

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/01

Reading Passage (Core)

General comments

Overall, candidates responded well to this paper and their answers revealed both interest in and engagement with the reading passage. As in previous sessions, most showed a good general understanding of the material and a pleasing number were capable of identifying some of the more subtle points in some parts of **Question 1**. The majority of responses to **Question 2** were of at least adequate length and attempted to address both elements of the task, although a disappointingly large minority did little more than repeat details (and, in some cases, whole paragraphs) from the original with little or no reference to what had been learnt from the experience. As has been mentioned in previous reports, the standard of written expression was mainly satisfactory to good and there were very few scripts indeed in which the candidates' linguistic capacity was so limited that meaning was significantly obscured. Nearly all candidates made a serious attempt to produce the best work of which they were capable on this paper and only a very small minority failed to complete the paper to an adequate length. Handwriting and presentation were generally satisfactory to good.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The reading passage on which this paper was based was a website article describing a cycle ride across the Andes in the low season. This proved to be accessible for almost all candidates who clearly understood the main features of the journey as well as the problems faced and pleasures experienced by the writer and her companions. However, as has been the case in previous sessions, a number of candidates appeared not to have read either the passage or the questions in sufficient detail and consequently failed to score as many marks as they would appear to have been capable of. This point will be referred to in more specific detail in the comments on individual questions that follow but it should be emphasised here that in particular, **Question 1 (g)** carried a potential 6 marks and required candidates to identify three words or phrases from paragraph 7 that the writer used to describe her enjoyment of a particular part of the journey. It also required an explanation of how the chosen expressions helped the reader to imagine such enjoyment. 1 mark was awarded for each of the words or phrases correctly identified and 1 further mark for each convincing explanation of those words or phrases. Candidates, therefore, who did no more than lift words from the passage without any attempt to explain their effect were unable to score more than 3 marks for this question. A similar problem arose with **Question 1 (j)**. In each of the given phrases, there were two words which required explanation for the full 2 marks to be awarded; many candidates did little more than re-arrange the wording of the original passage, without making their understanding of the vocabulary clear to the Examiner, with the result that, again, they were unable to score more than half of the marks available for the question.

- (a) A pleasing number of candidates clearly identified the two reasons why the writer wanted to visit the Manu region as being because she wanted adventure and because she wanted to see Peru's National Bird, the Cock of the Rock. Most succeeded in identifying at least one of these reasons. However, a significant number of responses stated that the writer wished to see Peru's National Bird as one reason and that she wanted to see the Cock of the Rock as the second; such answers revealed a fundamental misreading of the passage and illustrate the point made above about the need for careful reading.

- (b) Again, many candidates achieved both of the available marks for this question. Of those who did not, there were some who had simply failed to understand the phrase and wrote answers which were clearly wrong. However, there were many others who apparently understood what the writer meant and clearly explained the meaning of 'exhilarating' by saying that the downhill part of the journey would have been genuinely exciting 'in good conditions', consequently failing to make clear their understanding of the rest (and apparently more straightforward part) of the quotation. Those who said that this part of the journey would have been really exciting if the weather had been better, on the other hand, did reveal the necessary understanding and gained full marks for the question.
- (c) Candidates responded well to the summary question and a good number achieved the maximum seven marks. Those who did not fell mainly into two categories: those who over-generalised their answers, saying, for example, that the cyclists found the cold unpleasant but failing to include any of the precise details of the effects of the cold mentioned by the author, or those who apparently did not read the question carefully and ignored the instruction to state what was enjoyable about the downhill journey. It was pleasing to note, however, that a large number of candidates heeded the suggested length for their answer and attempted to write concisely.

The points which were credited were as follow:

- 1 it was freezing cold
- 2 their hands lost all feeling/could not feel handlebars
- 3 the hairpin corners were dangerous
- 4 their lips/knees froze/pure agony
- 5 their noses ran
- 6 the village was closed up
- 7 excessive time taken for the journey/took 3 hours/2 hours
- 8 the roads were smooth
- 9 they could reach good speeds (on the gradient)
- 10 the countryside and scenery
- 11 seeing the animals

- (d) Again this was a two mark question for which many candidates succeeded in identifying only one reason as to why the writer thought they had 'stepped back centuries' and, as a result, were awarded only one mark. There were two features of what they saw in the village of Paucartambo which made them think that they were in an earlier time and these were the appearance of the village itself (the cobblestones, narrow alleys and whitewashed houses) and the traditional clothing (skirts and blankets) which was worn by the inhabitants.
- (e) This was a straightforward question and most candidates answered it correctly: the writer described the owner of the football pitch as a 'nice' man because he allowed her and her companions to camp there overnight (presumably free of charge). A very small number of candidates suggested that the word 'nice' was being used ironically because, as things turned out, the campsite turned into a muddy quagmire overnight. Such responses were awarded the mark available for this question as Examiners felt that it was possible that this was the writer's intended implication.
- (f) This was another two mark question and there were two distinct points that needed to have been made to secure both marks. One reason why the writer and her companions were disappointed when they saw the Cocks' dance for the second time was because of the heavy rain which somewhat dampened their enthusiasm; the second reason was that there were very few birds actually performing their dance. Many candidates apparently had difficulty in clearly identifying both of these points; in general, the rain and 'foul conditions' were more frequently mentioned than the scarcity of birds. Again, there was evidence of quite serious misreading in the responses of a number of candidates who appeared to be under the misconception that the dance was being performed by human beings.
- (g) The words and phrases that were acceptable as responses for this question were: *ever more beautiful and warm jungle; racing along; luxuriant with grasses; rich moist air; filling the lungs as if they had been starved; heady and intoxicating; wanted to smile and laugh; sheer happiness; big, bright buttercup yellow butterflies; a haze of butterflies; utterly dreamlike!* The phrase *jolting along* which was suggested by some candidates was not accepted as it was felt that 'jolting' could hardly be considered a pleasurable experience. However, candidates who produced a convincing

explanation for their choice of this word were rewarded with one mark. Most candidates successfully identified three appropriate words or phrases and many identified all three; what proved to be disappointing, however, was the nature of the attempts to explain why they suggested the sense of pleasure to the reader. The most successful responses were those which showed an appreciation of the figurative implications of the words – for example, *cycling in a haze of butterflies* was seen by some as being a reminder of idealised romantic cinematic imagery and others correctly identified the suggestions of an almost hallucinatory and transcendental experience in the phrase *heady and intoxicating*. Such sophistication of response was, not surprisingly, rare and the majority of candidates opted for the equally correct approach of explaining the literal meaning of their chosen phrases; for example, *the rich moist air of the jungle* was seen as being refreshing and sustaining after the thinness of the air that they had breathed at higher altitudes. The least successful responses to this task came from those candidates who failed to realise that it was necessary to make clear their understanding and simply wrote comments such as ‘*the ever more beautiful and warm jungle* means that the jungle became warmer and more beautiful’ which did not fulfil the requirements of the question.

- (h) This was another straightforward question and, again, was correctly answered by most candidates; the travellers had to wait for a bus in Pilcopata because all the buses on that particular day were full and/or they had to wait two days for another one. The most common incorrect answer was that they had to wait for the bicycles to be repaired which was not stated in the passage.
- (i) This was also an apparently straightforward question but a surprisingly large number of candidates answered it incorrectly; some who did so simply ignored the instruction to choose a **two** word phrase and wrote down a complete sentence; such responses were marked as incorrect regardless of whether they contained the phrase ‘without bitterness’ or not. Other candidates simply chose the wrong phrase, which seldom contained only two words.
- (j) As with their responses to **Questions 1 (b)** and **1 (g)** many candidates failed to score as many marks as they could have done on this question by forgetting to explain the meanings of both key words in the stated phrases. For example, many explained ‘trudged’ as walking with difficulty, but made no attempt to explain ‘quagmire’, simply using the word itself in their answers. More were successful in gaining both marks in their explanations of ‘time-oriented society’ although only a few were successful in achieving both marks for ‘environmentally conscious’. Despite explaining the second part of the phrase successfully they did not realise that it was also necessary to show that they understood what was meant by the word ‘environmentally’. Once again, attention to detail is essential to achieve a good result in all parts of this first question.

Question 2

As has been the case in previous examinations at this level, the standard of candidates’ responses to the writing task was generally of a pleasing standard. Most wrote to at least an adequate length and generally made a serious attempt to apply the understanding they had gained of the passage to meet the requirements of the question; the key points here were that they should attempt to write in a format and register appropriate to a journal; that they dealt with the good and bad points of the journey; that they made an attempt to describe the writer’s thoughts and feelings and that they made some comment (based on the content of the original passage) to say what the writer had learned from his/her experiences.

Some candidates misinterpreted the requirements of this task and produced answers which bore very little, if any, relation to the circumstances of the writer or the events of the journey described in the original passage. Some such accounts occasionally contained a mention of a boat and then continued with a description of adventures on the high seas: others described experiences in countries other than Peru and involved all means of transport except bicycles. Very often these attempts were well written and scored quite highly for *written expression*, but it was impossible to award them more than 1 or 2 marks for *content*. As with the comprehension tasks in **Question 1**, it is essential that candidates read the wording of the question closely in order to achieve the best marks of which they are capable. It is important to remember that this is a *Directed Writing* task and candidates are, therefore, required to show their understanding of particular aspects of the passage and to use those as a basis from which to address the task.

Nevertheless, the majority of candidates did approach the task in the correct way with varying degrees of success. The most effective of these showed that their writers had fully absorbed the details of the journey described in the original passage and recreated in their own words its high and low points in a tone of voice fully appropriate to a journal entry (at times with interjections about the state of the sea on which their boat was sailing as added verisimilitude). Such responses successfully wove descriptions of and comments on

the writer's thoughts and feelings about particular incidents into the fabric of their narratives and remembered to comment about what they had learnt from the experience. Responses at this level usually appreciated that the learning experience involved both spiritual as well as practical matters; for example, they learnt to appreciate the values of a way of life with different values from that they were used to as well as learning that it was not a good idea to ride a bicycle round hairpin bends if your hands were too frozen to apply the brakes. Less successful responses to the task tended to be over-reliant on the content and language of the original passage, making straightforward but undeveloped references to the writer's thoughts and feelings and adding one or two sentences by way of a conclusion in which they mentioned that they had learnt that the rainy season was not the best time to camp on a football field. The least successful responses (which were in the minority) consisted of little more than a re-hashing of the original passage with references to thoughts and feelings being made in passing, rather than as a result of deliberate intention; in scripts at this level, references to what had been learnt were usually omitted or perfunctory at the best.

Examiners commented favourably on the candidates' linguistic competence. There were very few scripts in which the expression was so limited that it was not possible to understand clearly what had been written. The best scripts contained a wide range of appropriately used vocabulary and were correctly punctuated with only a few spelling slips. The writing in these scripts was well structured with paragraphs of adequate length being used to shape meaning. Less successful attempts usually were marred by uncertain spelling of basic vocabulary and insecure punctuation; in particular, the use of commas rather than full stops to separate sentences and the omission of the apostrophe to denote possession. A further limitation of responses that fell just below the top bands was the failure to control the structure of the writing through well organised paragraphs and future candidates should be encouraged to work at improving this aspect of their writing and to avoid the two faults of either writing too many one or two sentence paragraphs or of submitting work with no paragraph divisions at all.

In conclusion, Centres and their candidates can again be congratulated for the way they prepared for and performed in this examination. There were a pleasing number of very good responses and a very large number which were quite good: the difference between the one type of response and the other lay mainly in the amount of detail and the precision of focus which the candidates included in their responses to both the Reading and Writing aspects of the paper.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/02
Reading Passages (Extended)

General comments

Candidates found the passages on Aunt Pegg and good uncles very accessible and many appeared to enjoy the paper, particularly the opportunity to play the part of the aunt in **Question 1**. In many cases the paper was answered well, but not all candidates had been adequately prepared. For example, there were still many who did not understand that the summary was a collection of facts selected from the passages in relation to the question. Instead they wrote commentaries. Despite the fact that they were told to write one side in total, many summaries were far too long. In the answers to **Question 2**, many candidates failed to address the writer's choice of words but wrote a paraphrase of the descriptions.

The most pervasive fault was in the response to **Question 1** where weak candidates located appropriate reading matter to use in their letters, but did no more with it than to offer a weak paraphrase or, in some cases, a virtual copying of the words. Candidates should be taught that they are expected to use and modify what they have read to make it fully suitable to the question. Those who used the reading material without such modifications could not expect to gain more than half marks at best for the evidence they gave of their reading ability.

Some of the answers to **Question 1** were very long, which was not a problem in itself. However, some candidates may have spent their energy on this question and, in some cases on **Question 2**, with the result that not enough attention was given to reading Passage B and to writing a careful summary.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1

Question 1: Imagine you are Aunt Pegg. After one week of looking after the children, you write a letter to their parents in which you: give your impressions of the children; give an account of your progress with them so far; tell your plans for the next week. Write your letter. Base it on what you have read in Passage A.

This question was generally well answered. Candidates at least located material that related to the children's questionable behaviour and how Aunt Pegg dealt with it by means of giving chores and lessons in arithmetic, the works of the great writers and 'Practical Farmwork'.

However, only good candidates explained her 'philosophy' and showed how it was founded on good diet and keeping children occupied. Weaker candidates found the whole question of diet more difficult to deal with. They also fell into the trap of repeating verbatim the incident of the shopping bags. Some also found the episode of the 'Hairy Stinkweed' difficult and assumed that the children habitually swore. There was no evidence for this in the passage.

Good candidates used the reading material imaginatively. For example, instead of repeating the two instances when Aunt Pegg used her whistle, they would refer to it when writing about her theory of discipline or the need for promptness. This was much more subtle proof of their reading ability than retelling the story from the original. Again, good candidates would refer to the change in the children with a reference to their going about their chores quietly, 'almost as if they did not enjoy what they were doing'. This of course, would be exactly how Aunt Pegg would have interpreted the misery of losing their former freedom.

The trouble was that many of the letters did not look deeply into the text. The syllabus calls for the understanding of explicit meaning (most obviously tested in **Question 3**) and also implicit meaning. That includes matters such as the writer's attitude, which colours the facts. The difficulty here was that this was an autobiographical fragment written from the children's point of view and therefore biased. This was shown by the use of 'vile' and the little rhyme at the beginning. However, written later in life, one would think that

the children might show at least some sympathy for her point of view. Although she thought she was doing right, there was enough in the passage to suggest that she really was a curse. For example, the punishments were not exaggerated, at least in their frequency. Her use of the whistle was bizarre. Her ideas of education at the best were inconsistent. Therefore candidates who interpreted her character more or less as the children presented it were more likely to pick up the flavour of what they read. Many interpreted the character by means of little asides and comments that showed her almost militaristic manner. She spoke about children being seen and not heard, there were references to her memories of the beliefs of her 'dear father' and admonitions to the parents about the dire consequences of allowing the children to get away with their poor attitude to life. Hence an important part of this exercise was to write in such a way that Aunt Pegg's character was made plain. Candidates did this to a greater or lesser extent. There were few who wrote utterly formal letters, like a head teacher writing to parents.

Some tried to portray Aunt Pegg as wholly benevolent and usually started their letter by praising the parents for bringing up such lovely children and the pleasure it had brought Aunt Pegg to look after them. Many who started in this vein failed to maintain the attitude throughout the letter. More to the point, there was little character, or voice in the writing, that emerged as the letter proceeded.

Finally, candidates were asked to give plans for the final week's activities. Some mistakenly thought that the passage referred to the whole period instead of just the first three days. Some candidates suggested 'more of the same' which was not very adventurous. Of those who invented activities, some went outside the bounds of likelihood as indicated in the passage, and announced visits to a theme park. The Examiners were looking for the sort of thing that would fit Aunt Pegg's character. Visits to farms were in order, and one candidate suggested a pond where they could identify the various creatures to be found there. There were plenty of museums and visits to the library 'to let them choose one of Chaucer's masterpieces'. This last quotation shows how one can invent one's own idea to illustrate the reading of the passage. Another candidate suggested a daily 'three-minute shower' and yet another, a 'visit to the Horse Guards to see discipline in action'. One candidate expressed Aunt Pegg's intention to take the children to a performance of the *Ring* cycle by Wagner – all four nights of it.

Question 2: Re-read the descriptions of: Aunt Pegg in paragraphs 2 and 3; the children in paragraph 5. Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.

Centres had obviously practised this question, which was answered more effectively than in previous sessions. However, there were still many candidates who did not get to grips with the words, possibly because their own vocabulary was simply not wide enough.

There was also a weakness in dealing with the imagery, most of which was quite straightforward. Candidates coped well with the cat image, but were less sure of the 'eyes like sticks' and the 'upside-down new moon'. Here they could have said that the image was visual, and that it meant that Aunt Pegg's mouth was perpetually turned down in the opposite of a smile. The connection with the moon suggested something rather mysterious, perhaps witch-like, and that would be a possible effect. There was also some difficulty with the zombie image, where candidates needed to understand the idea that the children were going about their business as if they were controlled, or had no life left in them, or were totally under the control of Aunt Pegg. Candidates needed to understand the importance of arguing through the meaning to suggest the effects words might have on the reader.

It was not enough to identify literary devices. There were plenty of candidates who were confused between similes and metaphors when all they needed was the word 'image'. The Examiners were presented with all sorts of clever identifications, which meant nothing if they were not related to meaning and effect.

Some candidates wrote a list of words and made one umbrella-like comment, usually a generalisation that was not worth rewarding. They needed to deal with the words and phrases separately.

Some candidates started a new paragraph for each word, which was fine, although the answer as a whole usually lacked cohesiveness. It was not necessary to identify and explain all the appropriate words in each section.

The following is an example of what a good answer might have looked like.

The description of Aunt Pegg starts with an outpouring of hatred. The word 'vile', one of the strongest words of its sort has the effect of turning the reader against the aunt. The odd rhyme, 'leering, sneering, peering' reminds us that the description is given from the point of view of young children and may be biased. It gives

the impression of a distorted, perhaps witch-like face, its intention to paint Aunt Pegg as an ugly woman. Later in the passage we learn that her mouth is like 'an upside-down moon'. Her face is thus described as ugly with the mouth turned down in a thin line. The moon is connected with night and magic, so this may again suggest that the children see her as a witch. The final image of absurd caricature is that 'she had eyes on sticks'. This is clearly a ridiculous exaggeration, but appropriate since although she is a small woman, she can apparently see everything. This alien image also suggests that the eyes can turn to peer in any direction. The effect is that the children are never free of her monitoring them. Finally there are several ideas that suggest cats, suitable for a witch-like person. She would 'pounce on us like a cat', which suggests the infliction of some damage, though obviously this is another exaggeration. This is linked to the 'snarl' also of an angry cat. The effect of this is to suggest that her voice was unduly harsh and unfeminine.

The children are described as completely changed from our introduction to them at the beginning of the passage. Now they are like 'little zombies', lifeless, the living dead. Aunt Pegg has defeated them and they are like her prisoners. The reader has the effect of their moving around listlessly, 'uncommunicative', not talking to each other any more; hence the reference to the 'barred doors of our prison'. This image is even more effective since they are in their own home. They are described as 'mournful' as if someone has died. What they are mourning for is their former life, for which they feel 'nostalgia'. Yet nostalgia is related to the distant past, and these children are remembering the events of only two days ago.

Part 2

Question 3: Summarise: what makes a good uncle, as described in Passage B; what the children disliked about their aunt, as described in Passage A. You should write about 1 side in total, allowing for the size of your handwriting.

Where Centres had instructed their candidates effectively, this question was well answered. There were twenty-five possible points in the mark scheme and candidates had only to identify fifteen to be given full marks for content. They had to read Passage B carefully and methodically to be sure of their marks. Weaker candidates were confused by the references in the passage to useless or bad uncles, who were of course irrelevant to this question. They also extended the points about living exciting lives and telling imaginative stories (paragraphs five and six) beyond what was either necessary or clear. Some candidates did not get the point that good uncles took their nephews and nieces to places that they wanted to go. It was not enough to say that they 'took you on holidays'. There was also some confusion about the gentle hints referred to at the end of the passage.

Passage A was often well answered. Candidates were particularly good at points referring to her 'telling them off', failing to smile, and behaving in a militaristic fashion.

As usual, there were some candidates who wrongly commented on what they had read. They forgot that this was a factual exercise, written for information only, and that there was no place for their thoughts and feelings about the content of the passages.

Many answers were anything but concise, with unnecessary and elaborate explanations. There was also a tendency to repetition in Passage A, especially to do with points about diet and giving lectures about Aunt Pegg's 'philosophy'.

There were few examples of candidates who copied out the text.

Too many answers were again well over the one page suggested. Candidates with small handwriting were often most likely to write too much. The example that follows demonstrates how short an effective summary can be.

Good uncles are those who spend time with their nephews and nieces and who do not find them annoying. When they arrive they bring presents and on leaving they are cheerful and promise to return. They make suggestions to parents about making children's life more enjoyable. During their stay they take the children to places they enjoy and allow them to eat junk food. They encourage 'dangerous activities' and they prove that they are risk takers. They are the first to join in games. Their lives are interestingly exciting and they have a penchant for imaginative stories. They are most energetic people.

The reasons that the children disliked Aunt Pegg were that she never smiled and that she was always telling them off and monitoring their activities. They disliked the food she made them eat and the jobs she made them do. Her programme of instruction was annoying and they were expected to carry heavy shopping

bags. When they got anything wrong they were punished, and she behaved towards them in a militaristic way. On top of all this she insisted on lecturing them about her 'philosophy'.

A summary such as this would only occupy just over two thirds of a page of average handwriting.

Location Entry Codes

As part of CIE's continual commitment to maintaining best practice in assessment, CIE has begun to use different variants of some question papers for our most popular assessments with extremely large and widespread candidature. The question papers are closely related and the relationships between them have been thoroughly established using our assessment expertise. All versions of the paper give assessment of equal standard.

The content assessed by the examination papers and the type of questions are unchanged.

This change means that for this component there are now two variant Question Papers, Mark Schemes and Principal Examiner's Reports where previously there was only one. For any individual country, it is intended that only one variant is used. This document contains both variants which will give all Centres access to even more past examination material than is usually the case.

The diagram shows the relationship between the Question Papers, Mark Schemes and Principal Examiner's Reports.

Question Paper	Mark Scheme	Principal Examiner's Report
Introduction	Introduction	Introduction
First variant Question Paper	First variant Mark Scheme	First variant Principal Examiner's Report
Second variant Question Paper	Second variant Mark Scheme	Second variant Principal Examiner's Report

Who can I contact for further information on these changes?

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/31

Directed Writing and Composition

General comments

Most candidates made a good attempt at this paper. They understood what was required in **Question 1**, and generally used their time wisely in completing both sections of the paper. There were some issues that are addressed in detail in this report.

- In **Question 1** candidates who failed to evaluate the appropriate reading material scored no more than half marks. It was not sufficient to copy out or to paraphrase the original.
- In **Section 2**, some candidates used abnormally inflated language, which was inappropriate to the complexity of the subject matter.
- Some candidates had been taught to invent and use images at all costs. Some of these images did not fulfil the function of aiding communication. Images must be appropriate, otherwise they can become confusing.
- Writing that is based on the real world is usually more authentic than fantasy which is outside the experience of candidates.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1: Directed Writing

Question 1: You are a Headteacher and have received the publicity flyer from the *Green Team Challenge* management (GTC). You have decided that your school will nominate a student for the challenge, and have received *three* recommendations, following a vote by the whole school. Imagine you hold a meeting with your Deputy Headteacher to decide which one of the three candidates to nominate. Write the dialogue between yourself and your Deputy Headteacher. In your conversation you should: evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each of the finalists; explain the reasons for your final choice.

This question was almost universally understood and candidates were aware of the criteria contained in the flyer and the various qualities exhibited by the three finalists. The use of the reading material helped them in the content and structure of their writing and they had little difficulty in assuming the comparatively formal tone of the speakers and of the occasion.

To score high marks out of the ten available for reading, candidates had to match the strengths and weaknesses of the three candidates to the criteria. The weakest candidates ignored the criteria and concentrated on reproducing the information about the candidates either by copying or by some degree of paraphrase. Comments were often no more than 'That will be useful in the rainforest'. It must be understood by Centres and candidates alike that this act of location and reproduction gives very little evidence of reading. It was generally worth three or four marks out of ten at the best.

Most candidates, even the weakest, referred to all three candidates. Candidates scoring five or six marks still tended to list attributes, but made some reference to the criteria, generally the point about fitness. They were able to apply this to Marissa, whose training schedule suggested endurance, and Didier, on account of his body building. They were unsure about Kim, and did not seem able to understand that the sum total of his/her physical activities might suggest overall fitness. They also made at least some fleeting comment about Marissa's fear of insects and snakes, and generally focused on her comment that she could deal with them.

Good candidates, scoring between seven and ten marks, entered into a much fuller discussion of the suitability of the three candidates. They questioned Didier's ability to get on with others, based on what he said in his submission. Better still were those candidates who understood the importance of interpersonal skills. Comparatively few saw the importance of Kim's experience in the Student Counselling Service, although they recommended her/him for mentioning her/his position in the family.

Really good candidates took up details such as the ability to canoe or to rock climb, and discussed them. Some depth of thought was required to make a case for a good biologist. It was not, as some candidates thought, a matter of first aid, but of interest in the flora and fauna (even bugs and snakes) of the rainforest. How might Kim's ability to invent be put to good use? Was Didier's map reading really useful in a rainforest where there might be few or no maps? The best candidates thought through these details.

As far as reading was concerned, the weaknesses were:

- Using too little of the reading material (a few candidates only wrote about one candidate).
- Using the material too literally without evaluation.
- Adding fictional details (such as Kim's recent illness) for which there was no evidence in the passage.

The process of discussion and evaluation was assisted by the dialogue format of the question. The two teachers could enter into a cut and thrust session with one taking the opposite viewpoint of a student from the other. This made the language more interesting as it was persuasive and argumentative as distinct from informative. Candidates who presented the case as a monologue or who did not allow the poor Deputy to get a word in edgeways made things more difficult for themselves.

The fifteen marks for writing included, of course, a consideration of the candidate's use of grammar, spelling and punctuation, and these varied as the general ability of the writing. In some Centres at least, the accuracy of the answers to **Question 1** was greater than that of the composition. However, in this question there were noticeable weaknesses in the use of the full stop, and Examiners saw a large number of sentences separated only by commas.

Most of the answers were well structured. For example, most candidates opted for the brief introduction, a consideration of each candidate in turn, and a rationale for the final choice. This made a neat and effective structure, particularly where the sections were equally balanced.

Finally, Examiners looked at the quality of the language and way in which the argument was organised, with appropriate links between the two speakers. Both formality and a certain degree of informality were appropriate, though some answers were too informally written to allow a meaningful discussion to take place.

Section 2: Composition

It was encouraging that some Centres had observed previous reports and worked with their candidates on some of the weaknesses, particularly in argumentative writing and descriptions. There were also some indications that more candidates were using commas in the right places than previously. There are further comments on performance in each genre set out below.

Centres are reminded that each genre has its own structural features and that there is still weakness in planning out the logical stages of an argument. It is also important that descriptions have structure; although not narratives, something has to happen within a description to give it some shape. Narratives are still weak in building up and sustaining climaxes, which are often dismissed without enough care and detail for their effect to be appreciated by the reader.

Candidates often rely too much upon fantasy and violence which does not always engage with the experience of the reader. The best writing at least seems to be related to personal experience and avoids the stereotypical.

In marking style and accuracy, the Examiners looked for a wide range of appropriate vocabulary and a grasp of different types of sentence structure. These are the easiest ways of differentiating between Bands 1 and 2 and Bands 3 and 4. However, the language has to be appropriate. Some candidates used so many imposing words that it was very difficult to follow the meaning, as in the following example.

'I smell the damp, and feel entwined with the nature I had become accustomed to in my treehouse, like a diver would when in a cage, watching sharks as they watch him, with equal fascination on both sides, anticipating each other's move and, despite the fear, being inquisitive, as if willing to be part of the other's life while knowing it to be an unrealistic desire.'

The sentence is too long and, while it is possible to make out the thought, the reader is left with questions as to the exact meaning. While trying to understand a detail, the next idea is thrust upon the reader, causing further confusion. Lastly, the effect of the image is not clear. There were too many examples of inappropriate choice of language, which suggested that many candidates did not understand the function of imagery.

'Each word reflected off the newly varnished wooden tilings...and seemed to return and enter my pathetic ears with an amplitude far greater than a fog horn from a ship.'

Here it was difficult to relate the idea of words echoing off a hard surface to the low and muffled sound of a fog horn.

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'An unfathomable distance of thirty feet.'

Accuracy, of course, varied, but the main problems were again full stops and commas and tense.

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knowledge as the main character. Responses to the topic describing *the group of people eating and talking together around a table* also suffered from lack of development. Some of the descriptions of the people were interesting in themselves, and there was much variety in the group. However, candidates should avoid caricatures at this level. In one response the people were obviously at a small reunion and were looking at pictures of themselves when young. This gave a good deal of direction to the writing and provided some variety. There were many good descriptions of *The performer*. There was much interest, originality and atmosphere, although candidates were unwise to spend too much time on the part before the performer entered. Candidates who did this gave themselves little time to describe the performer. Few candidates attempted the *Time capsule* and those who did sometimes provided a fairly stereotypical list of contents. Those who added an air of mystery did better.

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/32

Directed Writing and Composition

General comments

Most candidates made a good attempt at this paper. They understood what was required in **Question 1**, and generally used their time wisely in completing both sections of the paper. There were some issues that are addressed in detail in this report.

- In **Question 1** candidates who failed to evaluate the appropriate reading material scored no more than half marks. It was not sufficient to copy out or to paraphrase the original.
- In **Section 2**, some candidates used abnormally inflated language, which was inappropriate to the complexity of the subject matter.
- Some candidates had been taught to invent and use images at all costs. Some of these images did not fulfil the function of aiding communication. Images must be appropriate, otherwise they can become confusing.
- Writing that is based on the real world is usually more authentic than fantasy which is outside the experience of candidates.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1: Directed Writing

Question 1: You are a Headteacher and have received the publicity flyer from the *Green Team Challenge* management (GTC). You have decided that your school will nominate a student for the challenge, and have received *three* recommendations, following a vote by the whole school. Imagine you hold a meeting with your Deputy Headteacher to decide which one of the three candidates to nominate. Write the dialogue between yourself and your Deputy Headteacher. In your conversation you should: evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each of the finalists; explain the reasons for your final choice.

This question was almost universally understood and candidates were aware of the criteria contained in the flyer and the various qualities exhibited by the three finalists. The use of the reading material helped them in the content and structure of their writing and they had little difficulty in assuming the comparatively formal tone of the speakers and of the occasion.

To score high marks out of the ten available for reading, candidates had to match the strengths and weaknesses of the three candidates to the criteria. The weakest candidates ignored the criteria and concentrated on reproducing the information about the candidates either by copying or by some degree of paraphrase. Comments were often no more than 'That will be useful in the rainforest'. It must be understood by Centres and candidates alike that this act of location and reproduction gives very little evidence of reading. It was generally worth three or four marks out of ten at the best.

Most candidates, even the weakest, referred to all three candidates. Candidates scoring five or six marks still tended to list attributes, but made some reference to the criteria, generally the point about fitness. They were able to apply this to Marissa, whose training schedule suggested endurance, and Didier, on account of his body building. They were unsure about Kim, and did not seem able to understand that the sum total of his/her physical activities might suggest overall fitness. They also made at least some fleeting comment about Marissa's fear of insects and snakes, and generally focused on her comment that she could deal with them.

Good candidates, scoring between seven and ten marks, entered into a much fuller discussion of the suitability of the three candidates. They questioned Didier's ability to get on with others, based on what he said in his submission. Better still were those candidates who understood the importance of interpersonal skills. Comparatively few saw the importance of Kim's experience in the Student Counselling Service, although they recommended her/him for mentioning her/his position in the family.

Really good candidates took up details such as the ability to canoe or to rock climb, and discussed them. Some depth of thought was required to make a case for a good biologist. It was not, as some candidates thought, a matter of first aid, but of interest in the flora and fauna (even bugs and snakes) of the rainforest. How might Kim's ability to invent be put to good use? Was Didier's map reading really useful in a rainforest where there might be few or no maps? The best candidates thought through these details.

As far as reading was concerned, the weaknesses were:

- Using too little of the reading material (a few candidates only wrote about one candidate).
- Using the material too literally without evaluation.
- Adding fictional details (such as Kim's recent illness) for which there was no evidence in the passage.

The process of discussion and evaluation was assisted by the dialogue format of the question. The two teachers could enter into a cut and thrust session with one taking the opposite viewpoint of a student from the other. This made the language more interesting as it was persuasive and argumentative as distinct from informative. Candidates who presented the case as a monologue or who did not allow the poor Deputy to get a word in edgeways made things more difficult for themselves.

The fifteen marks for writing included, of course, a consideration of the candidate's use of grammar, spelling and punctuation, and these varied as the general ability of the writing. In some Centres at least, the accuracy of the answers to **Question 1** was greater than that of the composition. However, in this question there were noticeable weaknesses in the use of the full stop, and Examiners saw a large number of sentences separated only by commas.

Most of the answers were well structured. For example, most candidates opted for the brief introduction, a consideration of each candidate in turn, and a rationale for the final choice. This made a neat and effective structure, particularly where the sections were equally balanced.

Finally, Examiners looked at the quality of the language and way in which the argument was organised, with appropriate links between the two speakers. Both formality and a certain degree of informality were appropriate, though some answers were too informally written to allow a meaningful discussion to take place.

Section 2: Composition

It was encouraging that some Centres had observed previous reports and worked with their candidates on some of the weaknesses, particularly in argumentative writing and descriptions. There were also some indications that more candidates were using commas in the right places than previously. There are further comments on performance in each genre set out below.

Centres are reminded that each genre has its own structural features and that there is still weakness in planning out the logical stages of an argument. It is also important that descriptions have structure; although not narratives, something has to happen within a description to give it some shape. Narratives are still weak in building up and sustaining climaxes, which are often dismissed without enough care and detail for their effect to be appreciated by the reader.

Candidates often rely too much upon fantasy and violence which does not always engage with the experience of the reader. The best writing at least seems to be related to personal experience and avoids the stereotypical.

In marking style and accuracy, the Examiners looked for a wide range of appropriate vocabulary and a grasp of different types of sentence structure. These are the easiest ways of differentiating between Bands 1 and 2 and Bands 3 and 4. However, the language has to be appropriate. Some candidates used so many imposing words that it was very difficult to follow the meaning, as in the following example.

'I smell the damp, and feel entwined with the nature I had become accustomed to in my treehouse, like a diver would when in a cage, watching sharks as they watch him, with equal fascination on both sides, anticipating each other's move and, despite the fear, being inquisitive, as if willing to be part of the other's life while knowing it to be an unrealistic desire.'

The sentence is too long and, while it is possible to make out the thought, the reader is left with questions as to the exact meaning. While trying to understand a detail, the next idea is thrust upon the reader, causing further confusion. Lastly, the effect of the image is not clear. There were too many examples of inappropriate choice of language, which suggested that many candidates did not understand the function of imagery.

'Each word reflected off the newly varnished wooden tilings...and seemed to return and enter my pathetic ears with an amplitude far greater than a fog horn from a ship.'

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/04

Reading Passages (Extended)

General comments

The standard of the coursework folders was high, and the Moderators saw few examples of candidates who had not worked hard to submit their best work. The only exception to this was that some candidates paid little or no attention to proof reading. Errors of typing should be treated in the same way as all other mistakes. Presentation was good, especially where pictures and graphics had been added, although this, of course, did not add to the marks.

The best work was from Centres where coursework was used as a means of helping candidates to become better writers. Centres are encouraged to set more than three coursework pieces from which candidates (with their teachers' help) can choose the best. Given the range of genres and purposes for writing, a good deal of writing practice during the course, leading to the completion of the portfolios, constitutes good educational strategy.

The best work was also strongly personal. Centres are reminded of the objective to 'articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined'. This clearly means that candidates should learn to express their own experience, thinking, feelings and imaginings, and not something that has been derived from elsewhere. Writing that is too strongly related to the Internet, complete with close paraphrasing, is not in the spirit of this component. Research essays may well be useful in some other subjects, but they are not what using and developing one's own thinking and language are about. Some candidates even resorted to the Internet in order to explore the ideas and opinions of the article selected for the third assignment. This was unnecessary and often led the argument away from the original, resulting in fewer marks and less lively writing. The best writers were those who were imaginative and adventurous in their writing.

There was an increase in autobiographical fragments this session, some of which were described in great detail and were often moving. Responses in Assignment 3 were especially good where the candidate strongly disagreed with the writer of the article and produced some fiery prose.

Assessment

This was generally sound, and rank orders were usually correct. The assessment of content and structure was more likely to be accurate than that of style and accuracy. Some Centres were unaware of the wide range of language used even by their weaker candidates and were a mark or two severe; in rare cases they overreacted to the slightest of errors. However, more Centres were over-generous to candidates who made plenty of errors, particularly of sentence separation. Some of the marking of error was lax. Moderators expect error to be acknowledged on the script. A common criticism was that there was no evidence of detailed marking by teachers on the scripts.

The commonest reason for generosity was in the reading mark. Centres should study the specification of the component and also the mark scheme. It was the way that candidates responded to the ideas and opinions of the original text that mattered. Those who did little more than to reproduce the material should not have scored more than half marks. Some candidates used the original as a stimulus and showed no evidence of understanding what was actually written. They should have scored under half marks. Lastly, some candidates still treated their text as an excuse for 'literary criticism', and wrote more about the language than about the ideas and opinions. Language was relevant to this assignment where the writer's choice of words demonstrated the nuances of his ideas and opinions.

This session there were more examples of sets within departments that were marked more or less generously than others. The only way to deal with this problem is to have an effective and strict method of internal moderation.

Submitting the portfolios

From the point of view of Moderators, the best way to submit portfolios is to fix the appropriate form to the front and to staple the sheets together. This saves a good deal of money in postage and it also saves time in handling the work. In addition the marks can be clearly seen. This session the use of heavy folders was a problem as was the placing of each folder (often unstapled) inside a thin and tight plastic folder.

Administration

There were a number of examples where the text used for Assignment 3 was not submitted. This is a syllabus requirement for written coursework.

Some Centres did not ensure that the marks on the folders were the same as those on the MS1's. Changes after Internal Moderation need to be transcribed onto the folders. In addition, it was not always clear whether changes had been made to the reading or to the writing mark.

Drafts

The Moderators required drafts that showed differences between the draft and the final version. They also needed to know the comments that teachers had made (preferably in one colour) and what changes the candidate proposed (in another colour). Where this was done, it enlightened the whole purpose of drafting which was to edit, revise and correct. Drafts without amendments were really quite pointless. Some teachers are still correcting candidates' spelling, punctuation and grammar on the draft. This is not permitted; the guidance offered by teachers should not constitute correction. It is acceptable to draw candidates' attention to particular types of error, but not to do the work for them.

Comments on specific assignments

Assignment 1

These were divided into three main types: formal essays, often heavily dependant on various websites; writing about events and places known to the candidates; the words of speeches on a variety of issues.

The use of the speech was often very effective, although some so-called speeches read more like essays. There were only a few examples where the rhetoric outweighed the content. Generally the content came first and was enlivened by the style of the speech. The best of these speeches had some passion about them, which was enough to create a sense of audience and engagement for the reader. Moderators saw stock topics such as abortion and animal rights presented well and with a feeling of the personal involvement of the writer. There were speeches in support of charities, against war and on supermarkets.

The formal essay was less successful. For one thing, some essays simply did not sound original. They had the language of the website and were often more securely written than the rest of the folder. There was little originality in topics such as euthanasia, smoking, capital punishment and team sports. On the other hand, some topics lent themselves to evident originality. *Against Cheating* and *Music is a powerful weapon* were good ones, and there were essays attacking corruption in one particular country, which certainly represented the views of the candidates. Essays on violence often reflected some fairly direct experience. Similarly, it was difficult to write about cosmetic surgery without expressing personal views.

Finally there were a growing number of other interesting approaches to this assignment. Perhaps the best idea was *Room 101* in which candidates followed the recipe of a well-known TV programme and banished their pet hates forever. Two Centres attempted reviews of restaurants. These were good because they provided interesting comments on the décor as well as the food, giving variety of content. There were some examples of leaflets, generally about the School. These were interesting but sometimes the content was a little limited because candidates had paid too much attention to the presentation and illustration. Topics such as *May week*, *Someone I admire*, and *The school Geography trip* were all well done.

Assignment 2

A number of Centres had taken the advice of previous reports on this component and not set the writing of fiction until the candidates had studied the shape and nature of stories. Many decided on the genre of ghost stories or crime stories. One Centre produced a set of Philip Marlow narratives, which were interesting because the candidate found it possible to explore and imitate the language and the attitudes of the detective.

However, it remained important that when writing stories of any kind there was some emotional understanding of the content. Stories without personal credibility were as often either unconvincing because of their crowding of unlikely incident, or uninteresting, sometimes after a promising start. There were more examples this year of candidates' frank acceptance of events in their own lives, which, if told in enough detail and emotional honesty, could strike a chord with their readers. Hence there was an account of the terrible hurricane that hit the Cayman Islands and a story called *Six seconds after impact*, an account of a sports injury. *Mommy's little girl* was about a child left at home when the earthquake struck, and there were good pieces called *The day I got my dog*, *My precious box* and *My parents lost me*.

Some of this work reminded the Moderators that the candidates were only sixteen, and it was not always wise for them to pretend that they were adults. However, some of the best work was based on the idea of two voices in which the same events were seen through different eyes. The challenges of this exercise led to some excellently original writing. The best was a very funny story about Alzheimer's disease seen from the view of the relative and the sufferer. The piece showed great insight into the condition, but kept the reader wickedly amused throughout. Other titles that worked well were *Unwelcome interruption* (about a crocodile), *Fate's hand*, *A sip of tea*, and *Creeping darkness*.

There were also some good descriptions, including *City at night* and *Street market*. Centres should remember that these should be written in a different style from those of Assignment 1.

Finally, one of the finest pieces of writing was *Prince of Darkness*, a monologue delivered by that personage.

Assignment 3

When it was done well, the last assignment elicited some of the very best writing. Advice to Centres is to set up this assignment as follows:

- The teacher decides on an article (or articles) that is about one side of A4 in length. The views and opinions of the writer are controversial, so it is easy for candidates to disagree, analyse the content of the article and to transform what the original says into their own views.
- Candidates answer a task, which is in effect to write to the author of the article or the publication where it has appeared.
- Candidates should not be taught by the teacher what to write, although they may have a brief discussion of how to approach the task.
- Candidates should be marked for reading on the basis of how well they have understood and responded to the ideas and opinions expressed in the article. Low marks must be given for mere repetition of the article or failure to engage with the text.

The problems with allowing candidates to choose their own articles were mostly to do with inequality of opportunity offered by different texts.

It was particularly important to avoid those that were mostly factual and especially newspaper reports that had no comment and were usually very short. Long texts sometimes lasting more than two or three sides proved very difficult to candidates who often did not know which extracts to choose in order to present a coherent response. Similarly it was not recommended to give candidates more than one text. Some candidates attempted to answer the task using a whole novel, and very rarely gave answers that focused on particular details. Texts downloaded from the Internet were often full of disconnected facts and very difficult to respond to in a sustained way.

Many of the adjustments made to the portfolios as a whole took the reading mark into consideration.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/05
Speaking and Listening

Comments on specific aspects of the Test

Part 1 – The Individual Task

Moderators continue to report that the most common format remains the fact-based informative ‘talk’ or presentation. Although the syllabus does allow a variety of approaches, monologues, dramatic performances and role play of media/news/documentary reports, for example, are still uncommon.

Centres and candidates are free to focus on topics which lend themselves to standard presentations; we are not discouraging this. However, Moderators would like to see such presentations using a greater range of presentational and language devices.

The choice of topic does, of course, impact on the depth to which subsequent discussion can develop. A very personal piece or a common, perhaps pedestrian topic is unlikely to result in probing and lively discussion. By contrast, a candidate who sets out to explore, to challenge, to be creative, etc. is likely to attract the attention of the listener, and productive discussion will usually result.

Part 2 – The Discussion

It was very pleasing to hear evidence that the majority of candidates were well prepared for this examination. Moderators are happy that in almost all cases, Examiners were very much part of the discussions, entering into the spirit of the occasion and that the conversations were generally productive extensions of the Individual Tasks. It was clear in many cases that candidates had planned for focused discussion.

Choice of topics

Moderators report a similar range of topics this session, with the usual attempts by some candidates to offer unusual topics (e.g. the Ultimate Frisbee) which can work very well if researched properly and presented efficiently.

Good topics are those which contain a judicious mix of research and personal involvement, and those which are well-defined and focused. For example, music as a topic is probably too broad, while ‘music as a political tool’ is likely to result in more pertinent discussion.

Assessment

For Part 1, Centres are reminded that “lively delivery sustaining audience interest” is necessary, and that “a wide range of language devices” should be present in Band 1. In other words, a rather straightforward, pedestrian informative talk, which is secure and safe, is likely to satisfy the criteria for Band 3. For higher reward, the candidate needs to be attempting something more challenging, more creative, more ambitious perhaps. Band 2 will indicate partial success of this aim.

For Part 2, we are assessing listening skills using an independent set of descriptors. The essence of a good listener is that he/she will choose the right moment to respond and will respond accurately and in some depth, hopefully adding to the conversation. If a candidate responds to most of the Examiner’s prompts soundly, this is likely to result in a Band 2 mark (7-8). For higher reward, the candidate would need to develop and extend the point being put forward. This involves the integration of speaking and listening skills.

Moderators noted lenient marking again in awarding marks for Part 1. The advice to teachers is to be sure that all of the Band 1 descriptors have been fully met before awarding 9 or 10 marks. In Part 2, however, Examiners were generally accurate and very little adjustment of marks was necessary.

Moderators would again like to emphasise the possibility of differentiating tasks according to candidates' interests and abilities. For example, it is permissible for a weaker candidate to select a more straightforward topic and to aim for a safe, competent presentation, perhaps accepting a Band 3. It is advisable, on the other hand, for a stronger candidate to select a topic which is more complex and is likely to result in a deeper level of discussion. More challenging topics will also require more sophisticated presentational skills and a wider deployment of language devices, which are needed if Band 1 is to be attained.

Advice to Centres

- Moderators would again like to point out that a wider variety of approaches to Part 1 is encouraged.
- More able candidates should consider presenting topics which are focused and not too broad.

Final comments

Moderators enjoyed listening to samples and recognise the amount of effort made by candidates and teachers at many Centres in presenting interesting and appropriate work.

Moderators would like to thank Centres for sending in samples on CD. CIE encourages this as it makes the task of external moderation more efficient. However, Centres doing so should ensure that the CDs can be played at normal speed on a regular, portable CD-player, and that they are carefully labelled.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/06

Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

General comments

Moderators report that most Centres are completing appropriate coursework tasks. Indeed, in some cases the tasks are very interesting and result in stimulating speaking and listening activities which the candidates clearly enjoy. At such Centres, candidates and teachers are working together to design and implement a wide range of tasks which illustrate speaking and listening skills.

If teachers feel that they cannot conduct **three different tasks** in accordance with the syllabus requirements, then they are advised to enter candidates for **Component 0500/05 Speaking/Listening Test**.

Comments on specific aspects

This session saw an improvement in the quality of the work undertaken by candidates, and also in the collation and presentation of the appropriate samples and documents sent to CIE. Centres who offered additional annotation (written on the Candidate Record Cards) accompanying each task undertaken by each candidate, helped to make the process of external moderation swift and efficient.

Assessment was applied by most Centres with a good deal of accuracy.

Advice to Centres

A Moderator is seeking to fulfil two main duties while listening again to a Centre's coursework: initially to confirm the Centre's interpretation and application of the assessment criteria, but also to confirm that a variety of appropriate tasks has been completed.

Please remember to send in the Individual Candidate Record Cards – these are the only means by which the Moderator is made aware of the tasks/activities which have been undertaken at the Centre.

For the moderation process to be completed efficiently, Centres need only submit **recordings of the Task 2 activity**. It is not necessary to send in recordings of group activities or talks/speeches from individual candidates.