

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/11

Writing

Key Messages:

- It is essential to read the question carefully and be clear about its particular focus.
- In **Section 1** tasks it is important to read the bullet points very carefully to ensure all required details are included.
- Register and tone are important aspects of Directed Writing and need consideration.
- Pay attention to commonly confused words such as this/these, they/there us/use.
- Greater focus on the accurate punctuation and layout of speech would improve performance.
- Concentration on correct tenses and agreement would improve candidates' writing in both sections.

General Comments:

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

Comments on specific questions:

Section 1

The Directed Writing task is assessed with equal marks given to **Task Fulfilment** and **Language** criteria. Candidates had to write a letter to a newspaper editor responding to an article criticising a concert they had recently attended and enjoyed. In particular, the candidates had to offer details of what the newspaper had criticised, and explain what they particularly enjoyed about the performance. This was a scenario that was clearly within the experience of the candidates, the majority of whom responded extremely well to this task. The scenario allowed use of a range of real and imaginary information and this contributed greatly to the success and interest of the responses.

Section 1 is Directed Writing and so involves more reading than **Section 2**. In this task candidates had to be aware that they were focusing on writing an effective letter for the specified audience, which included both the editor and the readers of the newspaper, in addition to the content of the letter. In order to satisfy the requirements of the bullet points this year, responses needed to include:

- the name of the singer or group **and** where and when the performance took place
- details of what the newspaper criticised
- what they thought was so enjoyable about the performance.

In the first bullet point it was essential to include three details – the name of the performer or group, a clear date, and a venue. The second bullet point required a reasonably developed response, highlighting a

number of criticisms of the concert, and Bullet 3 required a full explanation of what they found particularly enjoyable about the performance.

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

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

As far as **Task Fulfilment** was concerned this year, the highest marks were awarded to responses which kept their focus on the context and purpose of the letter and shaped their writing according to the descriptors. In **Task Fulfilment** it is the development of the ideas that will gain most marks. The first bullet point posed more problems than in previous sessions. The majority of candidates offered a clear name for the performer or group, many using famous names or their favourite performers. However, many responses did not provide a date for the performance, or offered a vague suggestion such as 'last week'. A significant number of candidates also omitted to name a venue for the performance, some simply referring to a country or city instead. There were limited opportunities for further development in the first bullet point therefore candidates needed to pay careful attention to the details requested and ensure close reading of the question. The second bullet point invited a much wider variety of responses: the most successful responses offered a variety of ideas about what had been criticised in the article. Many focused on the appearance or clothing of the performers, the quality of the singing or dancing, and the quality of supporting performers, particularly choreography. Others focused on problems with the venue – faulty sound, or lighting, over-crowding, poor refreshments and expensive tickets. All of these were clearly linked to the focus of the question. The best responses covered a number of these ideas, developing the detail with conviction and authenticity. A few responses offered very little development in this area, sometimes limiting their response to this bullet point to a single area of criticism.

When addressing the third bullet point sensible suggestions were made as to what the candidates enjoyed about the concert - the more developed responses drew on their knowledge about their favourite band, focusing on specific songs and dance moves performed. Many also focused on the importance of music and performance to their local culture, or cited the performers as a source of national pride, or a very welcome visitor to their country. Others referred to wonderful refreshments, the vibrant atmosphere, the obvious enjoyment of the fans and the deep meaning of the lyrics moving them to tears. Occasionally candidates did not address this bullet point at all, focusing only on the criticisms.

Therefore, the stronger candidates usually were able to amplify the second and third bullet points well and the best responses were those which included additional material while using the clues in the task.

The most successful responses linked the second and third bullets skilfully, rejecting the specific criticisms made in the article with supporting evidence explaining their own enjoyment. Other responses needed to incorporate more detail in the second and third bullet points. The bullet points do not always have to be given equal treatment but it is also true that the answer should not be too unbalanced because otherwise a bullet point might not be adequately developed.

Generally, there was a good awareness of audience and candidates were comfortable with the concept of writing a letter to a newspaper editor. However, some candidates missed the opportunity to embrace the diversity of the audience by acknowledging the writer of the article and the readers of the newspaper, instead writing rather personally to the editor as though he/she alone was responsible for the criticisms made. The register was kept suitably formal in most responses. Others occasionally were too informal, expressing outrage, demanding personal apologies, or including threats to close the newspaper down. The vast majority of candidates employed an appropriate format following the guidance given in the rubric by adopting a firm but formal tone. The best responses were able to balance the need to express displeasure through a polite but insistent argument that the performers had been unfairly maligned. Less successful answers became rather emotional and sometimes too insistent, often focusing on their own feelings rather than defending the performance. The majority of responses adopted an appropriate format for a letter, using the opening specified in the task. Some responses did not include an appropriate ending for a letter with no valediction included at all, others used rather informal terms such as 'Best wishes' or 'Thank you' instead of the appropriate valedictions such as 'Yours sincerely' or 'Yours truly'. Organisation varied, with some candidates following the bullet points chronologically and others grouping their ideas as effectively in another order. Candidates are advised that they need to organise their writing in appropriate paragraphs in order to improve performance.

Overall, the vast majority wrote a suitable amount for **Section 1** and captured the formal but insistent tone very well. Other responses were rather short, only just reaching the lower word limit. Candidates need to ensure that they address the word length requirements in their responses. Linguistically, candidates were at ease with vocabulary associated with music and performance and writing about a favourite singer or band: most found little difficulty in addressing the task to produce a convincing piece of work.

Section 2

Question 2

Describe the life you expect to be living five years from now.

This was a reasonably popular title. The vast majority of candidates were able to clearly picture themselves in the specified time – five years from now – referring to graduating from university and beginning their first job, renting their first property or buying their first car. Others were rather vague or imprecise about the timing, often jumping far into the future and imagining a perfect life of vast wealth, success in a variety of businesses, a large loving family and several mansions around the world. These responses tended to become a list of fulfilled ambitions, sometimes relying on rather stereotypical concepts of success. This was rather limiting in terms of language and the full exploration of the title. The best responses were more personal, employing convincing personal details about the candidate's hopes and dreams for the immediate future, focusing on university education, career aspirations and emerging independence from parental rules. Many of them were hopeful but tentative, acknowledging that life is not always fair and indicating that the future is likely to involve struggle and disappointment. Many wrote movingly about their parents hoping that one day they would be able to support them to repay their investment in their education.

Question 3

What do you think has been the greatest achievement in your country during the last ten years? Give reasons to support your view.

This was another popular title and proved to be an attractive topic for candidates of all abilities. It was often approached by candidates who clearly had strong feelings on the subject. Many expressed great feelings of national pride, referring in detail to extensive achievements in education, health, development of roads and transportation systems, and other relevant developments. Some candidates discussed a range of achievements and others focused on a single idea, improved rights for women, or democratic government, for example: either approach was acceptable and led to some excellent, detailed and thoughtful responses. Again, it was impressive to see how many personal experiences could be successfully utilised by candidates and it was clearly a title for those who had strong opinions, as they could sustain their arguments with convincing evidence over a number of paragraphs rather than merely repeating a strong but limited view.

Question 4

Write a story which includes the sentence: 'When the driver heard the words, he clearly lost all his concentration.'

This was a very popular title. Favourite themes included bus trips along treacherous roads, irresponsible drivers using their mobile phone and receiving bad news, criminal activities ending in disaster and family arguments ruining day trips. The best essays were those that built up to the prescribed sentence effectively and then explored the aftermath fully. There were some really tragic and moving accounts of waking up in hospital with terrible injuries, losing loved ones or having to endure a long period of rehabilitation. They focused on an accident resulting from a loss of concentration as a life changing experience. Other successful responses took a more comic approach, often involving bungling criminals and a get-away going wrong, or squabbling siblings turning a mundane lift home from school into a near disaster. These often resulted in driving into a tree or off the road, with being stranded or a damaged car as the most serious consequences. Less successful responses spent a great deal of time building up to the required sentence in their narrative, but failing to really explore the potential in terms of consequences. These responses often ended with the prescribed sentence. The weakest responses were those which simply told a narrative story which lacked any development of tension or drama. It was noticeable at all levels of response how well the majority of candidates integrated the given topic sentence into their writing without any sense of awkwardness.

Question 5

Classrooms.

This was a reasonably popular topic inviting a wide range of responses. Any approach to this question was possible. The best responses treated it as a reflective title exploring their memories of school and describing personal and meaningful moments. There were some vivid descriptions of lessons, teachers and friends made and lost in the classroom. Other successful responses took a more discursive approach, arguing the importance of education and the place of classrooms in creating an appropriate learning environment for candidates. Less successful responses took a descriptive approach and attempted to simply describe a typical classroom. This was obviously a self-limiting approach and these responses failed to develop fully or became very repetitive as the candidate struggled to meet the required length of response.

Question 6

Write a story in which forgiving someone plays an important part.

This was a very popular title, inviting some really powerful stories of betrayal and forgiveness. Stories usually involved a situation in which a friend or family member behaves dishonestly or immorally. The better responses were more measured and thoughtful in their approach, sometimes exploring a complex situation where the disloyalty is unintended or a by-product of a difficult situation. Such situations were treated in a number of ways with some showing a good lexical range to highlight the drama and tension. Many responses were very reflective, exploring how the passage of time heals old wounds and advocating forgiveness as an inevitable step in being able to move on and achieve future happiness in life. A large number of responses featured the advice of an older relative stressing that forgiveness is the key to happiness, incorporating a strong moral message. Less successful responses focused on trivial arguments, or became rather melodramatic and unconvincing.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/12

Writing

Key Messages:

- The use of dialogue is effective in creating character but only when properly punctuated and set out.
- Concentration on correct tenses and agreement would result in major improvement for most candidates.
- An awareness of the proper use of full stops (not just commas) is a crucial part of the descriptor for Language Band 3 and above.
- The use of 'And', 'But' and 'So' as repeated sentence openings should be avoided, as well as 'Moreover' when wrongly used.
- In letters, it must be remembered that a valediction and a signature have to be added.
- 'Wanna' and 'gonna' as expressions are beginning to be used much too often, especially by weaker candidates. Also, the use of 'too' to mean 'very' as in 'She was too happy' is increasing.

General Comments:

The general standard of the examination this year seemed to be well up to that of previous years, especially in the gaining of **Task Fulfilment** marks in **Section 1**. However, there are still relatively few responses which gain top marks for the **Language** mark in both **Sections 1** and **2**. The narrative questions in **Section 2** continue to be the most popular choices and this year saw an improvement in the smooth integration of given sentences into essays. Overall, there were very few rubric infringements of any sort and very few examples of candidates not attempting questions. The strengths and weaknesses of the linguistic ability were very similar to those of previous years: some of the work is outstanding in its creativity and in its accuracy and also there are now fewer candidates who fall into the very lowest bands linguistically. Many candidates still, unfortunately, use the word 'that' in front of direct speech – for example 'he said to me that "I am going out"' so that it is impossible to be sure whether direct or indirect speech is intended, especially if speech punctuation is omitted. Finally, candidates are advised to refrain from writing rough versions in pencil which are then copied over in ink as these are extremely difficult to read once scanned.

Comments on specific questions:

Section 1

This year, candidates had to write a letter of complaint about a disappointing visit to a restaurant with their family. This topic was an extremely successful one in that there were virtually no misinterpretations of the overall situation and there were virtually no examples of candidates not attempting the question. Everyone appeared to have a lot of first-hand experience of eating out or found it easy to imagine. To demonstrate the necessary reading skills required in the **Section 1** task, candidates had to be aware that they were in the restaurant celebrating an event with their family and they had been the victims of poor service on the part of the restaurant. The service was so poor that they had decided to write a letter of complaint and it was to be addressed to the manager of the restaurant. In order to satisfy the requirements of the bullet points this year a perfect answer had to have:

- the date **and** the reason for the celebration
- precise details of what had gone wrong and caused the complaint

- details of what they would like the manager to do as a result of the complaint.

The descriptors for **Task Fulfilment** for **Section 1** in the syllabus make clear that candidates will be judged under headings of clear understanding of purpose, situation and audience; a correct format for the piece of writing; appropriate tone and register; the use of information to justify personal opinion and the sensible development and organisation of the bullet points. In **Task Fulfilment** it is the **development of the ideas**, often the distilling of clear points, which will gain most marks. Furthermore it is vital to remember that candidates are not supposed to be writing a narrative essay although there will be a need for some explanation. Therefore, the most successful candidates stated clearly the date of the event and why they were there. Very often it was because of some success in an examination, or the birthday of a family member. Often it was a promotion gained by a working relative or a successful business venture within the family group. Parents' anniversaries were also a popular reason for the celebration. A small number of candidates did not include a family but instead talked of a group of friends or business partners and this did not address the rubric. Quite a large number of candidates had difficulty providing the date properly. In general, when asked for the date (as opposed to just 'When'), it is not enough to copy from the scenario and say 'recently'. Nor is it enough to say 'last Friday' when candidates are not asked to supply a date above 'Dear Sir,'. Obviously, if a date is given above 'Dear Sir,' then the expression 'last Friday' becomes an adequate one. There was often some good elaboration when candidates said the restaurant had been recommended by friends or it had a good reputation, and all this helped produce a solid paragraph.

The details given for the poor service were extremely wide ranging and seemed to cover every possible reason for complaint; indeed, many details went beyond the strictest meaning of the word 'service' but were accepted as being in the spirit of the situation. There were complaints about inadequate reservation procedures, decoration, slow service, rude serving staff, inefficient air conditioning and lighting, poor hygiene and food, excessive cost and, especially, the time taken to be seated and served. Of very great concern to very many candidates was what went wrong with the special cake which had been ordered, a delight that was often of the wrong flavour or which had melted. There were even complaints about poor parking arrangements at the restaurant. All of this certainly led to great personal embarrassment for the candidate who had usually booked the venue, although a surprising number still wanted to visit the restaurant again, often to see if there had been improvement. Better candidates were able to amplify the first and second bullet points with what appeared to be personal experience of local establishments which added tremendously to the apparent authenticity of the responses this year. A small number of candidates were drawn into a narrative approach and tended to exaggerate unnecessarily so that all manner of disasters befell the family group in the restaurant, including ruined clothing caused by spillages and even broken limbs cause by slippery floors. The better candidates chose fewer problems, focused on actual service and elaborated on the disappointment whereas weaker candidates merely listed as many problems as possible.

Bullet point 3, about what the manager should do, proved to be the least well addressed point. Candidates usually expected the manager to reprimand staff, improve the quality of food, the hygiene, the computerised booking system, and repay the cost of the meal if their restaurant were not to suffer a blow to its reputation. Less successful candidates failed to respond fully to the word 'what' in the third bullet point and simply said that the manager should address the issues raised (e.g. 'I expect you to improve your service..' or 'Look into the complaints..') rather than saying precisely what they should do ('you should hire more experienced chefs..' or 'staff should be sent on a training course..').

Generally, there was a very good awareness of **audience** throughout the task. Successful answers showed a clear awareness of the manager as the audience; it is certainly worth remembering that phrases like '...you, as the manager, ...' help to reinforce this awareness. Some responses clouded the issue by talking of the manager in the third person ('The manager should..') and it was never quite certain whether the candidate was confusing the manager with the owner of the restaurant. Some even went beyond this and used expressions like 'You should get you manager to ...' which suggested a misreading of the audience. The vast majority had a good sense of the **situation** this year which made the responses more generally successful than in most years. Very few candidates misunderstood the situation – one response, for example, saw 'service' in the very limited sense of 'mobile phone reception' in the restaurant but even this was open to some credit. There were also some candidates who found the whole business of complaining slightly awkward and often showed in the final paragraph a reluctance to upset the manager or get anyone into trouble. The **tone/register** was kept formal by most which was as expected. This year it was something of a test to see whether candidates could maintain the balance between being persuasive and being polite and the vast majority succeeded extremely well in this. There were only one or two examples of candidates who adopted too aggressive an approach and therefore failed to see that this would be self-defeating. Most candidates employed a satisfactory **format**, mainly by ensuring that their letter was a formal one and providing a suitably formal ending with signature. A small number of candidates were too informal (using

'From' in place of a suitable valediction) and some were far too friendly ('Regards'), given the general tone of complaint. There were also some examples of the valediction and signature being left out altogether, and one or two examples of candidates writing a report rather than a letter. **Opinion and justification** were easy to cover in responding properly to bullet points 1 and 2. Organisation varied only occasionally with virtually everyone following the logical structure of the bullet points.

Overall, the vast majority had no difficulty in writing full answers for **Section 1** and they captured the aggrieved approach very well. Linguistically, candidates were at ease with this vocabulary, food being a subject close to most people's hearts, and the references to specific food items further enhanced the register. For the same reason, spelling was generally good. Most candidates also found little trouble in maintaining the proper tense sequence, although a small number had difficulty with tenses at the start when they began '...we had visited your restaurant...'. Paragraphing was much improved this year but it is still true that a weakness with some candidates is to forget about paragraphing which is as essential here as in **Section 2**. The advice still remains that a useful rule for this section is one paragraph for each bullet point plus a brief introduction and conclusion. It is also worth remembering that it is better to avoid copying sentences from the scenario. This year there seemed to be a very large number of candidates who simply wrote 'Unfortunately, we received very poor service which made the occasion unhappy and unsuccessful'. This was certainly the occasion for the use of synonyms at the very least; the changing of 'you' to 'we' in the sentence was not enough to ensure a convincing start to the text. There were a number of quite regular vocabulary errors in the confusion between service/services, staff/staffs/stuff, unsatisfied/dissatisfied, complain/complaint and in the spelling of 'nowadays' as 'now a days'. Similarly, some awkward expressions appeared regularly, as in 'sat on a table'.

Section 2

Describe two things that visitors to your country find interesting.

This was a more popular question than the descriptive topic usually is and it generally worked well across the ability range as candidates were able to draw on material close to their experience. More perceptive candidates related sites to specific qualities that reflect national identity and it was noticeable how much pride was shown in aspects of the country described. The vast majority of those who attempted it approached it as a descriptive piece of writing, partly because there was very little opportunity here for mere narrative. Having said this, a number of candidates adopted the position of a tour guide to several guests from other countries but even here the emphasis was clearly on description. Areas of natural beauty, mosques, museums, shopping malls, historical forts and palaces, food and architecture were described in great detail with a good use of adjectives from very many candidates. Aspects of language and culture were covered as were the day-to-day lifestyles of different people. Hospitality was a key feature. There were very few if any disappointing answers, although a small number of candidates failed to do themselves full justice by describing only one 'thing' or spending too long on one aspect at the expense of the other and so giving an unbalanced response. Another weakness was in relying on a factual list, often too long, in which there was very little detail or appreciation for the item.

Do electronic forms of communication, for example emails and texts, make writing letters unimportant now? What is your opinion? Give examples and reasons to support your view.

This title was surprisingly popular as the discursive titles are usually the least popular. The title was, of course, of particular interest to the target age group and it elicited responses that were also longer than those usually produced for this type of essay and they were also less repetitive in their material. Candidates very largely agreed with the opinion given in the title. There were many reasons and examples put forward to support this view. Amongst the most popular were the speed of modern communication when compared to traditional methods, the ability to send to more than one person at once with email and texts, the ability to send attachments easily and the lack of any need to travel to a post office. These points were difficult to argue against. There were however some less convincing points, such as modern methods being cheaper. Given that the majority opinion was so overwhelmingly in favour of electronic communication, it was interesting to see how many powerful arguments were raised in favour of letter writing. Candidates acknowledged that letters might involve more care and attention, they involved more time and concern. There was some poignant evidence of the emotion that could be involved in receiving a letter as opposed to the more business-like text. One candidate wrote movingly of the joy her grandmother felt at receiving letters from her grandfather when they were young, as much because of the physical feel of the letters as the sentiments expressed. There was something in the time they took to write and the character in the handwriting which made them better. Electronic forms of communication were better for business, but carried health risks and the possibilities of hacking and technology could be addictive. The digital world was also blamed for the swift decline in the traditional idea of pen pals. Letter writing was seen as better for

conventional communication skills and better for rural areas without digital connections, but also letters could be easily lost. Ultimately, there was no denying the enthusiasm and conviction with which electronic communication was supported. The best essays had structure and detail whereas the weaker ones relied on mere assertion. Weaker candidates, as always in discursive essays, were short of ideas and repetitive in their vocabulary but this was certainly less obvious this year than in the past with the discursive title.

Write a story which includes the sentence: ‘The mixture of amazement and relief on my father’s face was something I will always remember.’

Each year, the narratives are always the most popular and so it proved this year. The best answers were those which fully and convincingly incorporated the given sentence into the narrative, usually at the end of the story. There were a number of very popular scenarios. By far the most popular was that of the candidate failing at some stage to attain good exam results, then seeing how much it hurt their father and so resolving to work harder. Invariably the exams were retaken with far better results and the father was therefore overjoyed. There were several variations of this plot, with some succeeding at some sporting event or musical/debating competition. Whatever the area of success, the given sentence only really worked in the essay if the candidate had carefully planned for the father to be both amazed and relieved. For example, the relief followed naturally in all the stories, very often because fee paying or some other financial or medical consideration was as important as the candidate fulfilling his or her promise. However, the ‘amazement’ was only really effective if the candidate had set out reasons for this, such as previous lack of aptitude or hard work, or some other stumbling block which made the achievement initially unlikely. The better essays were those which managed to avoid the trap of being merely sentimental (there was a great deal about ‘tears rolling down his cheeks’ in these responses) and drew effective lessons about expectations, duty and responsibility. There was often a very good use of flashbacks (often the mother had died, thus throwing the emphasis on the father) but it has to be stressed that flashback only works well when there is a secure use of tenses in the writing. Selective and well-punctuated dialogue was also a useful technique for ensuring characterisation in the better scripts.

Discoveries.

This particular one-word topic was far more popular than is usually the case but ‘Discoveries’ was still the least popular of the topics this year. A few stronger candidates chose a narrative approach based on family situations, in which someone discovered they had been adopted as a child or some other similar scenario. Most candidates however saw discoveries as marking progress for human beings and they indulged in a list of notable scientists who had made famous discoveries. There was sense in which they were using material from Science or History lessons and these essays were rather predictable as very few of them took the opportunity to question or evaluate such discoveries. While weaker candidates relied on a routine, dry, and not always factually correct, listing of discoveries, some of the better candidates wrote some extremely perceptive pieces about self-discovery. Linguistically, there was sometimes a confusion between discoveries and ‘inventions’, although this did little to affect the assessment.

Write a story in which a locked wooden box plays an important part.

This narrative title was not quite as popular as **Question 3** but was certainly more open to fantastical or unlikely scenarios. Basic storylines usually involved having a previously unexplored basement or moving to a new house where a box had been left behind or the more traditional response of finding a treasure box. Some of the stories bordered on the unbelievable. More involving were stories about heirlooms that had been left. As such, the title was popular across the ability range and elicited some excellent answers from the best candidates. Weaker candidates made their stories too convoluted. The comments about successful technique mentioned under **Question 4** apply equally here.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/21
Reading

Key Messages

- For **Question 1**, the summary, candidates are advised to answer the two parts of this question appropriately, following carefully the specific instructions for each part to fulfil the rubric in the most efficient way. **Question 1(a)** is best approached in 'note' style, ensuring that each point is fully made. **Question 1(b)** should be written in 'continuous writing', with care taken over the use of English as well as in attempting to paraphrase the content in the candidates' own words.
- For other questions there is a need to develop greater skills in answering questions which require a response in own words. While many showed an ability to identify the key words in such questions, to recast them by using the stem of those words is not acceptably original.
- The complete rubric should be read very carefully, for all questions; merely glancing at it sometimes results in a crucial instruction being missed, as in **Question 4(b)** where the answer was to come 'From paragraph 1'. Several candidates chose to use information from elsewhere in the passage.
- Candidates need practice in recognising the difference between opinion and fact in Passage 1, the non-fiction passage. When an opinion was identified, too much unnecessary text was usually added, so that fact intruded and the opinion was not specifically identifiable.
- In dealing with questions based on Passage 2, the fiction passage, it is essential that candidates read again the whole of the paragraph to which the question directs them. This will ensure that all relevant material will be considered before an answer is attempted.

General Comments

Most scripts were presented neatly, within the parameters of the answer booklet. Only occasionally did a candidate appear to have written a rough draft, rubbing it out before going over it in pen. The majority of candidates wisely recognise that the resulting blur can cause illegibility.

The majority of candidates completed every question.

Questions were to be answered on two passages, the first being non-fiction and the second being fiction, the variety of subject matter providing the opportunity for questions which stretched and discriminated amongst candidates. The best responses demonstrated an ability to deal with the more challenging questions of interpretation and all candidates seemed to engage with subjects familiar and unfamiliar.

The first passage, 'Chess', explored the candidates' ability to read for ideas; the second, the story of 'Alice' and her shopping trip with her grandmother, tested their reading for meaning. 20 marks were available for the summary question, with 15 of these marks being awarded for the assessment of the candidates' ability to select content points from the text of 'Chess' and 5 marks for the assessment of their ability to express these points fluently in their own words. Further questions tested candidates' ability to read for ideas; in this case to decide which of three given statements were true and which false and to recognise two opinions, distinguishing them from the surrounding facts.

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

In **Question 1(a)** the majority of candidates followed the bullet point style of the first (given) point, producing a clear list of selected ideas separated into the two boxes, as instructed. Keeping in mind the particular

information required for each box is essential to avoid the confusion of points across the boxes which was seen more frequently in some scripts than in the past. A noticeable number of candidates chose to lift directly from the passage, using continuous prose instead of notes or bullet points. Within the writing frame format given, this can result in points being omitted through lack of space or handwriting becoming illegibly compressed. Care is necessary, when writing in notes, to ensure that the subject of the point is clear. A bullet point which begins with no subject, or with the pronoun 'It', will always refer to the subject of the rubric; here it was 'chess'. If the subject of the point was something else, for example 'the Chess Olympiad' or 'The Chess Federation', there was a need for explicit mention of these things which was not always met. For example, '*It* defines the rules of chess', without linking the pronoun to the Chess Federation made no sense; similarly '*It* is played by teams representing different countries' without linking *It* to the Chess Olympiad suggested that 'chess' is always played internationally.

In **Question 1(b)**, candidates were to write up their note form content points in formal, continuous prose; there were some commendable results among those who made a genuine attempt to use their own words and original structures. Others needed to include greater originality of expression in order to gain high marks. Many candidates attempted to rework the relevant details from the passage, with the substitution of their own words here and there where possible. Weaker responses were those which directly copied blocks of text; in the attempt to link these, it often proved difficult to control sentence structure fluently and resulted in fractured syntax. The better scripts demonstrated competent use of spelling, punctuation and grammar, while others were less carefully written, suggesting the need for improvement in various areas: the use of full stops and capital letters for sentence separation; correct use of tenses to avoid such mistakes as 'In modern times the game was mainly used as a hobby' and 'Ancient texts describe how the game *is* played'; inappropriate use of prepositions, as in 'This now made chess to spread *up to* Europe'; the omission or intrusion of the definite article, as in '*The* chess was spread to (*the*) Muslim world'.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Reading for Ideas

Question 1(a) was the first part of the summary question, carrying 30% of the total marks for the paper. Candidates were asked to identify the information in the passage which described the origins and rise in worldwide popularity of chess throughout history, and the reasons for its continuing popularity today. Using only the material from paragraphs 2 to 5 inclusive, they could present these points using either the words of the text or their own words. One content point under each heading of the rubric was given by way of illustration, although these given points were not rewarded with a mark.

Excluding those supplied, there were a further 18 content points, of which candidates could identify any combination up to a maximum of 15 points, carrying one mark each. The full range of marks was seen, a small number of responses being awarded the maximum and many scoring half the available marks and above. There was a tendency in quite a number of scripts to start a point but to leave it incomplete: 'Arab countries conquered Persia'; 'Chess Olympiad occurs every two years'; 'Invention of chess computers'. All of these lacked the defining explanation as to *why* these things popularised chess.

Paragraphs 2 and 3 described the origins and early rise in popularity of chess throughout history, in India, Persia, the Arab world, the Far East and medieval Europe, offering a possible 10 points which the candidates could make. In Paragraph 2, there were 5 content points, explaining how chess spread from Persia to India and from there to the Far East and the Muslim world, focusing on why it attracted people and how its popularity became part of their lives. Almost without exception candidates picked up the straightforward reference to chess spreading from India to Persia; some unnecessarily included the irrelevant extension of the given point, from the first sentence. Most also included the next 2 points about its use in the education of young noblemen and the appeal of its strict rules. At times the necessary reference to 'noblemen' was omitted, as was the crucial fact, in the fifth point, that it was when the Arab countries 'conquered Persia' that the Muslim world took it up and was attracted by it. The final point in Paragraph 2 was another which the vast majority offered: that Buddhists introduced the game to the Far East, as they travelled there on pilgrimage.

From Paragraph 3 candidates could select a further 5 points all describing the reasons for the popularity of chess in Europe. The need to place at least the first of these points in Europe was essential; the better responses demonstrated this, explaining that chess became a pastime associated with the nobility there. If the European context had not already been established, it was necessary to make it when stating that chess

became a subject for art such as jewellery decoration; weaker responses which did not do so might still have been referring to the Far East or even the Arab world. The last 3 points available in this paragraph each required an essential element to score: that 'high ranking' military personnel did not just treat chess as a pastime, but *had* to be skilled at the game; that the invention of the chequered board 'made it easier to distinguish between the squares; and that theories and tactics appeared 'in writing'. The last two of these points frequently omitted the essential explanation and could not, therefore, be credited.

Candidates generally found the second section slightly more difficult than the first, though many succeeded in scoring a number of the points available. The rubric of this section asked for the reasons for the continuing popularity of chess today, and a further 8 points were available in Paragraphs 4 and 5. Paragraph 4 contained 4 of these reasons. The first extended the fact, provided in the given point, that chess tournaments have increased popularity: *some* of these tournaments, or the Chess Olympiad specifically, are *international* competitions. Only the best candidates made clear this distinction and avoided the generalisation that 'chess tournaments' are global events; not all of them are. While most responses included mention of the International Chess Federation many did not explain that this body added to the popularity of the game because it defines the rules, and rates the players. The next 2 points concerned the popular advantages offered, first, by modern media in keeping people up to date with championships and, second, by the technology of chess computers which act as opponents and help players to practise. Candidates were usually successful in making both of these points, sometimes by careful lifting, and avoided the distractor which was merely an example i.e. the broadcasting of the 2012 World Championship. Weaker responses were those which offered that as the main point.

The final 4 points appeared in Paragraph 5, and explained why players find the game interesting and more challenging than other games. The first of these was that the *different* pieces have *different* powers, or move in *different* ways; the distinction between the pieces was the key element of this reason, recognised by the better candidates and overlooked in weaker answers. Many then correctly identified as an attraction the uniqueness of how victory is decided by the fate of only one piece. Those who did not score this point often confused the words 'piece' and 'player', making chess no different from any board game, where one 'player' wins. That chess demands skill or concentration was usually selected correctly as a cause of its popularity, only a few choosing the alternative way of expressing the same point: that there is no mere luck involved. The last point available was again recognised by most candidates, who explained that chess players have a sense of community with the past. In choosing the alternative method of expressing this, the crucially important historical element was frequently omitted, candidates stopping short at players having a sense 'of belonging to a great chess playing family...' without completing the lift to add 'which extends through centuries'. In the light of the rubric, these words were necessary.

A small number of candidates were awarded maximum points and a large number scored half the available marks and above. While points can be made by producing a list of notes or short sentences in bullet point form, as indicated above, rather than in continuous prose, all points nevertheless need to be fully made; they should be clear enough to be fully understood by another person. Where marks were lost it was often because points were incompletely made, without the necessary key ideas and appropriate agents.

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were asked to use their notes to write a summary, in their own words, describing the origins and rise in worldwide popularity of chess throughout history, and the reasons for its continuing popularity today, as outlined in the passage. They were to write no more than 160 words (the first ten of which were given), within the space available in the answer booklet. Most candidates adhered to the rubric by attempting to use their notes to summarise the contents of the passage and this seems to have proved useful except in cases where irrelevant points were included in **Question 1(a)** and were then carried over into **Question 1(b)**, e.g. 'Its Sanskrit name – chaturanga – meant four divisions...' or 'The first of these (chess tournaments) took place in London in 1851'.

Almost every candidate completed the exercise, and most did so comfortably within the given space. When candidates decide to cross out a word, phrase or sentence, they should carefully re-read what the sentence then says to ensure that nothing is left in or taken out which destroys the syntax and, inevitably, the sense e.g. 'Then **as** Buddhist pilgrims ~~travelled along the silk road they took~~ it to the Far East.'

Short answers were very rarely seen. Candidates have taken the advice given previously that very short answers can never justify a high mark because sustained use of own words or completely accurate English cannot be demonstrated. While a number of candidates used original wording in a sustained or noticeable manner, others managed to select from, edit and restructure the text to some extent. At the same time, there was an increase in the number who merely moved selected blocks of text around without any originality, or who simply copied directly from the text. A relatively small number of candidates demonstrated a combination of carefully reworded text with accurate English, including a variety of original complex

structures, and gained full marks. The weaker responses referred to above were unable to demonstrate any originality and were noticeably less careful with spelling and punctuation, even when copied from the text. Noticeable, too, were those responses which, in an attempt to create original structures, relied solely on repetitive 'and' compounds; candidates might learn to convert some of these into truly complex sentences with the use of relative pronouns or other conjunctions. Linking words such as 'moreover', 'however', 'nevertheless', and 'in addition' can be effective – when used appropriately – but their frequent repetition is no substitute for genuine recasting of the text. They should be used with care.

Questions 2, and 3 tested 'Reading for Ideas', Assessment Objective 4 in the revised syllabus, where candidates were to demonstrate their ability to respond to the ideas of the whole text or a section of it. **Question 2** asked whether each of three statements, based on information in the first paragraph of the passage, was true or false. The majority coped well with this fairly straightforward question, gaining full marks. The first statement – 'There are thirty-two pieces on a chessboard at the start of a game' – was true; the second and third – 'Chess was created by two people' and 'Chess was not known until a hundred years ago' – were both false. A few who did not read the text with adequate attention jumped too quickly to the conclusion that mention of 'centuries' must mean the 'hundred years' reference was true and that, if it was not invented by a 'single' person, then it must indeed have been 'created by two'.

Question 3 asked candidates to select and write down two opinions from Paragraph 3, something which the majority clearly found challenging to do concisely. A good number appeared to focus on the right area of the text for the first opinion, that chessboards of medieval Europe are/were exquisitely beautiful, recognising that there was something subjective, rather than verifiably objective, there. When candidates offered the opinion in the words of the passage, rather than converting them into a new statement, the addition of the introductory words from the text 'can be seen in...' were accepted. However, almost invariably, responses also included the preceding reference to 'the social value attached to it'; the focus was then shifted from an opinion about the chessboards to being a statement about the social value of chess. The second opinion – that chess is a wonderful game – could be credited when expressed more briefly as 'this wonderful game' or with the addition of the few unimportant text words 'such was the popularity of ...' This opinion was rarely recognised and, when it was, excess quotation usually shifted the focus to '...writings about theories and tactics...'. A number chose to offer 'Chess was seen as a prestigious pastime'; so it was, but that is given as a historical fact rather than as the writer's opinion. 'Chess is more interesting than other board games' could not score because candidates were to select the opinion from Paragraph 3, not Paragraph 5. That instruction also prohibited personal opinions such as 'I do not think acquiring chess skills makes you a better knight or soldier'. Here was another example of the necessity to read with care and adhere to the rubric.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 2

Reading for Meaning

As is usually the case, this text proved more challenging than the first, candidates having to deal with less familiar vocabulary and narrative style. Questions on the writer's craft require that candidates learn how to recognise and decode figurative language; inferential questions demand that they focus on what lies beneath a literal interpretation.

Question 4 (a) asked what Alice and her grandmother were doing on that 'particular day'. A very straightforward question, the answer being heralded in the text by the quoted words, it was answered correctly by almost every single candidate. The very few who tried to enlarge upon the single fact of 'shopping' spoiled their answer by limiting the expedition to an incorrectly specific type of shopping – for clothes or food. The text makes reference, for example, to 'soap', suggesting that it was not, in fact, only food which they bought, but 'groceries' in general; that was the only other idea which was acceptable.

Question 4(b) looked for two ways in which the writer indicated that Alice was only a little girl and candidates could choose two from three possible ways suggested in Paragraph 1: that the shopping bag knocked her on the leg was the first option which the majority chose, correctly; only a few lifted the incomplete statement that, 'its short handles knocked Alice on the leg', with no definition of the pronoun as 'the bag'. Many also recognised Alice's playing with the string bag, putting it over her head and pulling it down over her body, as a child's game or that it showed how small she was. As an alternative form of this answer, a few distilled the text question as 'When she wore it like that she thought she looked like a perfect Net Man' and gained the mark. The other way in which her youth was shown was not attempted precisely enough: she did not know which sort of items could be put together in the same bag or, alternatively, her

grandmother had to explain to her what went into which bag. Specific examples mentioned in the passage could be used, as in 'She didn't know that vegetables and soap couldn't go in the same bag' or 'Her grandmother had to explain that tins and soap could be put together'. Many who attempted this idea did not explain it clearly: 'Explaining the things that went in the bag' was a typically vague response which did not suggest the necessity of separating certain items. A popular wrong answer was the lift that 'she was allowed to hold the shopping bag.' On a few occasions, when the rubric instruction to take the answer from Paragraph 1 was ignored, candidates could not score when offering information from the second paragraph – the fact that Alice 'jiggled about'.

Question 4(c), which asked how we could tell that Elspeth was a caring grandmother, required candidates to infer the fact from Elspeth's words. Some offered a version of the answer to the previous question, saying that she demonstrated care by telling Alice how to pack bags. This was a piece of practical advice which did not necessarily show 'care'. Many candidates recognised as the right idea the grandmother's words to Alice, when she dropped the eggs, and gave those words as their answer; this was almost, but not quite, accurate. Only the more astute candidates recognised how those words, "Don't worry, don't worry," were repeated '*over and over again*' to show the full extent of her comforting and reassurance.

Question 5(a) asked for two ways in which Alice was misbehaving, and these were clearly stated in Paragraph 2. The first evidence, of her starting 'to jiggle about', was easily spotted by the majority of candidates and a good number answered this with their own words – she was 'fidgeting' or 'wouldn't keep still'. A number of those who lifted, unwisely continued with the text, adding the irrelevant comment that she 'didn't like this friend much'; this was nothing to do with how she misbehaved. Similarly, those who copied the second example of misbehaviour – 'Alice bent back the sole of her sandal', sometimes added the comment that 'she tried not to look bored'. This excess spoiled the perfect answer because, in *trying not to look bored*, she was actually *trying to behave properly*. The action of bending 'back' the shoe, or bending it 'under her foot' was necessary to differentiate the deliberately naughty action from merely bending her foot / shoe; many were successful in realising this.

Question 5(b) was the first in this section of the paper which asked candidates to answer 'without using the words of the passage'. They were to explain exactly what was happening as 'Tiny beads of moisture left a ghostly imprint of her nose and lips on the glass' when she looked in through the shop window. Most candidates correctly identified the key words to be recast as 'moisture' and 'imprint', though substituting for them both proved challenging in many cases. There was a good measure of success in replacing 'moisture' with a number of acceptable words such as 'breath', 'condensation', 'vapour' or 'mist'; 'sweat', 'water' and 'wetness' were not allowed, being imprecise in their use. There were also a greater than usual number who made no attempt to find a synonym or who used the stem of the key word e.g. 'The glass was *moist*'. 'Imprint' was dealt with in the same way: many offered suitable words such as 'mark', 'shape', 'outline' or 'image', but 'print' for 'imprint' was a popular attempt which could not be credited.

Question 5(c) again required an explanation 'in your own words'. Perhaps because 'own words' was the phrase used in the question, there were very few who did not attempt to do this. Candidates need to realise that this instruction means exactly the same thing as 'without using the words of the passage', the phrase used in the previous question. The question looked for how Alice's feelings changed as she looked at the 'glass cabinet'. Ideally, this entailed identifying the change from her 'apprehension' on seeing the strange, dark interior of the shop to the 'exhilaration' felt when she saw the cabinet of jewellery. However, Examiners are looking for an understanding of the key words in such answers, and if candidates offered synonyms for Alice's feelings together, as in 'She was excited and nervous' or 'Alice showed anxiety and happiness', such responses were credited without specific reference to what caused the change. 'Apprehension' was rarely recast well, her earlier 'boredom' being the most frequent wrong attempt. Alternatively, candidates chose not to express the 'feeling', as instructed, but to suggest what *caused* the feeling, as in 'everything was creepy/weird'. 'Exhilaration' was more often successfully dealt with as 'happiness', 'delight' or the very frequent 'excitement'.

Question 6(a) asked what Alice was reminded of when she saw the highly polished surface of a table in the antiques shop. To answer this question candidates had to decode the image presented to the girl's mind that, if she touched it, 'ripples would circle out from under her fingers to lap at its edges'. Those better candidates who recognised the picture often wrote, succinctly, 'Water'; others, 'a lake', 'a pond' or 'a pool of water'. Any such example of a still surface of water was correct, while there were many responses which merely repeated the information about the ripples which would result 'if she touched' the polished surface. There was no attempt to explain the inference deduced from the idea of ripples or from their 'lapping' the edge of the table, indicating a somewhat casual reading of the question.

In **Question 6(b)** candidates had to pick out and write down the single word used which continued the idea of 'temple', 'a temple of wonders' being how Alice saw the antiques shop. The word sought was 'reverently', maintaining the religious suggestion. This was recognised by a very small minority and a variety of alternative words were given, from 'lampshade', 'antique' and 'gold-edged' to the very popular 'carousel'. This last seemed a strange choice and clearly candidates had no idea of what it meant. Very few offered more than one word – something which can never gain a mark – and 'feathered fans' or 'gold-edged paintings' appeared just occasionally.

Question 7(a) This question on the writer's craft asked for the effect created by the word 'looming' that would not be created by, for example, the word 'appearing'. The context was of the shop owner 'looming over the top of the carousel' of clothes to look at Alice. This was another word which appears to have been unfamiliar to many candidates. Most guessed at a notion of mystery or a slowness of movement, perhaps suggested by the sound of this 'new' word. A few responses correctly suggested something to do with the man's great height or bulk, but the use of the comparative, as in 'He was taller than Alice' was not rewarded; he may still have been a fairly small man. Fewer still chose the alternative effect, saying that the man seemed ominous or menacing, or that he frightened Alice. Candidates are advised that wider reading and more frequent dictionary work will help not only in vocabulary questions but also in the appreciation of the writer's craft.

Question 7(b) Generally, candidates found this inferential question challenging. The description given – 'The floor fell away and she was rising towards a low red lantern covered with the writhing green bodies of dragons, which was hanging from the ceiling. Then the floor was coming up to meet her again' – was a vivid one and what was happening was to be fully explained. The words which appeared in the text before and after those given were the clue to what was going on. We were told that the man gripped Alice under her arms and, after being raised up, 'she was set down in front of the man'. In other words, the shop owner was lifting her upwards and then putting her down again. Careful reading of the whole paragraph would have made this clear. It is the height to which he raised her which is 'fully' explained in the quotation: she was lifted *up towards the ceiling*, or *towards the lantern which was hanging from it*. Lifting her 'up from the carousel' would also have sufficed to explain the upward movement which the little girl saw as the floor falling away from her, though all too frequently, no 'full' explanation of the first movement was given. More candidates recognised the downward movement. Unfortunately, a good many of those misread 'set' as 'sat' and spoiled their answer by suggesting that the man placed her on a chair or on the counter. Others distorted the movement by implying that he 'dropped her'. Quite a few responses referred back to the previous paragraph to suggest that Alice was feeling dizzy and 'fell' back down.

In **Question 8(a)** a precise explanation was required of the two methods which, according to the shop keeper, can be used to decide whether pearls are real or fake. A majority of candidates were able to answer with the precision needed, describing how one method entailed placing the pearls in contact with human skin; if real, they would glow or shine. The second method was to rub them against the teeth; if they felt like sand, gritty or rough, then that showed they were real, too. The appropriate lifts from the passage were perfectly acceptable answers, though many capably responded with their own structures. Not scoring was almost invariably due to candidates explaining the methods, regarding skin and teeth, but omitting the consequence of the actions they described. There were those who gave a full explanation for one method but left the other incomplete e.g. '(i) To put them in contact with human skin and see if they glow. (ii) To rub them against the teeth.' Some responses were unsuccessful, again through lack of accurate detail, as in 'Rub them against the teeth and they *taste* like sand' or 'Put them in *your hand* and they will glow'. The shop keeper had not specified putting them in one's 'hand'; these few candidates, reading that to demonstrate the method of skin contact, he had placed them in Alice's palm, ignored his earlier explanation, deciding that it must be the skin of the hand only which made them glow. 'Explain precisely...' and 'Explain fully...' are specific instructions and candidates should take careful heed of them.

In **Question 8(b)** Alice, we were told, was 'enchanted' as she watched the shop owner putting the pearls into her hand and this question looked for the single word, used later in Paragraph 5, which continued the idea of 'enchanted'. This second quotation question was much more successfully attempted than the previous one. The vast majority picked out and wrote down, as instructed, the one word 'spellbound', only the very weakest choosing 'opalescent', probably because it was a word they did not understand but hoped as the right one.

Question 9 required candidates to distil the grandmother's words spoken in the final paragraph; to deduce from them what she was implying. "Don't be ridiculous. Are you running a business, or what?" she had said, and a full explanation was to be given of what Elspeth meant by this. Only the most able candidates were able to do so to gain full marks; others coped with part of the answer but found difficulty in expressing the whole idea fully. The expression 'Don't be ridiculous' was Elspeth's exclamation at the very idea of freely giving away real pearls to a little girl; it was the expensive nature of the free gift which she thought

'ridiculous', or silly, something which he surely could not or should not do. Thus, if answers referred merely to giving away 'things' or 'necklaces' in general, this was insufficient; the gift had to be something expensive, costly, valuable or, alternatively, 'pearls'. (The word 'pearls' was accepted without the qualification of 'real', their genuine nature having been clearly indicated in the text.) The second point which grandmother made was to do with *why* it was 'ridiculous', and was centred on the fact that someone owning a shop will be trying to run a business, or to make a profit and not to lose money or cause the business to fail by giving away valuable stock. Thus, together with the expensive nature of the gift, the answer also needed the necessity for business acumen, that is good judgement in business. 'She meant that the man must not be giving out things freely when it comes to running his business properly' gained one mark, for example, having omitted the costly nature of the 'things' given out, but scored for the reference to running a 'proper business'. 'She thought he was foolish to give the pearls to Alice for free when he should have been charging her for them' again scored only the first point. That he should charge for, or sell, the things in his shop is simply a definition of a shop keeper and did not adequately express his lack of judgement in terms of running his business. Again, 'Elspeth meant that if he carried on like this he would soon have nothing to sell' scored half of the available marks, this time for the notion that his business would fail, but without explanation of what he was doing to cause this. An excellent example of a clear and full answer was: 'Elspeth means that any person running a business would not give out something so expensive for free as a business has a profit motive.' This gained full marks; only the very best candidates responded with such clarity.

Question 10 was the customary vocabulary question. Candidates were required to show their understanding, in context, but not necessarily in direct synonyms, of five words or phrases from a choice of eight. Candidates did not fare particularly well here, showing the need, as with own words questions, for work on vocabulary-building. A popular choice was 'rituals', often recast correctly as 'customs', 'traditions', 'routines', 'regular actions' or 'things that happen frequently'. Narrowing the frequency of 'rituals' to '*daily* activities' was inexact; we could not tell this from the context. 'Everyday' activities was also unacceptable as the word implies a normality, without necessarily being a 'routine'. For 'peered', the mark was gained for 'stared', 'gazed' and 'looked closely / intently', but 'looked' alone was not sufficiently strong to be rewarded and 'examined' or 'studied' were unsuitable in the context. Few attempted to substitute for 'writhing'; those who did had clearly met the word before and scored with the confident use of words such as 'twisting', 'turning', 'twining' and 'wriggling'. For 'solemnly' the synonym 'seriously' was the common correct choice, with 'soberly' being an excellent, though rare, alternative, while 'quietly' and 'slowly' were not sufficiently precise. Another popular choice was 'whipped', the best definitions being 'snatched' and 'grabbed'; 'took', alone, frequently occurred without scoring the mark as it needed a qualifier, as in 'took *quickly*' or 'took *swiftly*'. The better attempts at 'friction' included something of the roughness, scratching or grating suggested by the 'rubbing' in the text; 'rubbing' alone was imprecise. The scientific terms 'resistance' and 'opposing force' showed what was possibly an interesting and acceptable transfer of subject-based vocabulary. The few candidates who chose to recast 'dilapidated' did not do so well, usually offering 'old', which may have been the case but need not necessarily have been so. Placing Alice on a 'broken' chair – another frequent suggestion – would have been unlikely and was again a weak substitution. Acceptable choices included 'tattered', 'worn out', 'falling apart' and 'damaged'. Together with 'rituals', 'peered', 'whipped' and 'friction', 'propelling' was attempted most frequently, and was most often recast correctly as 'pushing'; 'dragging' and 'pulling' were seen but these words distorted the meaning, failing to capture the idea of moving someone forward from behind.

Correct grammatical form was not insisted on in this question, as understanding of the word is what was being tested. The practice of including the chosen words in sentences is, fortunately, rarely seen now; the attempt to offer more than one synonym or phrase, however, still exists. This is of no benefit to candidates as only the first attempt will be marked.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/22
Reading

Key messages

- A thorough reading of the whole passage, particularly of the fiction text, Passage 2, is recommended before beginning to answer the questions. Some candidates appear to deal with the passage paragraph by paragraph, resulting in a set of answers that do not make logical sense of the whole text. Closer reading of the whole text before tackling the questions would help to clarify the narrative and the sequence and logic of events described in it. As in past years, most candidates showed a good understanding of the summary passage, but experienced more difficulty in responding to the detailed demands of the comprehension questions. In both summary and comprehension exercises, close reading and careful attention to detail, were the approaches which brought the best results.
- As in the past, many candidates experienced difficulties with questions in which they were required to answer in their own words. However, there were fewer instances of candidates failing to couch their synonyms of key words in sentence form, as in 'shameful – embarrassed, exuberant – very happy' in **Question 5(d)**. Candidates are reminded that, in recasting the word they have identified as the key word, they must not use its stem, as in offering 'ashamed' for 'shameful' in **Question 5(d)**.
- To perform well on the vocabulary question candidates are advised to work on vocabulary or dictionary exercises, and to increase their reading of both fiction and non-fiction material.
- In **Question 1(a)** candidates should avoid using pencil, before writing over the pencil in pen, which in the past often led to writing which was difficult to read.
- In **Question 1(a)**, candidates are advised that content points cannot be scored if they are spread over two bullets with no obvious link, or if they are put in the wrong boxes, although there were fewer instances of this than in the past. Candidates should also focus in this question on making the whole point.
- In a few cases in **Question 1(a)**, candidates used ellipsis, as in, instead of writing out the points in full. Candidates should be aware that this is not an acceptable form of communication, even in note-form, in an examination. Even when the last section of the quote is supplied, as in 'it was imported by the Egyptians.....system of burial', this is not acceptable practice.
- In **Question 1(b)**, Candidates can improve on noun-verb agreement, the omission of definite or indefinite articles, or intrusive use of the article where none is required. Candidates are advised to improve the use of connectives such as 'however' and 'furthermore' to ensure that these are used appropriately.
- Candidates need practice in recognising the difference between opinion and fact in Passage 1, the non-fiction passage. When an opinion was identified, too much unnecessary text was usually added, so that fact intruded and the opinion was not specifically identifiable.

General Comments

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

There were very few incomplete scripts and even weaker candidates seemed to engage with the tasks and the texts.

Both passages, the first entitled 'Cinnamon' and the second entitled 'Esme and Kitty', which was also contextualised with an introduction, seemed to engage the interest of the candidates and to stretch and discriminate amongst them, and this was reflected in a very wide range of scores ranging from single figure to almost full marks. The first passage explored the candidates' ability to read for ideas and the second tested their reading for meaning. 20 marks were available for the summary question, with 15 of these marks being awarded for the assessment of the candidates' ability to select content points from the text of 'Cinnamon' and 5 marks for the assessment of their ability to express these points fluently in their own words. Further questions tested candidates' ability to read for ideas, in this case to distinguish true statements from false ones and those which could not be identified as either true or false from the passage, and to distinguish fact from opinion.

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

There were only a few instances of 'no response' i.e. questions which candidates did not attempt to answer.

In **Question 1(a)** occasionally candidates confused the contents of the two boxes. However, there were fewer scripts which offered points split across two bullets than has happened in the past.

The format of the summary question, both **Question 1(a)** and **Question 1(b)**, largely prevented candidates from writing to excess, copying verbatim at length or producing both fair and rough copies. There was very little irrelevance noted or evidence of candidates diverging from the rubric.

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

Linking words were sometimes used inaccurately, e.g. 'however' and 'whereas' were sometimes used when what followed in no way contradicted or differed. Conversely, 'moreover' and 'furthermore' were sometimes followed by the opposite or different argument. 'Although' was also frequently misused at the start of a sentence. Besides not relating to what has gone before, the sentence itself was often incomplete with no main clause.

Other common errors included mis-use of active / passive forms, e.g. 'It used to mix with water' instead of 'it was used to mix with water', and errors where there was no subject given, e.g. 'used to improve diet' or 'used to treat diabetes'. Missing articles continued to be a problem as did the converse problem of intrusive articles, e.g. 'the cinnamon was used in cooking'. Sometimes lower case letters were used to start a new sentence, and 'it's and 'its' were frequently confused. Sometimes 'cinnamon' was incorrectly given in the plural form.

There was a tendency among some to use repetitive simple sentences beginning 'It was...' A curious misreading which occurred on more than one occasion was 'offsprings' for 'offerings', while 'embalming' sometimes appeared as 'emblaming' or 'embaling' and 'Hebrew' as 'Herbew'. The statement that 'cinnamon is no less popular ...nowadays' was sometimes misread as having the opposite meaning and 'anti-inflammatory' was often read as 'inflammatory'.

Both spelling and punctuation were good.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1(a) was the first part of the summary question, carrying 30% of the total marks for the paper. Candidates were asked to identify the uses and popularity of cinnamon in former times, and the uses and continuing popularity of cinnamon in modern times. The summary had to be based on all but the introductory paragraph of the text, and candidates were to write their answers in note form, where they were free to use either the words of the text or their own words. One content point under each heading of the rubric was given by way of illustration, although these given points were not rewarded with a mark. Where marks were denied it was usually because key words or phrases were missing. Some responses were able to reach the maximum 15 marks, and almost the whole range of marks could be found.

Excluding the provided content points, which were not rewarded with marks, there were 20 content points, of which candidates could identify any combination up to a maximum of 15 points, carrying one mark each. Most candidates expressed the points either in note form or in short sentences; few responses presented long, verbatim copies of the text for each content point, understanding that there is little evidence to suggest that such a strategy yields more marks. Candidates were not instructed to use bullet points, although the sample points given to assist them used bullets; however, most candidates used bullet points, seeming to realise that it would help them to focus more clearly on identifying content points if they were presented under bullets.

Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 referred to the uses and popularity of cinnamon in former times, and there were 9 points (excluding the first, which was given) which the candidates could make. In Paragraph 2, there were 4 content points, (excluding the provided first point) outlining the uses and popularity of cinnamon in former times. The Egyptians used it as an embalming agent, it was used in Indian medicine, it was a gift for gods, or God, or Apollo, or it was linked to religion. A few candidates thought, incorrectly, that cinnamon was a gift from God. The fourth point which could be made from this paragraph could be made in any one of five ways: cinnamon was one of the ingredients of the oil used to anoint Hebrew priests, or to bless articles in the Hebrew temple, it was linked to the Hebrew religion, it was one of the ingredients of the incense used in Hebrew temples or that it was linked to holiness in the Hebrew religion. The fact that Hebrew texts make references to cinnamon was not a content point as, although appearing in the text, it is not a use of cinnamon. Where an unsuccessful attempt was made at the option of anointing Hebrew priests, or at the option of blessing articles in the temple, it was often unsuccessful because the reference was to cinnamon and not to oil. Where points from this paragraph were not fully made, it tended to be because of omissions of reference to the Egyptians, or to medicine, or to the Hebrews. Some candidates mentioned cinnamon as a cure for 'deadly disease', without specific reference to plague.

There were 2 content points to be found in Paragraph 3, the first of which was frequently made by candidates and the second which was less successfully made. These points were that cinnamon was seen a luxury or a symbol of affluence, and that it was used in cooking throughout the world. Mention of 'diverse cuisines' was not sufficient to score this second point as it is possible to have diverse cuisines within one county, and mere reference to diverse cuisines was not enough to capture the international aspect. Many candidate stated, simply but incompletely, that cinnamon was used in cooking.

In Paragraph 4, there were 3 content points, all of which concerned the role that cinnamon played in Europe. Cinnamon was used in cooking by the elite in Europe, it was used to cure plague, or mixed with cloves and water and paced in the sick rooms of plague victims, and used by European countries to gain domination over each other. Leniency was shown in marking the point linking cinnamon to a cure for plague in that there was no insistence on reference to Europe; however the other two points did feature that insistence. Some candidates managed to make the reference to European countries but spoiled the point by not making it clear that countries used cinnamon to gain domination over one another, making it seem as if European countries were acting collectively to dominate other parts of the world, or some unspecified part of the world, as in 'European counties used cinnamon to gain domination' or simply that Europe used cinnamon to gain domination, over other continents or the entire world presumably, and that was also incorrect.

In the second section of the summary the rubric asked for the uses and continuing popularity of cinnamon in modern times, and there were 9 available content points, (excluding the first, which was given.) In Paragraph 5, candidates could make 4 points (excluding the provided first point): cinnamon was used to cook sweet dishes, the oil from its bark or leaves has antiviral properties, and it kills mosquito larvae. Where the second of these points was unsuccessfully made, it tended to be because it was presented that cinnamon itself had

antiviral properties and not its oil. The final point in this paragraph could be made in one of three ways: cinnamon has an anti-inflammatory effect, or it helps or improves digestion, or it helps or improves diet.

In Paragraph 6, it was possible to find 5 content points: pharmaceutical companies are considering the use of cinnamon, it reduces cholesterol, it is a potential cure for diabetes, it reduces obesity, and it delays the onset of memory loss, or boosts brain activity. Reduction in blood sugar was sometimes suggested as a point in its own right. Although the text was written largely with conditional or futuristic ideas, there was no insistence on this, and presenting these ideas as already happening was perfectly acceptable. There was some confusion over 'prevention' and 'cure' and the precision in the use verbs was necessary here; for example, the passage does not state that cinnamon is a cure for obesity.

The strongest candidates achieved maximum points and a large number scored 9 marks and above. Candidates are advised to avoid reproducing the given content points. Although points could be made by producing a list of notes or short sentences in bullet point form, as indicated above, rather than in continuous prose, these points nevertheless need to be fully made with, as indicated above, appropriate agents and extensions which affect the meaning or fullness of the point.

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were asked to use their notes to write a summary, in their own words, of the uses and popularity of cinnamon in former times, and the uses and continuing popularity of cinnamon in modern times. They were asked to write no more than 160 words (the first ten of which were given), within the space available in the answer booklet.

It appears that the task set in **Question 1(a)** of reading to identify the most relevant information is helpful to candidates when they set about writing their summaries in **Question 1(b)**. Instances of irrelevance were few. Examples of responses which strayed from the details of the original text into comments of their own on the topic almost never occurred.

Most candidates completed the exercise and most were able to do so comfortably within the given space. The strongest responses included use of own words in a sustained manner and in a style which was always accurate, containing original complex structures. The general use of own words was noticeable, with many candidates being innovative or original in their use of English; many others selected from, edited and restructured the text well, while others moved blocks of text around rather than re-wording detail, or copied from the text. There were occasional responses where attempts at use of own words proved unwise in that the over-ambitious vocabulary did not entirely match the meaning of the original.

Nearly all candidates attempted the question and adhered to the rubric. Candidates are advised that very short answers cannot justify a high mark, since they cannot demonstrate a sustained use of own words or completely accurate use of English.

Some candidates tried to disguise the fact that they were writing simple sentences using the words of the passage by using many 'linking' words and phrases. For example, one response used 'on the other hand' four times in the summary, which took up a great deal of the word allowance, plus ten other 'links', such as 'furthermore', 'in addition', 'moreover', which took up another sixteen words, so that one-fifth of the summary made little or no contribution to the content of the summary. A few complex sentences would have been far more impressive stylistic features.

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

Questions 2 and **Question 3** were the questions testing the new assessment objective in the revised syllabus, Assessment Objective 4, Reading for Ideas, where candidates are being tested on their ability to respond to the ideas of the whole text or a section of it. In general, **Question 2** was answered quite well whereas candidates tended to be less successful in responding to **Question 3**.

Question 2 asked candidates to tick the correct box against each of three statements based on information given in Paragraph 1; they were to decide whether each of the statements was true, false or not stated in the passage. The first statement – cinnamon was first discovered in Sri Lanka – was true; the second statement – cinnamon bushes stop growing after three years – was not stated in the passage; the third statement –

cinnamon is produced by scraping the bark off the inner branches of the bush – was false. Candidates found this question surprisingly challenging, with very few gaining all three marks.

In **Question 3** candidates were to select and write down two opinions from Paragraph 3. The key to answering this type of question is to identify words or phrases which are subjective rather than objective, and these were 'it is obvious' and 'delightful flavour'. Correct answers had to be put into a context which made sense, while at the same time not including so much information that the opinion ceased to be an opinion and became a statement. One answer therefore was 'it is obvious that legends would grow up around cinnamon / it'. Inclusion of 'and so' or 'so' were acceptable, and candidates were free to use their own words, although very few did. The second opinion in the paragraph was that cinnamon has a delightful flavour' although lift of 'its delightful flavour' or 'because of its delightful flavour' were acceptable. The addition of 'cinnamon was used in cooking' was incorrect, as it turned the opinion into a statement. This – 'because of its delightful flavour, cinnamon was used in cooking' – was a very popular incorrect answer, wrong because its whole focus shifted from being an opinion about cinnamon to being a statement about cooking. Many candidates chose as their opinion the story of the cinnamon netted at the Nile's source. 'It was regarded as a luxury' appeared to be an opinion to many. A few candidates assumed their own opinion was required, rather than an opinion from the text.

Comments on specific questions

Section 2

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

Question 4(a) asked why the ship was 'groaning' and candidates found this challenging. The vast majority of candidates wrote, incorrectly, that the ship was making a lot of noise, which was a recast of 'groaning' and not an answer as to why the groaning was occurring, namely because it was full of passengers / people. 'Full' alone was insufficient as it had to be made clear that it was the passengers and not the cargo which was making the ship full, as careful reading of the text showed that the cargo was still being loaded. Many candidates stated that the ship was not in a good state, that it creaked, that the engines were noisy or that its horn was being sounded.

In **Question 4(b)** the correct answer was that the mother was waving or saying farewell. There was no insistence on the recipient of the waving, but if a recipient was given it clearly did not destroy a correct answer, and many acceptable recipients were suggested – her family, her friends, her husband, the people on the quay. However, any idea that she was waving to her daughters was incorrect as they were standing beside her on the ship. Alternatively, acceptable answers focused on the people on the quay – she was waving because the people on the quay were waving.

Question 4(c) asked for two ways in which the sisters showed affection for one another, and this was a generally well answered question, the answers being that Kitty put her arm through Esme's and that Esme laid her head on her sister's shoulder. Some responses spoiled the first of these answers by adding unnecessarily that she kept her eyes on the quay, a distortion which was enough to lose the focus of the answer. Similarly, candidates who added to the second answer a reference to their mother patting Esme's fingers were denied the mark in an otherwise correct response. A common mistake was to write 'through Esme' rather than 'through Esme's'.

Question 5(a) asked what was happening when the ship rolled from side to side, and the better candidates were able to infer that a storm had blown up, or that the sea was rough or wild. Waves striking the ship, or strong waves, were also acceptable answers, but answers such as 'waves' alone, or even 'big waves' or 'dangerous waves' or 'tides' were inadequate.

In **Question 5(b)** candidates were asked to pick out and write down the single word which continued the idea of 'moving from side to side', the correct answer being 'seesaw'. There was a fair degree of success with this question, but also several common wrong answers, the most popular being 'sway' and sometimes 'bucked', 'slopped' or 'staggering'.

An image had to be de-coded in **Question 5(c)** where the sea was personified when it 'hurled itself at the glass'. This meant that correct answers gave the idea of the sea attacking, or being hurtful or malicious; mere synonyms for 'hurl' e.g. 'threw itself' were insufficient. Alternatively, the mark could be scored by inferring the force or strength of the sea. In general, candidates found this question on writer's craft

challenging, and where it was answered correctly it tended to be for references to the force or strength of the sea rather than decoding of the personification. Some candidates clearly did not know the meaning of 'hurled' and commonly presumed it was 'gentler' than 'splash'.

Question 5(d) was the first of the questions on the Paper which required candidates to answer in their own words, the key words being 'shameful' and 'exuberant'. For the first available mark, acceptable synonyms for 'shameful' were 'embarrassed', 'humiliated' or 'awkward' and for 'exuberant' acceptable synonyms were 'excited' and 'very happy'. Candidates were generally not particularly successful in this question. Many offered 'ashamed' as a synonym for 'shameful' but this could not be accepted as an answer because it is a derivative of the word being tested. Very few candidates offered a correct synonym for 'exuberant', with the weaker 'happy' or 'glad' being popular wrong answers, words which are too weak to give the force of 'exuberant'. 'Proud' was another popular wrong answer. Some candidates resorted to weak words such as 'she felt bad and then she felt good'. Often the 'exuberant' idea was not attempted, and instead two definitions for 'shameful' were offered. There were instances of the key words being copied, but was perhaps not as prevalent as it has been at other times.

Question 6(a) asked for the two indications that Kitty was desperately ill, the answers being, firstly, that she was deathly, or very, or extremely pale, the second being that she did not recognise her sister. Successful lifting allowed many candidates to gain one or both marks, but some failed to qualify the whiteness of Kitty's face with 'deathly' etc. and some spoiled an otherwise correct answer by adding that she turned her face to the wall or said that she could not stand the sight of the sea. A few candidates split one of the correct responses over the two answers and could not earn a mark. A small number simply lifted the words of the question, offering 'she was lying on the bed' and 'she was crumpled up'.

Question 6(b) was an inferential question which most candidates answered correctly by writing that she wanted to hide the view of the sea, or make sure that Kitty could not see the sea, or that her sister could not stand the sight of the sea. Some answers lacked precision, e.g. 'so that she could not see outside'. There were also many imaginative, but incorrect, answers, ranging from 'in case she vomited' to 'so the towel would dry' which, although inferences, could not be supported by any evidence in the text.

In **Question 6(c)** candidates were asked what Esme learned not to do as she walked around the ship, and this was a prime example of the need for careful reading in comprehension questions. Very few candidates gave a correct response, most suggesting the course of action Esme should take (leaning forward) rather than that which she should not do, which was, by inference, leaning backwards or standing straight. Some candidates suggested that 'she learned not to go out on deck in such weather', or 'to stay in the lounge or dining room', which she probably did, but is not what the passage tells us she learned.

In **Question 7(a)** candidates were asked what the girls' mother disapproved of, the answer being that she disapproved of them wearing all their clothes, or so many clothes, or too many clothes, or five dresses. Candidates had to provide the idea of superfluity, and merely to lift the reference to wearing the few clothes they had, one garment on top of the other, was insufficient. Simply wearing layers of clothing is what most people do; the key was the superfluous nature of what they were wearing. Most candidates took their answer from what came before mother 'tutted in disapproval', rather than continuing to include her rhetorical question. Many candidates thought their mother's disapproval was aroused by the bumping and struggling.

Question 7(b) demanded inferential understanding of the heat which the illustrations such as the 'yellow dust' reflected which many candidates found challenging. Many wrote of their missing their garden or the countryside. Some inferred from the 'bare toe' that they came from a poor neighbourhood or an undeveloped country. Some weaker candidates relied on their imagination rather than the text for an answer to this question. 'Peaceful' was a popular wrong answer, and even 'cold' was offered from time to time. Some candidates gave the name of a country or a US State.

In **Question 8(a)** candidates were asked for the evidence to support the claim that the girls' grandmother thought they were 'like beggars', the answer lying in making the inference from the text that they had no coats. The majority of candidates took the grandmother's statement at face value and said that their clothes were in poor condition, or that their clothes made them look like beggars. Others came close, but not close enough, to the correct answer by writing that they were wearing no coats.

Question 8(b) asked for the emotion shown by Esme, and lay in a successful inference of either the word 'snorted' or the word 'retorted'. Therefore acceptable inferences inferred from 'snorted' were scorn, mockery or disgust, while acceptable emotions inferred from 'retorted' were anger, annoyance or irritation. Many candidates simply referred to Esme's 'snorting' and 'retorting', or that she was 'not going to like the place'.

For those who correctly interpreted her emotion, 'anger' was the most frequent response. Popular wrong answers were that she felt insulted, or hurt, or offended.

Question 8(c) was the second of the questions on the Paper where candidates were asked to answer in their own words. This was not a traditional own words question, the key words to be re-cast were 'threat' and 'cast a shadow', and these had to be linked to an inference that the grandmother worried unnecessarily about her health. Acceptable synonyms for 'threat' were 'possibility', 'chance' and 'danger', although other conditional ideas could make the point, as in 'she might have a headache' or 'she would have a headache'. Acceptable synonyms for 'cast a shadow' were quite broad, provided they related to the plan for the day as in 'the plans would be cancelled', or 'the plans would be postponed' or 'the shopping would be delayed' or 'she thought they would not go shopping after all'. Many candidates were preoccupied with the grandmother's activities earlier in the day, and thought that it was these plans which had been disrupted, therefore making irrelevant references to the meals the grandmother had to plan or the letters she had to write; although these did not answer the question, they were not enough to negate a correct response where it was made. Some candidates thought she was busy not only planning the meals but cooking them as well and some saw her concern as being for the health of the girls, rather than her own.

Question 9 asked why Kitty squeezed Esme's hand and there was a wide range of acceptable answers to this inferential question. Candidates could focus on the size or grandeur of either the store or the staircase, linking it to an emotion evoked, such as fear, amazement, awe or nervousness. Alternatively, they could focus on the range, or even the amount, of goods in the store and link that to an emotion evoked. A simpler way to answer the question was to say that the purpose of Kitty squeezing Esme's hand was to comfort or reassure her, or indeed to comfort or reassure herself. The lift of 'the range of goods in the store was astounding' was also an acceptable response. There were many incorrect or incomplete answers here, mostly involving a reference to the store or the staircase but without a corresponding emotion evoked. Some candidates thought that Kitty feared that Esme would run off and become lost, or fall on the stairs, which were frequently interpreted as being an escalator.

Question 10 was the customary vocabulary question, in which candidates were required to show their understanding in context, not necessarily in direct synonyms, of five words or phrases from a choice of eight. Candidates did not score particularly well here, showing the need for work on vocabulary building. Most candidates who attempted 'flew' scored the mark for any sensible reference to speed, such as 'quickly' or 'speedily'; 'suddenly' was an attractive wrong answer, wrong because it appeared in the text at 'suddenly the door flew open'. A reasonable degree of success was gained by candidates who correctly offered 'obviously', 'definitely' or 'undoubtedly' for 'clearly', 'trip' or 'outing' for 'excursion', and 'puzzling' or 'confusing' for 'baffling'. For 'exasperation', candidates scored a mark for writing 'frustration', 'irritation', or 'annoyance'. For 'capacious' a mark could be scored for 'large', 'big' or 'spacious', although many candidates offered incorrectly 'having a large capacity' which was too close to the word being tested to be accepted as a correct answer. Correct synonyms for 'dank' were 'damp', 'clammy' and 'misty', and correct synonyms for 'ventured' were 'risked' or 'dared'. 'Went' was a popular wrong answer for 'ventured', which did not capture the risk element implied in the word.

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