the speech was understood by everyone listening. Overall, spelling was satisfactory. Paragraphing was also done well. Many candidates would improve their accuracy by using capital letters

properly, ensuring correct verbs and tenses and avoiding omitting articles. There was some natural use of idiomatic expressions.

## Section 2

### Composition

#### **2. Describe a relative's house which you enjoy visiting. (Remember you can describe the atmosphere and the surroundings, as well as the house itself.)**

The descriptive title this year was more popular than in previous years, possibly because a relative's house was something the candidates knew very well. The houses described ranged from a number that were luxurious, with security cameras and luxury cars, to those which were small and homely. There were some vivid descriptions, especially one about an uncle's farm growing maize and sugar cane. A very happy atmosphere was conjured up, with everyone enjoying the sunset from the roof and by day feeding the many animals (including the *territorial* and potentially aggressive goats) and riding the horses. Then there was a creative cousin's architect-designed, isolated house set amidst magnificent scenery: *a little extravagant with a stunning, carefully crafted interior with the colour scheme a show stealer*. Another description was of an aunt's rather chaotic house with *a diffusion of cooking smells throughout the house...an explosion of taste* of spicy food, layers of dust everywhere and messy cupboards – but a place of great family celebrations. There was a focus on what the place meant to the candidate, with a strong nostalgic feel – a house *with the vibration of the ancient years and feelings...old people in love with nature and many rooms with hidden stories*. Most candidates did well overall to restrict the amount of narrative in their descriptions. Others told a story of a visit to a relative. Candidates are advised to look at the guidance in the brackets in the question and try to evoke the atmosphere of a place.

The best essays made full use of all the senses when describing and demonstrated an impressive range of vocabulary. Effective similes and metaphors were helpful. Weaker responses relied heavily on listing what was in the house rather than describing it and on repeating the words *beautiful, amazing and environment*.

#### **3. 'The future is about science and technology. There is no place for arts and music on the school timetable.' Do you agree? Give reasons and examples to support your view.**

This title attracted a reasonable number of candidates. There were some extremely thoughtful essays which explored the pros and cons of both sides of the argument which they saw as equal. Science and technology was generally seen to be the more important because this is how our future is to be determined and candidates were very knowledgeable about the latest electrical gadgets and life-enhancing equipment. For most, arts and music were the poor relations, mostly seen as hobbies rather than school subjects. Very occasionally, a candidate set out a good case for the arts to be included or maintained in the curriculum; there was one particularly uplifting and sensitive essay in which the candidate pointed out that while science and technology *are given more focus in school*, there should be *a more important role for the arts and music which contribute to children's happier life so that they may have greater courage to face future difficulties and drawback*. The arts help people to develop *a sensitive heart* and the *peaceful and profound spiritual world that the arts and music can offer is irreplaceable*. It was a remarkably mature approach to the topic.

A few responses gave only one side of the argument and these essays lacked a little depth. Some candidates misread the plural word *arts* as the singular *art* and so restricted their ideas to drawing and painting rather than a fuller cultural range. Candidates are advised to consider if they have a sufficient number of ideas to sustain an argument and also have the range of language to convey their ideas before selecting this type of essay. Planning (but not an overlong written plan) is essential if candidates are to avoid repetition; a number of candidates listed the uses of technology instead of presenting an argument.

#### **4. To have a happy life, it is more important to have time to do what you want rather than to have a lot of money to spend. Do you agree? Give reasons and examples to support your view.**

This was quite a popular choice. Most candidates preferred spending time with family which they saw as more important than money or high wages. There was a general agreement that money cannot buy happiness. Many responses structured their argument rather simply on the basis of going backwards and forwards with the pros and cons rather than by developing the argument. Candidates are advised that a point of view needs to be stated in the introduction and reinforced in the conclusion.

**5. Write a story which includes the words: ‘The house they lived in as children now looked very different.’**

This was an extremely popular title. Generally the sentence was convincingly inserted with candidates using the correct pronoun and tenses as given in the question. Many candidates inserted the given sentence into their essays more naturally than in previous series. Others changed *they* to *he* or *she* (sometimes without changing *children* to *child*) or changed the tenses. Candidates are expected to keep to the sentence exactly as it is given in the question. Homecoming after a long absence was a popular theme. One of the most successful stories was a story of returning home to a shattered city and the struggle for survival. The vocabulary was extremely sophisticated, with such words and phrases as *ghoulish*, *existential crisis*, *championing peace*, *impending calamity*, *violence held sway* and *resounding in her mind* – all of which demonstrated writing of the very highest calibre. Other narratives relied on stories about going overseas for study, family arguments leading to break up, and financial difficulties, all of which led to moving away from home before a return was possible. On their return, houses were often in disrepair, renovated or haunted.

**6. Write a story about a time when you wanted to do something adventurous but you had to change your plans.**

This was another very popular choice. Planned trips to climb mountains were extremely popular and a common thread was a change of plan due to a parent or relative’s illness or the bad weather. There was very often a good deal of emotion expressed, such as in the case of the candidate who had to cancel a trip due to his grandfather’s emergency admission to hospital. The story had a moving end with the narrator being *the last one to see his* (grandfather’s) *last smile* before the latter passed away. Another sad story was where a girl went off happily with her boyfriend for the day with singing and loud music in the car. There was a call (which she nearly did not pick up) from her mother, to whom she had not been speaking, to say her grandmother was dying in hospital. They rushed there (no singing and loud music now, as the narrator tellingly noted) and soon afterwards the grandmother passed away quietly. The ring of sincerity came through strongly. When there was involvement in a story, candidates managed to find the words to express themselves, often very movingly. Some strong responses were highly skilled at creating atmosphere and character. Others were less successful in controlling their narrative and described in very great detail the preparations for their journey.



# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/21  
Reading

## Key messages

- Candidates are advised to take their time in reading both texts in order to understand them as far as possible. When each has been read in this way – probably more than once – candidates should read the relevant questions carefully so they can respond accurately to instructions such as ‘Give *one* word...’, or ‘Explain *in your own words*...’.
- For both parts of the summary, **Question 1(a)** and **Question 1(b)**, candidates are advised to focus on identifying only the main points from the text without unnecessary inclusion of examples and extensions of these points. In this way, the task fulfilment required by a ‘summary’ question will be successfully achieved.
- It is important for **Question 1(b)** that candidates practise the use of a variety of suitable linking devices to move from one main point to another, creating their own cohesion in presenting a summarised version of the original text. In doing so, they should include only those ideas which are to be found in the passage.
- For **Question 2**, which asks candidates to select opinions from a text, further practice would be useful in recognising a statement which suggests a personal, subjective view rather than one which is recognised as a proven fact.
- In **Question 11**, the multiple choice vocabulary question, candidates have to select the correct meaning of a given word, as it occurs in the text, from 4 options. They are advised to consider each option, trying each within the context before making their choice.
- **Questions 12(a) and 12(b)**, the section dedicated to appreciation of the writer’s craft, required candidates to explain the ‘Meaning’ of the given quotation from the text and the ‘Effect’ of these words. Although the format of these questions may appear to be ‘new’, the requirements are not. Candidates are still being asked to recognise literal meaning in the text, and to comment on the effect of the writer’s use of particular words or images. It is important that they distinguish between the two parts of the question explaining, under ‘Meaning’, what is actually happening in the given section of text and, under ‘Effect’, giving a sense of what is conveyed by the words, rather than repeating their meaning.

## General comments

Candidates read two passages, each of approximately 700 words, the first being non-fiction and the second being fiction. They answered a range of questions based on these texts, some of which were accessible to most candidates, while others were more challenging. The majority of candidates answered all the questions and only a few did not respond to the final section on the writer’s craft,

Questions on the first passage, entitled ‘Cars’, explored the candidates’ ability to read for ideas. The subject appeared to be accessible and to engage all candidates, and while the various changes which the car has brought may not have been considered before, many showed some knowledge of the disadvantages of cars and driving. Some candidates gave information which was not in the text. The summary question was worth a total of 22 marks, 12 of these being awarded for the selection of the main content points from the text, and a further 10 marks for assessment of the ability to draw these points together in a relevant and coherent piece of continuous writing. **Question 2**, carrying 3 marks, also tested the ability to read for ideas, and asked candidates to select 3 opinions – 1 from the first paragraph and 2 from paragraph 6.

The second text, ‘Lila’, proved more demanding than the first, involving – as such narrative texts always do – some subtle questions of interpretation. It required an understanding not only of literal meaning but also of implied meaning, of vocabulary in context and some aspects of writer’s craft. The strongest responses showed an awareness of what was expected by such questions of interpretation and demonstrated skill in dealing with them. This section of the paper carried 25 marks.

In **Question 1(a)** a majority of candidates achieved the maximum 12 marks and only a minority scored fewer than half marks. Stronger responses focused on selecting only the essential points and avoided both unnecessary examples and irrelevant material. The information with which candidates were most familiar i.e. the information required in the second section of notes – ‘the disadvantages the car has brought’ – was occasionally dealt with more fully than ‘the changes created by the car’. This was sometimes carried through to **Question 1(b)**, where it was the stronger responses which balanced the two parts of the summary to greater effect.

### Comments on specific questions

#### **Section 1: Reading for ideas**

**Question 1(a)** was the first part of the summary question.

Candidates were asked to identify and write down the information in the passage which described the changes created by the car and the disadvantages the car has brought. They were asked to select the appropriate points from the whole text and to present them in note form. At this stage they did not have to use their own words and were advised to use bullet points for clarity, as in the sample points given. One content point under each heading of the rubric was given by way of illustration, although these points were not rewarded with a mark. Some responses gained the maximum 12 marks and the majority scored half marks or more. Where marks were not awarded it was usually because candidates offered more than was necessary, including examples or irrelevance, as in: ‘Many jobs were created *in Henry Ford’s company’s production of cars*’. The main point was best seen in answers such as ‘Car manufacturing created many jobs’, rather than the suggestion that this was only in Ford’s factories i.e. an example. In other places, words or phrases essential to the point had to be included. Thus ‘New roads were built’, alone, was insufficient to make the point which required reference to the overarching ‘change’ this created: ‘The appearance of whole countries was changed by road building schemes’ conveyed the complete point precisely. The given points are good indicators of the fact that, while conciseness is possible e.g. ‘freedom of mobility’ (the first given point for ‘change’), other points may have to be made more fully e.g. ‘Fuel gives off pollutants *which damage the body’s defences against diseases*’ (the given point introducing ‘disadvantages’). The pollutants emitted by cars cause different types of damage; this is only one of the disadvantages caused by fuel pollutants.

This question carries a maximum mark of 12 and, excluding those given, there were 14 points from which candidates could identify any combination up to that maximum, for one mark each. Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 described 8 changes brought about by the car’s invention and, excluding the given point, there were 4 in paragraph 1: they make travel or journeys fast, or faster; the possibility of greater social interaction – which could be expressed alternatively as a wider circle of friends or increased communication with family; flexibility in work – or the explanation of that as the possibility of living and working in different places; and the fact that sprawling or larger urban areas/cities resulted. There were many candidates who, perhaps not understanding the word ‘mobility’, repeated the given point in different ways; they lifted the idea of people being restricted to the villages where they were born or the fact that car owners have now been ‘liberated’ from the confines of their homes. Like the original given point, such repetitions could not be credited. While lifting may be useful in this task, candidates must be sure to include exactly what is required to express a point correctly. Thus: ‘A journey of a few miles on foot could easily take more than an hour, unlike the speed of such journeys by car’ included all necessary detail, with reference to journeys, and their greater speed by car compared with on foot.

Where alternative explanations of the main point were given in the text, as mentioned above in relation to ‘greater social interaction’ and ‘flexibility in work’, some responses included these under separate bullets; the better responses recognised only one alternative was necessary.

A majority of candidates correctly identified the 2 points in Paragraph 2: the change in the appearance of countries through road building schemes, or the building of new roads or the extension of existing ones, together with the possibility of door-to-door trips. Roads existed before the time of the car so in themselves they were not a ‘change’; it was necessary, therefore, to include the fact that the ‘appearance of countries’ was the change brought about by the new road building schemes.

Paragraph 3 was entirely about one significant ‘change’: the creation of many jobs. Examples of the Ford factories and production in India were understood by most candidates as examples of this change and only a minority offered the examples of precise numbers of jobs in those places. The main point, the creation of *many jobs* or jobs for *many people*, had to be distinguished from the examples.

In the second section of this question, the rubric asked for the disadvantages which the car has brought. The remaining 7 points which candidates could select were in paragraphs 4, 5 and 6. Apart from the given point, there was 1 more point in paragraph 4, which concentrated on the dangers of pollutants emitted by the fuel used in cars. There were those who overlooked the words 'such as' and offered the example which followed the given point in the text i.e. 'respiratory infections'. As mentioned in the first Key Point, examples are unnecessary when summarising and should be avoided in favour of stating only the point which they exemplify. The given point dealt with the effects of pollutants on humans; candidates were able to mention the other effect, which was the effect on the environment. This could be summed up in any one of various ways: damage to the environment, greenhouse gases, global warming or damage to the ozone layer. The better responses used such brevity; others, as in the first section, repeated the same point under separate bullets. A small number offered the distractor, catalytic convertors; these are a solution to the disadvantage, rather than the disadvantage itself.

Paragraph 5 contained two points: the huge number of accidents linked to them and the destruction of whole communities if car factories close. A majority of candidates recognised these points. The first required mention of the vast numbers involved – words such as 'millions', 'a million' or 'many'; 'increased number of accidents' or just 'car accidents' were not enough to suggest the scale mentioned in the text. The accidents also had to be clearly defined as 'road', 'traffic' or 'car' accidents. The second point involved recognising that '...communities are *destroyed*...' when factories close rather than 'unemployment happens when factories close'. Such destruction had to be suggested, either by the words of the text or an equivalent, such as in this accurate comment: 'Communities depending on the factories are totally devastated if they close down'.

The last 4 points were in paragraph 6. This paragraph included a number of distracting examples and extensions which the strongest candidates ignored in selecting the main points. These were that people exercise less, that driving is stressful and encourages anti-social behaviour, and that congestion is caused by cars. Others selected supporting details or examples instead of the overarching points. In such responses, for example, the focus was shifted from people exercising less to lengthy descriptions of people sitting in traffic jams on the way to expensive gyms. Similarly, the point that driving is stressful sometimes included the image of drivers being hunched at the wheel with faces screwed up in exasperation; the stronger responses recognised that these were examples of how stress might show itself. 'Anti-social behaviour' was not always understood so that some responses suggested that 'cars stop people talking to each other'. While 'traffic jams' (although not 'volume of traffic') was an acceptable alternative for 'congestion' as a disadvantage, congestion linked specifically to rush hours, as in 'congestion is common during rush hours' did not make the point. To score, the example of rush hours had to be acknowledged as being only examples, as it was in the text, with '...*particularly* during rush hours' or '...*for example* during rush hours.' Occasionally, candidates offered the remedies for congestion which, like the remedies for fuel pollution, did not fit the rubric requirement for 'disadvantages'.

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were asked to use their notes from **Question 1(a)** to write a summary of the changes created by the car and the disadvantages the car has brought, as outlined in the passage. The reference to 'their notes' pointed to the necessity for those notes to be accurate in terms of selecting the essential information to be used in **Question 1(b)**. The most successful responses were those which recognised that synthesising points from the text entailed using their own constructions and vocabulary to link the main ideas of the original. In this way, their summaries would not only be relevant but would also be 'well organised and easy to follow', as the rubric required. Using between 150 and 180 words of continuous prose was sufficient for the completion of the task and the vast majority of responses were within the word limits.

Marked for the relevance and coherence of their answers, the majority of responses included a satisfactory level of relevant detail; the best included all, or almost all, of the available material, balancing well the two aspects of the 'changes' and 'disadvantages' brought by the car. Those who used irrelevant extension and example of the points often considered one aspect at the expense of space to discuss the other. Repetition of the same point in different words was one of the reasons for this, and a few candidates introduced invented material, giving their own observations rather than summarising those of the passage, e.g. 'Road traffic accidents are caused on the roads by careless drivers who are disobedient to road traffic signs, regulations, signs and symbols'. There is no need, in a summary, for prolonged introductions and conclusions such as this well-written but unnecessary introduction: 'The car has taken transport and communication to a whole new level...'; or, again, at the end, 'In conclusion, as much as cars created a life-changing revolution, these changes came with a cost that affected the wellbeing of humanity'.

Stronger responses linked the beneficial changes created by the car in one section and the disadvantages of the vehicle in the next with appropriately used adverbial connectives such as 'moreover', 'furthermore', 'therefore' and 'thus' etc., positioned at the beginning of a new sentence. 'However' or 'nevertheless' were

correctly used between the sections, to indicate the introduction of contrasting statements. Other skilful connective devices such as ‘which’, ‘who’, as well as useful punctuation, were used to impressive effect in complex sentences; ‘and’ and ‘also’ were used in all responses but they were not overused in the best responses. In others, candidates had clearly learnt various linking adverbs which were sometimes used inaccurately, as in ‘It makes people less keen to exercise. Therefore some countries encourage car sharing’. ‘Adding on’ was often used as an alternative to ‘additionally’ or ‘in addition’; this is not an accepted phrase in general use. ‘Moreso’, which does not exist as a single word, was an attempted link in a number of summaries. ‘More so’ does not mean ‘moreover’, which may have been intended here: It has a specific use (as a contraction of ‘all the more so’) and should refer to something just mentioned e.g. ‘Lila was *afraid* and the writer was *more so*.’ Its use is very limited, is likely to be unhelpful in a summary and is best avoided.

**Question 2** continued to test ‘Reading for Ideas’, requiring candidates to identify and write down 1 opinion from paragraph 1, and 2 opinions from paragraph 6. Many candidates found this question challenging and only the strongest responses recognised all 3 opinions. The first opinion was the one most frequently given: ‘No invention has ever created a greater revolution than the car.’ Not everyone would agree with the writer’s comment; others may have regarded the aeroplane or electricity or something else as the invention which created a bigger ‘revolution’. Thus, it becomes an opinion. The correct opinion was not spoilt if candidates continued as far as ‘... giving freedom of mobility on an unprecedented scale’. Any further extension of the text, however, brought in undeniable fact which detracted from the opinion. The first of the 2 opinions from paragraph 6 – that ‘such drivers are undoubtedly selfish’, or that such drivers are just ‘selfish’, alone – was correctly identified in fewer responses. The final opinion, in the last lines of the text, was the least frequently recognised: ‘The best remedy is a congestion charge’. If candidates wrote on to the end of the sentence its content did not spoil the given opinion. Suggesting that something is ‘the best’ will always invite disagreement and others will have their own opinions; here, some might think a congestion charge is no better than staggering working hours or working from home.

One common incorrect response was that ‘cars encourage anti-social behaviour’; the comment following this statement can easily be proved true as one has only to look at lines of traffic to see all the single drivers. ‘Driving itself is often stressful’ was also an incorrect response frequently offered. Reference to the appearance of drivers and, particularly, to the well-known phenomenon of road rage proved this to be a statement of fact rather than someone’s opinion. The rubric stated that the opinions should come from specific paragraphs in the text, so candidates’ own opinions were not credited.

## **Section 2: Reading for Meaning**

Candidates found the narrative passage more challenging to deal with than the factual text of Passage 1. In this second section, they were dealing with varied vocabulary, inferred as well as literal meaning and some aspects of the writer’s craft. While a number of candidates demonstrated their ability in responding to such questions, regular reading and discussion of fiction will help to improve further the skills necessary to deal with them.

**Question 3(a)** referred candidates to the first paragraph, which described the relationship between the writer and Lila, and asked what the two girls did which showed that they had become good friends. It stated how they played in the ‘early days’ of their friendship when they ‘showed off’ their dolls to each other. Many chose ‘showing off’ as the answer. Stronger responses recognised that this happened when the friendship was in its ‘early days’ and read on to see that ‘eventually’ they ‘exchanged’ dolls with each other; this was the sign that they had become ‘good’ friends.

**Question 3(b)** was the first question which required candidates to answer in their own words. Candidates are asked to paraphrase the ideas in a quote from the passage which is given in the question. In this case, candidates had to explain what the writer thought about Lila’s behaviour at a particular point in the text. A good answer showed this, e.g. ‘The writer thought that Lila’s action was deliberate but she could not understand why Lila pushed her doll into the cellar’. Other acceptable responses which conveyed the idea of a deliberate action included phrases such as ‘on purpose’, ‘she meant to’ and ‘knowingly’. Some responses explained the idea that the writer could not understand why Lila did what she did by using ‘for no reason’ or ‘incomprehensibly’. These were acceptable paraphrases. Many candidates incorrectly suggested that Lila’s action was ‘unexpected’. Others gave more general opinions regarding how the writer felt but answers such as ‘She thought she was mean/cruel’ did not relate to the terms of the question, which required the paraphrasing of ideas in the given quote. Very few responses attempted one-word definitions of single words in the quote, e.g. ‘inexplicably – without a reason’ and ‘intentionally – on purpose’. Such responses were not awarded the marks because candidates are required to refer to the context.

**Question 4(a)** asked for one word in paragraph 2 which reinforced the writer's feeling that Lila was 'mean', and the majority of candidates correctly identified 'spiteful'. A few suggested the preceding adverb, 'so'; this word on its own, however, does not reinforce 'the idea'. One word only was required to answer and responses which offered a whole sentence had to highlight the individual word in some way. (Highlighting of the word could be done by underlining it, placing it in quotation marks or using a sentence such as 'The word is spiteful').

In **Question 4(b)** an inference had to be drawn in order to understand what it was that the writer was 'determined to do' when she held back her 'feelings on the edges of moistening eyes'. The specific quotation signals that those words were important to the answer. Many responses recognised that her 'feelings' were relevant and gave generalised responses such as 'She was not going to show her feelings'. That was true but related only to her holding back those feelings. Stronger responses understood that her 'moistening eyes' suggested she was about to cry and that tears were what she was going to hold back, leading to the correct answer: 'She was determined not to cry'. Some responses omitted the 'not', and so gave exactly the opposite of the correct answer. Others went beyond the given paragraph and used information from the next paragraph to say she was determined 'to get back at Lila' or 'to throw Lila's doll into the cellar'. Candidates are advised to read questions with great care, to be certain of the exact requirements.

In **Question 5(a)** candidates were asked to identify, in paragraph 3, the 'two agonies' felt by the writer. The strongest responses sometimes used the link between mention of 'pain' and the resulting 'agony', giving these as (i) 'the violent pain of losing her doll' and (ii) 'the agony of quarrelling with Lila'. Equally acceptable were answers which captured the same ideas: thus, one of the agonies could be expressed as 'the dropped doll', 'the thing that Lila had done', or 'Lila's unkindness'. For the other agony, the idea of fighting or arguing with Lila, or losing her friendship, was often recognised. Others lifted the sentence about two agonies from the passage – (i) 'one already happening and (ii) 'one possible' – but did not say what the agonies were, only when they were felt. Other common lifts from the passage were: (i) 'a violent pain' and (ii) 'the pain of quarrelling with her would be even stronger'. Neither part was credited; (i) gave only a synonym for agony and (ii) was ambiguous. It was necessary to explain that it was Lila who caused these agonies and so answers which used only the pronoun 'her' were not adequately precise to score unless Lila had been mentioned, as in (i) 'the thing Lila had done to her' and (ii) 'the pain of quarrelling with her'; this was an answer which gained both marks because of the reference to Lila in the first part.

**Question 5(b)** asked candidates to give one word from the paragraph which showed that 'What you do, I do' was something Lila usually said. 'Recitation' was generally offered correctly. Incorrect responses included 'confidence', 'disbelief' and 'recognising'. 'Recognising' was an understandable choice, in the context of something having been done before, but 'recitation' has the added notion of something which was 'said'.

**Question 6** was the second question on the paper which required candidates to paraphrase the ideas in the quote given in the question. Just like 'any child', these two children were 'tempted but at the same time terrified by the thought of forcing the door' into the cellar. The necessary context with which to 'explain' how the children felt about the cellar could be quite minimal and those who simply said that 'They were drawn to it and scared of it' were correct. Candidates found the idea of being 'terrified' straightforward to paraphrase and offered many correct alternatives, 'afraid', 'scared' and 'horrified' being the most common. Many found the idea of being 'tempted' more challenging and many different and suitable synonyms were seen: 'drawn', 'lured', 'enticed', 'driven' and 'urged' were some of these and the less forceful 'wanted to enter' gave the correct idea. There were a few who suggested, acceptably, that the girls thought it would be 'exciting' or 'an adventure' to go there. 'Interested' and 'curious', however, carried no sense of being pulled towards or desiring to enter the cellar in some way. Candidates are advised that in 'own words' questions they are asked to demonstrate understanding of context by paraphrasing the ideas in the quote. Responses which give definitions of individual words without the context of what is happening in the passage cannot be awarded the marks.

**Question 7** was another inferential question, asking why the objects in the cellar were 'unidentifiable'. The reason had to be deduced from what had been said in the first lines of paragraph 5, where the writer describes how they went down into a '...dimly lit space'. 'They could not identify what the objects were because there was only a 'dim' light', or 'they could not see clearly', or 'it was dark in the cellar'; these were the brief but correct answers in many responses. If candidates offered a lift which included the preceding word, i.e. 'a damp dimly lit space', this was acceptable as the sense of having to peer through the surroundings generally was not lost. Those who quoted the text words which followed, saying that the objects were 'eerie masses, sharp, square or round' were only defining 'unidentifiable' in some way, rather than explaining 'why' they appeared like this. Similarly, 'The girls didn't know what the objects were' was another definition of 'unidentifiable'.

The majority of candidates responded well to **Question 8(a)**. They had to identify the disobedient act which Lila and the writer carried out. Almost all candidates recognised that the girls 'were forbidden to go to neighbours' houses'. The lift of those words, which a number of candidates gave as their response, did not answer the question but rather outlined the general prohibition against visiting the neighbours – presumably ordered by their parents. It was necessary to say that they *did* go to a neighbour's house, or to Achille's house; that was the 'disobedient act carried out', despite being forbidden. The strongest responses included all of this: 'They were not supposed to go to neighbours' houses but they went to Achille's anyway' or, more briefly, 'The girls went to Achille's'. This last example was acceptable without the word 'house', as it is common usage to say that one goes to 'a neighbour's', or 'to a friend's' etc. There was no insistence on the correct use of apostrophes. There were other answers which could not gain the mark, such as 'they went to neighbours houses when they should not' as they did not go to more than one house; nor did they go 'into' a house.

At **Question 8(b)**, many candidates used the words of the passage to give the second or 'other' reason for Lila taking the writer's hand as they climbed the stairs to Achille's house. The question wording gave the first reason, from the passage i.e. that she knew the writer lacked 'the courage' to go further up, and candidates were thus directed to the answer in the words immediately following: that Lila 'also' decided to take her hand 'because with that gesture she herself was looking for the strength to continue'. There was no instruction to use own words, here, and this was a perfect response from many. Others were also correct with shorter versions of the same idea: 'looking for strength to continue'; 'Lila also lacked courage'; 'she wanted to get courage from her friend'. Most candidates were awarded the mark for these or similar responses.

**Question 9** quoted the writer's disbelief that 'Lila was speaking to him (Achille) like that' and asked what, apart from her confidence, this told the reader about Lila's behaviour. The inference in the writer's words was recognised by over half the candidates, who correctly said that Lila was 'rude', 'impolite', 'disrespectful' or 'had no manners'. Others suggested her words showed her to be 'direct' or 'outspoken'. All of these were acceptable interpretations and were awarded the mark. Candidates who did not understand the inference often said that she was 'brave', 'angry' or 'aggressive'; a few repeated that she was 'confident', when they should have found something 'apart from her confidence', as the rubric instructed.

**Question 10** asked candidates to explain why the girls were surprised by Achille's reaction to their visit. The opening sentence in paragraph 8 was sometimes correctly given as the answer: the writer felt '...that he was not angry but unexpectedly hurt'. In other words, they had expected anger and instead found him 'unexpectedly' upset by Lila's accusation that he had taken their dolls. The reader had already been told that Achille was 'a feared neighbour', a scary 'ogre' and so other acceptable answers focused on their fear of what he might do to them: they were surprised that, though they expected him to be nasty, evil or violent, or that he would shout at or hurt them, he was actually kind to them; he gave them money to buy new dolls. Most candidates identified his unexpected kindness or his giving them money for dolls; the suggestion that they were surprised because they had thought he would attack or kill them with a knife was considered to be too extreme. Stronger responses expressed the ideas clearly as in:

'The girls were surprised because although Lila had approached him rudely, he did not carry out any violent act against them, instead giving them money to buy new dolls. They were surprised by his unnecessary act of kindness when he was so feared'.

'Achille did not shout back at them but instead they walked away with a gift of money from him'.

**Question 11** asked candidates to demonstrate understanding of 5 items of vocabulary as each was used in the passage. Candidates have to select the correct meaning of each word, as it occurs in the text, from 4 options. In its new multiple choice format. They circle the option which they think has the same meaning as the given word, in the context of the passage. If candidates change their minds, as some did, they are advised to make their final choice clear and to ensure that the earlier choice is obviously deleted. Generally, all candidates did better with the new style of vocabulary question than with the previous one.

The majority correctly chose 'unbearably' for the first word, **(a)** 'intolerable'. The correct synonym, 'fond of', for **(b)** 'attached to', was also selected by many, with 'linked with' or 'related to' being the most frequent incorrect choices. The third word given, **(c)** 'crudely', proved the most challenging to understand. The correct choice was *roughly*, this being a term used to describe something which has been done with little attention to detail. The majority of candidates chose 'weakly'; weakness was more the *result* of the chain 'roughly' holding the panels together. In **(d)** 'briskly' was best substituted by 'quickly', which was selected in about half the responses, 'carefully' and 'eagerly' being common wrong choices. 'Confusion' was accurately circled by many candidates for **(e)** 'bewilderment', while 'surprise', the word offered quite frequently, was an

understandable choice, in the context; ‘amusement’ was presumably identified when a candidate thought Achille was laughing or sneering at the girls, but it is not a synonym for ‘bewilderment’.

**Question 12** was the new-style question on writer’s craft. In each part, **Question 12(a)** and **Question 12(b)**, candidates were asked to give the meaning of a phrase from the text, followed by the effect of each phrase as used in the passage. Under the previous syllabus, the appreciation of such things as metaphor and simile, or the effect created by one word or phrase rather than another, might appear in any part of **Section 2**. The final question, now, demands the same appreciation of the writer’s skill, and candidates are advised that, in these final questions, they should be focusing on this specifically.

In **Question 12(a)** candidates were directed to the phrase: ‘With Lila in the lead, we descended five stone steps into a damp, dimly lit space. I tried to stay close behind Lila.’ They were asked to give, first, the meaning of the phrase and then the effect of the phrase as used in the passage.

Candidates must first give the ‘Meaning’ of the phrase i.e. say what was actually happening ‘in the passage’. Many candidates started with Lila ‘leading’ and then continued, either verbatim or almost verbatim, with ‘we descended five stone steps into a damp, dimly-lit space’. This was a repetition of the question and did not give the meaning within the context of the passage, where it is clear that the ‘space’ described was a cellar, a basement or an underground room. Answers such as ‘the writer walked close behind Lila as they went down to the cellar’ or ‘Lila walked in front as they descended the stone steps into a basement room with the writer close behind’ gave the meaning exactly; what the ‘space’ was had been made clear, as had the fact that Lila was leading with the writer ‘closely’ following her. There were several ways to capture this idea of what was going on and several responses did so. Others suggested that the meaning was ‘the girls were scared’; in fact, this was moving towards being a response to the ‘Effect’ of the phrase, instead of its ‘Meaning’. When offering the ‘Effect’ of the phrase ‘as it is used in the passage’, some candidates said it suggested that ‘Lila was brave and the writer was a coward’; others, just as correctly, referred only to the writer and how she seemed afraid; still others said ‘the cellar was a scary place’ or that there was ‘a creepy atmosphere’. Different responses recognised and described a plausible effect linked to a person or the place and each of these answers successfully explained something of the effect the writer had created. Occasionally, a single word was offered, such as ‘fear’. Without a definite link to the writer, this was ambiguous: who was afraid? Candidates are advised to make clear the focus of the effect they describe and, if more than one person is involved, to name them rather than using the equally ambiguous ‘*She* was afraid’.

The given phrase in **Question 12(b)** was ‘With a tug at my heart I bent over to grab her, but it was only a crumpled page of an old newspaper’. The previous words in the text had made clear that the writer thought she had seen her doll and most candidates recognised that grabbing ‘her’ referred to the doll. Many explained the ‘Meaning’ by repeating that ‘She thought she had found her doll’, adding, verbatim, the description of the old newspaper, without attempting to decode the image of the ‘tug’ at the heart. There were several ways by which the emotion felt could be expressed, and some were given: she was ‘excited’, ‘thrilled’, ‘happy’, ‘delighted’ when she thought she had found her doll. All of these captured the idea of what she felt, as did the more physical description ‘her heart skipped a beat.’ Such promising responses were not successful if the rest of the phrase was either ignored or copied. While verbatim lifts were not helpful, alone, some responses re-shaped the phrase, showing understanding of it e.g. ‘...but it was just a bit of paper’ or ‘it was only a page of newspaper’. The ‘Effect’ of this phrase, ‘as used in the passage’ was appreciated by the many candidates who saw it as the writer’s ‘disappointment’ or ‘sadness’ at not finding her doll. The meaning had implied her delight; her disappointment was the ‘Effect’. If candidates mentioned the range of her emotions, from joy to sadness, then that, too, was correct. Alternative acceptable effects included that ‘It makes the reader feel sorry for her’ (and, here, as only the writer was involved, the pronoun ‘her’ was unambiguous); another was ‘It shows how much she really loved her doll’. Less successful responses did not distinguish between ‘Meaning’ and ‘Effect’; ‘disappointment’ was often given as part of the meaning and ‘excitement’ as the effect.

It was possible for candidates to gain 1 of the 2 available marks in these questions if they correctly offered either ‘Meaning’ or ‘Effect’ without a correct response to the other, as in:

Meaning: ‘She grabbed a newspaper thinking it was her doll’.

Effect: ‘It shows the level of disappointment for the writer’.

While the meaning here is incomplete, a plausible effect is expressed.

These Meaning and Effect questions were the most challenging question on the paper and a significant number of candidates omitted these questions entirely. Further practice in distinguishing between the two

requirements – ‘Meaning’ and ‘Effect’ – will be beneficial and candidates are advised to focus only on *literal* meaning under ‘Meaning’ and to avoid the use of the same material under both headings.



# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/22  
Reading

## Key messages

- Candidates are advised in the summary **Question 1(a)** to focus on the selection and expression of only the main, or overarching, points within the text. Irrelevant examples and extensions of those points, if included, often detract from otherwise competent responses in **Question 1(a)**, which then influences the writing of responses in **Question 1(b)**.
- In **Question 1(b)**, although there is no specific assessment of the use of English, candidates are advised to focus on clear expression; this will ensure a well-organised piece of writing which is easy to follow. Practice in the appropriate use of linking devices is advised to ensure the necessary coherence.
- In **Question 1(b)**, candidates are encouraged to change focus succinctly from the first section of the summary question to the next. Some wrote at length when moving on to the reasons for the decline in the popularity of sugar, meaning they sometimes had 3–4 lines of irrelevance in the middle of their response. In many cases ‘However’ would suffice.
- In **Section 2**, in the updated style of the vocabulary question, with its multiple-choice format, candidates are advised to consider, within the context, each of the alternatives offered; they should take time to select the most appropriate word for that context.
- In final question of **Section 2**, candidates are advised to concentrate on appreciation of the writer’s craft. Although the format of these questions may appear to be ‘new’, the requirements are not. Candidates are still being asked to recognise the literal meaning of a given section of the text, and to comment on the effect on the reader of the writer’s use of particular words or images. Further practice in the approach to these questions will be beneficial. Candidates are advised to focus on literal meaning under ‘meaning’ and to avoid presenting effect as if it were meaning.
- Candidates are advised to try to gain an overall picture of both the given texts *and* all questions, before they begin to answer; this is especially important with reference to questions on the second passage. Closer reading of the whole text before attempting the questions would help to clarify the narrative described in the text. Many candidates showed a good understanding of the summary passage but found that responding to the detailed demands of the questions on the second passage was challenging. In both sections of the paper close reading and careful attention to detail brought the best results.
- Candidates might be encouraged to highlight or underline key words in the question, e.g. in **Question 7** ‘why was the writer **surprised?**’, or to pay closer attention to words already highlighted in the question, e.g. in **Question 5(a)**, what were the **two** pleasures of childhood?
- Many candidates were challenged by questions in which they were required to answer in their own words. This was seen particularly in the paraphrasing of ideas in **Question 6**; closer attention to the context of the ideas to be re-cast should produce responses with a clearer focus.
- Candidates should be able to write their answers within the parameters of the examination booklet. Where this is not possible, they should write on official additional paper. They should not write on the front page of the booklet as this is reserved for their centre and candidate numbers.
- Candidates are advised not refer to additional material which does not exist; there were a few candidates who intended to write more, particularly in **Question 1(a)**, and indicated that they had done so when in fact they had not.
- Candidates are encouraged to practise recognising the difference between opinion and fact in the first, non-fiction passage. In general, there has been much improvement in candidates’ ability over the years to answer such questions correctly, but further practice would lead to even greater improvement. They should understand that an opinion might well form only part of a sentence; this will help candidates not to refer to excess which can turn an opinion into a statement.

## **General comments**

All candidates seemed to engage with the tasks and the texts. There were very few incomplete scripts. While the majority of candidates attempted every question, there were a number who did not respond to the final section on the writer's craft.

Candidates were asked to answer questions on two passages, the first entitled 'Sugar' and the second entitled 'A Disappointing Day'. The first passage explored the candidates' ability to read for ideas and the second tested their reading for meaning. 22 marks were available for the summary question, with 12 of these marks being awarded for the assessment of the candidates' ability to select content points from the text of 'Sugar' and 10 marks for the assessment of their ability to express these points in piece of writing which was relevant, well-organised and easy to follow. A further question allotted 3 marks to the testing of candidates' ability to read for ideas, in this case to distinguish fact from opinion in the first paragraph of the text.

The second passage, 'A Disappointing Day', tested the candidates' literal and inferential comprehension, their understanding of vocabulary, their ability to select appropriate quotations, their use of own words and their appreciation of the writer's craft. Some of these were tested in ways different from in the past.

In **Section 1**, almost all candidates put information into the correct sections and wrote to the required length. Both spelling and punctuation were generally good.

In **Question 1(a)**, there were 12 marks, for identifying content points in Passage 1. The focus was on the selection of main, or overarching, points, and to separate these main points from supporting detail or examples. For example, writing 'tooth decay is linked to sugar consumption' made a content point but writing 'tooth decay is linked to sugar consumption and snacking throughout the day means that the decaying process is accelerated' gives a gloss on the correct point but adds nothing to it. Candidates are advised to focus on the universal rather than the particular, and often the more succinctly expressed it is, the better.

In **Question 1(b)** a maximum of 10 marks were awarded for writing up the content points in a piece of writing which was relevant, well-organised and easy to follow. Marks were awarded for summaries which were relevant and coherent, i.e. could be easily followed and understood.

Although there are no longer specific marks for the use of own words, the rubric says that candidates should use them as far as possible. This suggestion, and the explanation that credit would be given for information which was presented in an easy-to-follow manner, encouraged the strongest candidates to re-phrase and synthesise their content points fluently and coherently. Others used parts of the passage, rearranging and adding to them to ensure a coherence of their own, to suit their organisation of the content; adverbial connectives as well as other linking devices such as punctuation were often used to some effect.

In **Section 2**, in own words questions, candidates were asked to paraphrase the ideas in a given part of the text.

The vocabulary question asked candidates to identify the meanings of five words from the text. They had to select one of four options for each word..

Writer's craft questions are now in a section at the end of the paper. Candidates are given two phrases from the passage. For each phrase they are asked to give the literal meaning of the phrase and its effect.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section 1**

**Question 1(a)** was the first part of the summary question, carrying 12 marks; candidates were asked to identify the origins and spread of sugar, and the reasons for the decline in popularity of sugar, as outlined in the passage. The summary was based on the whole 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.

Excluding the provided content points, which were not rewarded with marks, there were 14 content points, of which candidates could identify any combination up to a maximum of 12 points, carrying one mark each. Most candidates expressed the points either in note form or in short sentences lifted from the text; although some responses presented long, verbatim copies of the text for each content point, many responses presented the points in a concise way. Candidates were not instructed to use bullet points, although the rubric suggested that they might find it useful to do so, and the sample points given to assist them used bullets; most candidates used bullet points.

Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 described the origins and spread of sugar and there were 8 points (excluding the first, which was given) which the candidates could make. In paragraph 1, there were 4 content points, (excluding the provided first point) which was that sugar spread to other or to nearby islands, that it moved westwards to India with the migration of these islanders, that Indians, or Indian merchants, traded it with China and that the Persians took it back to Persia with them after they invaded India. Although the text distinguished between sugar cane and sugar, these terms were taken as interchangeable for the purpose of this summary. A common error was to state that sugar moved westwards to India without making the link with the migrating islanders; it was an incomplete idea to suggest that sugar moved without some human intervention.

Paragraph 2 contained 3 content points. The first 2 content points concerned the Arab people: they learned how sugar was made (having seen sugar cane growing, although this last idea was not necessary to make the point), and they began sugar production in other lands, or in lands that they conquered. If only one of these points was made, it was still necessary to include reference to the correct agent, namely the Arabs or Arab people, but either point could be made without reference to Arabs provided a context of Arab people had been established. The third content point in the paragraph was that European trade with the East included the importation of sugar, or that Europeans brought sugar to Europe by trading in it with the East.

The direction of trade was occasionally confused, with candidates writing 'Europeans traded sugar with the East'; there were some omissions of what was traded, namely sugar.

In paragraph 3, there was a further content point, which was that sugar was used as a medicine, or used to mask the unpleasant taste of some medicines, or that it spread into the pharmaceutical world. Occasionally the point was not made because the specific example (alone) of curing tuberculosis was offered rather than the general point. Many candidates went on to give one or two more bullets covering the same point.

In the second section of the summary, the rubric asked for the reasons for the decline in popularity of sugar, as outlined in the passage, and there were a further 6 content points, excluding the given point. From paragraph 4 candidates could make 2 points (excluding the provided first point), the first being that sugar consumption can lead to illnesses caused by weight gain. Some candidates wrote that eating sugar causes illness, without stating that these illnesses are caused by the weight gain specified in the given point. The second point was that refined, white, purified or processed sugar is empty calories, or that it has no nutritional value. Where this point was not fully made, it tended to be because the distinction was not made between the sugar of the general text and the refined sugar specified in this area of the text. 'Raw' sugar was sometimes offered as an alternative to 'refined' which was incorrect.

In paragraph 5 there were 3 content points, the first of these being that sugar can become, or is, addictive. This was a relatively straightforward point, but sometimes candidates did not make it because they lifted at lines 34–36 ('If someone has a sweet tooth this could be a warning that he is becoming a sugar addict'); this was an incidental reference to the point rather than the point itself. The second content point concerned refined, white, purified or processed sugar, this time stating that it causes hyperactivity; as with the point in the previous paragraph, the distinction was not made between the sugar of the general text and the refined sugar specified in this area of the text. The final content point in the paragraph was that sugar is linked to, or causes, tooth decay

In paragraph 6, there was a further content point, which was that hidden sugar is often added to processed food. Some candidates went on to write about the people being deterred from buying processed food, or to discuss the example of pasta sauce, but neither of these ideas answered the question.

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were asked to use their notes to write a summary of the origins and spread of sugar, and the reasons for the decline in popularity of sugar, as outlined in the passage. They were advised to write between 150 and 180 words (the first ten of which were given). They were asked to write up their notes from the content points into a piece of writing which was relevant, well-organised and easy to follow; the strongest responses were relevant and coherent. Such responses were characterised under relevance by adhering to the points of the text which were relevant to the question, avoiding the over-use of supporting details and examples, and also avoiding non-specific topic sentences, such as 'In this way we can see that

sugar is no longer as popular as it used to be' or 'But there are many reasons for the decline in the popularity of sugar today.' Irrelevant sections of the text which were frequently included were references to the cakes of boiled down sugar or 'stone honey', the opinions of eleventh century soldiers and the price of sugar in London in 1319. Emphasis was also given by some to the banning of sugary foods by schools, scientists' opinions on hyperactivity, the perils of snacking and the warning of a pasta sauce producer; these were examples or glosses on the overarching points and did not make separate points.

Under coherence, stronger responses linked points in a way which aided the fluency and moved the answer on in a natural and helpful way through the use of devices such as connectives and adverbial phrases. While the best responses used the common adverbial connectives such as 'nevertheless', 'however' 'furthermore' etc. appropriately but not excessively, others used them throughout their summaries in ways which were not always logical. Elsewhere, the repeated use of 'and' or 'also' was noticeable to link points; in the better responses these words were used only now and then for the skilful synthesis of ideas. Very few answers were shorter than the recommended length and hardly any candidates omitted the question completely.

In **Question 2** candidates were to identify three of the writer's opinions from paragraph 1. The key to answering this type of question is to identify words or phrases which are subjective rather than objective, and in this case the words were 'delicious' for the first opinion, 'fascinating' for the second opinion and 'it is easy to see' for the third.

These words supplied the first opinion that 'sugar is a delicious sweet substance (often used in food)', or 'sugar is delicious'; this opinion was emphasised by the subjective 'definitely', which did not need to be included in the response, but which was intended to draw the attention of candidates to its subjectivity.

The key subjective claim in the second opinion was 'it is fascinating' and this claim could be linked either to Captain Cook seeing sugar-cane, or that sugar-cane was still growing (there) many centuries later. The opinion lay in identifying that the longevity of sugar-cane was 'fascinating'.

'Easy to see' was the key subjective claim in the third opinion, and this had to be linked to the context: it is easy to see why they kept the secret of making sugar a (closely guarded) secret. Some responses incorrectly included the beginning of the sentence, writing that 'When the Persians invaded India, they took sugar back to Persia with them, describing it as a reed which makes honey without bees.' Others chose to offer 'this cultivation probably originated in New Guinea'; this was a common incorrect answer with the word 'probably' being taken as indicating an opinion, but the word 'probably' in this context indicated the likelihood, rather than the possibility, of a scientific fact being true given the limitations of the timescale involved of 8000 years.

A small number of candidates offered their own opinions rather than the writer's opinion as required by the rubric, e.g. 'in my opinion people should not eat as much sugary food'.

Some candidates used ellipsis instead of completing the 'opinion', not realising that without that completion, what they had written was not an opinion at all. e.g. 'It is easy to see ....' and 'It is fascinating ...'.

## Section 2

Most candidates seemed to find this narrative text more challenging than the non-narrative Passage 1.

**Question 3(a)** was a literal comprehension question asking whose idea it was to skip school, the answer being it was Lila's idea; this was a relatively straightforward question designed to ease candidates into this section of the paper. Likewise, **Question 3(b)** was a relatively straightforward literal comprehension question asking candidates for the excuse the girls gave to deceive their parents; again, most candidates were successful here in writing that their excuse was that they were going to a party at their teacher's house. Although the text did not specify that this was a farewell party or an end of term party, it was reasonable to infer this and so answers which included this fictitious detail were allowed. **Question 3(c)** asked who was the person least likely to be taken in by the girls' deception; it was necessary to focus on 'not even my mother' in the text, with correct answers being 'the writer's mother' or 'her mother' as in the context the person had to be the writer's mother and not Lila's mother. Incorrect responses tended to be 'the writer', 'their mother', 'Lila' or 'the teacher'.

**Question 4(a)** was the first of the questions on the paper which required candidates to answer in their own words. They were to explain what the expression 'intrigued by the invisible' tells the reader about the girls. The key lay in paraphrasing the ideas 'intrigued' and 'invisible', although this re-casting had to be done

within a sensible context as the question assesses understanding of the ideas. This meant that answers such as:

*Intrigued- fascinated*

*Invisible- cannot be seen*

were incorrect. Almost all candidates attempted a relevant context with very few giving only synonyms. Acceptable answers were responses such as ‘they were attracted to things they could not see’; alternatively, a specific reference to the invisible thing which fascinated them, namely the sea, was acceptable. The idea of ‘unknown’ was accepted here, although technically not the same as ‘cannot be seen’. Many candidates incorrectly shifted the focus onto linking ‘invisible’ to the girls, writing that the they girls could not be seen, or that nobody noticed them. Such answers were incorrect as, although the meaning of ‘invisible’ was known, the wrong context spoiled the response.

In **Question 4(b)** candidates were asked what was ‘the violent explosion of sound’, the answer being that it was echo of Lila’s shout or cry or voice; the context referred to the echo of their steps, but that was incorrect as that echo came before the ‘explosion of sound’ in the text. Some candidates were in the right area of the text by linking their answer to Lila’s voice but omitting the reference to the ‘echo’, which was needed for a completely correct response.

**Question 5(a)** asked candidates to identify the two pleasures of childhood experienced by the writer that day. The first was that they had a long time, or hours, or a day, before them with no adult or parent to look for them; the second pleasure of childhood was having a dear, or close, or best friend, or a friend like Lila. The first answer could be given by lifting at line 18: ‘Ahead of us were many hours when no adult would look for us.’ When this point was incorrectly made, it tended to be because no reference to time (hours, a day etc.) or adult intervention was included. The second answer could be given by lifting at line 20: ‘I was so happy to have a close friend’ the inclusion of ‘like all girls of my age’ was acceptable for a correct response. Many responses included a reference to Lila’s ability to plan things; this was a reference which was specific to Lila and the writer and not a general ‘pleasure of childhood’. Common incorrect answers were ‘harmonious start to the day’ and occasionally reference to ‘the pace, and/or time available, and/or the route to the sea’.

In **Question 5(b)** candidates were asked to identify the one word used in paragraph 3 which was the opposite of ‘harmonious’, the answer being ‘disordered’; the majority of candidates gave the correct answer. Others missed the fact that an antonym and not a synonym was being asked for, and offered ‘happy’ from line 20. Other incorrect choices included ‘pleasures’, ‘precisely’ and ‘pace’.

**Question 6** was the second of the questions on the paper which required candidates to answer in their own words and, with reference to ‘people seemed indifferent to our escapade’, explain what the writer thought about the people they passed. Correct answers were responses such as ‘they did not care about the girls skipping school’ or ‘they were not interested in two girls having an adventure’. There were very many ways in which the correct answer could be captured, with explanations such as ‘oblivious to’, ‘took no notice’ or ‘ignored’ capturing the idea of ‘indifferent’, and words such as ‘adventure’ or ‘exploit, or specific answers such as ‘what they were up to’ capturing the idea of ‘escapade’. Incorrect responses were those which seemed to think that ‘indifferent’ meant ‘not different to’ or ‘different to’; many candidates wrote that the people the girls passed were not like people they had seen before, or they were the same as people they had seen before. Others were unclear as to the meaning of ‘escapade’ and perhaps confused it with ‘escaped’ so that incorrect reasons were that the girl were running away or that the girls were fleeing.

**Question 7** was an inferential question which asked candidates why the writer was surprised that Lila wanted to turn back. Correct answers focused either on the weather or on Lila’s personality, so that ‘because they would wet whether they went on or turned back’ was one option and answers such as ‘she was not using her own type of reasoning’ was the other option. Candidates could make a deduction from the second of these options by writing something like ‘she was not the kind of person who gave up on things’ or ‘normally she would have kept going’. Many candidates found this question challenging and gave answers such as ‘she had never been so agitated’. Others lifted at lines 31–32 ‘it was her own type of reasoning and I was bewildered when she did not apply it’; this was incorrect as it was necessary to make the adjustment that ‘to keep going’ was her type of reasoning. Another common incorrect response was that it had been Lila’s idea in the first place and so it was odd that she wanted to turn back.

In **Questions 8(i) and 8(ii)** respectively candidates were asked what unexpected thing happened and what expected thing happened. In each case, a mother had to be mentioned and, because there were two mothers in this part of the text, it was necessary to identify them to answer correctly. The answer to

**Question 8(i)** was that the writer's mother came to school (to take her daughter to the party), or the writer's mother found out she was skipping school. The answer to **Question 8(ii)** was that Lila's mother did not notice anything or did not find out there was no party; because the text referred to 'at Lila's house nobody noticed anything'. 'Lila's family' was acceptable instead of 'Lila's mother'. Many responses were incorrect because they gave 'her mother' to answer **Questions 8(i)** without distinguishing which mother this was. Occasionally candidates offered the answer to **Question 8(i)** (what was unexpected) as the answer to **Questions 8(ii)** (what was expected). A common incorrect response to **Questions 8(i)** was a reference to the fact that it was raining, without the continuation to the fact that the writer's mother had gone to school with an umbrella. A common incorrect response to **Question 8(ii)** was the lift of lines 41–42: 'Lila knew her own mother was less attentive but decided to take off anyway'. However, if this lift was extended into 'At her house nobody had noticed anything,' this was a correct answer.

**Questions 9** asked candidates to explain what Lila did to betray the writer, and why she did this. The answer to the first part of the question, namely what she did, was that she persuaded, or forced, or planned for, the writer to skip school with her. Incorrect answers were that she took the writer with her when she skipped school. The answer to the second part of the question, namely why Lila did what she did, lay in inferring from lines 44–45 that Lila wanted the writer to be punished by her parents not sending her to High School. Incorrect responses were that she did not want the writer to go to High School; this was insufficient as Lila's plan had an intended effect and was more than just what she would like to happen. Many candidates wrote at length that Lila's actions were based on jealousy because she herself was not going to High School.

**Question 10** asked candidates to demonstrate understanding of 5 items of vocabulary as each was used in the passage. Candidates have to select the correct meaning of each word, as it occurs in the text, from 4 options, in the new multiple choice format. They circle the option which they think has the same meaning as the given word, in the context of the passage. If candidates change their minds, as some did, they are advised to make their final choice clear and to ensure that the earlier choice is obviously deleted. Generally, all candidates did better with the new style of vocabulary question than with the previous one.

The most successful attempts were with **Question 10(c)**, where 'nasty' was correctly chosen as the synonym for 'mean' and with **Question 10(d)**, where 'forced' was correctly chosen as the synonym for 'compelled'. In **Question 10(c)** 'miserly' was rejected by discerning candidates who looked at the word in the context and saw that it had nothing to do with money. Responses to **Question 10(a)** and **Question 10(b)** were less successful. In **Question 10(a)** the correct answer was 'cautiously' for 'tentatively', and in **Question 10(b)** 'charmed' was the correct synonym for 'enchanted' with 'surprised' being the most common incorrect response. Candidates often correctly answered the challenging **Question 10(e)**, where the correct answer was 'grip' for 'purchase', with 'bought' being correctly rejected by candidates who saw the context of the worn sandals, which had no purchase on the muddy ground.

In each section, **Question 11(a)** and **Question 11(b)**, candidates were asked to give the meaning of a phrase as used in the text, followed by the effect on the writer of this phrase. Many responses to 'Meaning' were imprecise meaning. Others gave the meaning under 'effect' and this also was too imprecise to be correct.

**Question 11(a)** directed candidates to the phrase 'as usual, it was as if Lila were ten steps ahead and knew precisely what to do and where to go' and asked for its meaning and its effect on the writer. Many responses started with a paraphrase of 'as usual' and then added on, either verbatim or almost verbatim, 'she knew what to do and where to go' which was a repetition of the question and did not give the meaning, which had to be something like 'Lila was leading the writer', or 'Lila was in charge', or 'Lila had everything planned'. The effect on the writer was that she had confidence in Lila, or that she trusted Lila, or that Lila was her role-model. Some responses did not address the question which asked for effect on the writer and gave, incorrectly, a statement about Lila, such as 'Lila was the leader'. Such a response was not an effect on the writer and was a statement which gave meaning and not effect.

In **Question 11(b)** there more success with the effect than with the meaning. Candidates were directed to the text at lines 28–29: 'there was something she had on the tip of her tongue but could not make up her mind to tell me.' There were many ways in which the meaning here could be given, such as 'there was something she nearly told me/or wanted to tell me but did not know if she should/or did not know how to say it'. Many responses gave incorrectly that she was unwilling to speak or decided not to speak. The effect on the writer was that it made her uneasy, or nervous, or confused, or that she realised that Lila was hiding something. Responses which referred to the writer's curiosity were considered too weak and answers which suggested that the effect was to made her angry were considered to be too imprecise.