

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/11  
Reading Passage (Core)

## Key Messages

- In responding to all questions, it is advisable to consider carefully the specific implications of key words within the question or within the phrase under analysis.
- The revised format of Question 1(g), the six mark language question assessing an understanding of vocabulary used in the passage, **clearly identifies the words that are to be explained**, by printing them in italics. It is important that responses **focus only on these words**, and explanations should comprise either acceptable synonyms or a more developed paraphrase. Responses that attempt to define a word by using a different grammatical form of the same word will not be credited.
- Centres are advised to encourage candidates to be aware of the distinction between the purpose of questions such as 1(g), as explained above, and questions such as 1(h), the six mark language question **assessing an understanding of the effects of language choices made by the writer of the passage**. The revised format of the latter question clearly identifies the phrases for comment. Responses should focus primarily on **explaining how the language used helps to convey the writer's experience** (in this case, his feelings while being in the middle of a volcanic eruption). This question does not require a paraphrase or definition of the vocabulary used and any explanation of the meaning of the words should be subsidiary to the main purpose of the question.
- **Question 2** test both Reading and Writing objectives and thus the content if a **response must be closely grounded in the stimulus passage**.

## General Comments

The reading passage for the paper seems to have been well received and proved to be an appropriate stimulus for both the writing and reading questions, as well as an effective discriminator of understanding for a core paper of this nature. There was very little indication that responses suffered from timing problems and most produced answers of adequate length for all questions. There was very little evidence of serious misunderstanding of either the passage or the questions and the paper proved successful in terms of discrimination in that it required careful reading. However, evidence from a large number of responses would seem to suggest that even those with an apparently secure understanding of the reading passage showed inexperience in slow, careful reading of both question paper and questions, with the result that answers did not focus on the precise details of what was being tested.

Question 2, the Directed Writing task, in general, was answered at least satisfactorily, with a pleasing number of responses making a confident attempt to write in a tone appropriate to the required genre (a leaflet for tourists to Hawaii), although in doing so some responses lost sight of the requirement to base their content on details taken from the passage and referred to what may have been personal experience gained from a holiday to the islands by the writers. However, it was felt that there was no evidence that those who might have had actual knowledge of the Hawaiian islands were in any way advantaged over those who had never visited them.

Although there were reports that some handwriting was very difficult to read, overall presentation and handwriting were generally of a good standard and nearly all responses gave clear evidence that the examination was being taken seriously and all were trying their very best to do well.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

- (a) Many responses scored at least one mark on this 2 mark question by clearly identifying that the number of people in the population has remained the same as when Hawaii was first 'discovered' by Captain Cook (responses that referred to the explorer as 'Captain Hook' were not penalised). Many responses, however, did not gain the second mark for this question as they merely stated that there are '10000 native Hawaiians' thereby omitting the concept of 'fewer' or a 'small number'. A common misunderstanding of this question came in responses that referred to the *culture* of the islands rather than to the *population*. As mentioned in the 'Key Messages' section of this report, careful reading of the questions, especially those to which the answers are straightforward, is essential for those wishing to reach the highest grade.
- (b) Many responses to this 2 mark question showed some appreciation of the difference between the literal and figurative meanings of the two phrases but failed to explain it clearly. Often, answers were simply a paraphrase of the question on both counts or did not quantify the degree of 'amazement' experienced by the writer in the metaphorical sense of the phrase. Words such as 'surprised' and 'shocked' did not adequately portray the writer's feeling of wonder and did not gain the mark. The literal interpretations were often paraphrases or too brief, such as 'the power of the volcano' and did not offer any explanation as such. One very good answer was: 'Physically moved by the power of the volcano' and 'metaphorically blew my mind'.
- (c) (i) A large number of responses gained the 1 mark available for this question and successfully identified the writer's disappointment at seeing what looked to be like a desert or 'dessert' (which was not penalised) but some, despite showing some evidence of understanding, did not gain the mark as the reference to 'desert' was not made.
- (ii) There were fewer correct responses to this 1 mark question than there were to (c) with quite a number identifying the 'eruption' but not mentioning its immediacy or what it was erupting into; namely the sea - either of these points was necessary to gain the mark. References to Mark Twain were often made without further clarification and comments such as, 'because he was going to see something that Twain did not see' were insufficiently detailed to be credited.
- (d) Again, this 1 mark question was successfully answered overall with the most common response focussing on the towns being 'engulfed'. Some responses simply repeated the question with the tautological 'towns being hard to find because they are buried' and many mistakenly claimed that the towns had been engulfed by 'tidal waves'; neither of these points could be awarded a mark. Correct references to surveyors not being able to get their bearings were common and correct although those responses that misread the word as 'survivors' were not rewarded as this was taken as an indication of misunderstanding.
- (e) Many responses did not clearly distinguish between this 2 mark question which focused on the far from reassuring content of the *leaflet* and 1(f) which also carried 2 marks but which was concerned with the hazards of the *walk* taken by the writer. Others answered this correctly and then repeated their answers in Question (f) while other responses answered one correctly for each question with a wrong answer taken from details relating to the other question. A small number of responses successfully identified the generic 'negative' content of the leaflet or recognised the 'ironic' nature of 'reassuring'. There were, in fact, three points that could have been mentioned:
- the surface may collapse at any time (responses that gave the word 'unstable' and the fact that the 'lava could collapse at any time' were awarded only one mark as these are not discrete points)
  - the dangers of inhaling the clouds of hydrochloric acid
  - the irony in the word 'reassuring' and the negative content of the leaflet (a clear explanation of this point would have gained both available marks).

- (f) The introductory comments to 1(e) apply equally to responses to this question. Responses that referred to a wall of lava stopping the writer parking could not be rewarded as there were three points that could have been mentioned:
- no path/jagged/rough slabs of rock
  - the surface can rip skin to shreds/risk of falling over
  - risk of being scalded by hot steam.
- (g)(i) A relatively small number of responses gained the two marks available for this question and only a slightly larger number achieved one mark. The concept of 'uniqueness' was not clearly tied down as being one of a kind and presented instead as difference in various degrees. Similarly 'tradition' was not explained in terms of length of time and sameness. Frequently, responses focused on explaining culture rather than 'traditional'.
- (ii) Responses to this question were generally more successful, especially with explaining 'submarine' as being under water. Those who referred to actual submarines were not rewarded and neither were those that explained the word as *underground*. The word 'successive' caused more difficulty and was sometimes misread as 'successful' although there was general recognition of the number and constancy of the eruptions.
- (iii) The slow movement of the rocks mixing into the water was often recognised although this was sometimes explained through reference to the viscosity of the liquid and its 'thickness'. The word 'slimy' sometimes appeared; presumably from a literal interpretation of the word 'sluggish' and this was credited if the second part of the association was clear.
- (h) Many responses did not clearly explain *how* each of the selected phrases helped the reader to understand what the writer's experience was like. Many merely paraphrased the phrase in question or repeated it, changing one or two words, or rearranged the syntax. Frequently, the 'explanation' offered was done for all three phrases without reference to the context. The phrases most appropriately commented upon comprised the sudden thud and knees buckling and the 'slow-motion nightmare'. Explanations of these in terms of shock, fear and even horror would have gained one mark per phrase for showing straightforward understanding and answers that clearly identified and commented on the use of such words as 'nightmare', 'slow-motion', 'thud', and 'buckle' would have gained a further mark. The 'fiery pool' phrase was occasionally explained in terms of its potential menace and gentle popping but usually as 'very hot' and the bright orange/black moonscape phrase was only explained in terms of its startling contrast by the most successful responses. A significant number of responses misunderstood the 'black moonscape' to be the sky and not the ground.

Only a small number of responses did not use the given phrases and selected others randomly from the text or, indeed, split one given phrase into three smaller parts. Others attempted to describe the feelings of the writer at this point in the passage, but only a small number successfully confronted the requirement to 'explain how the phrase helps you to understand the experience'. As mentioned at the beginning of this report, Centres are advised to focus on this aspect of the paper when preparing candidates for this examination.

- (i) The most successful responses to this question showed a secure understanding of the requirements of the 7 mark summary question with scores of 5 or more being quite common from those who focused closely on the need to identify points related to volcanoes and their effects on the Hawaiian islands. Less successful answers tended to focus less clearly on the stated topic and to include irrelevant details about the islands' population and culture or to focus too narrowly on the engulfed towns and related consequences to the exclusion of other relevant details. Another feature of such responses was that they contained much unnecessary repetition, for example by identifying details about creating new land and rising from the sea and so on and then repeating them, especially in relation to the black sand beach etc. The least successful responses tended randomly to copy sections of the passage without evidence of attempting to isolate individual points. There were eleven points (stated below) from the passage which could have been identified up to a total mark for the question of 7:

- 1 Volcanoes are powerful/have primeval power.
- 2 Islands are formed by eruptions of submarine volcanoes/thrust 6,100 metres up from the ocean floor.
- 3 Volcanoes die and sink back into the sea.

- 4 Some are 4,000 metres high.
- 5 Eruptions lead to a continually changing landscape/ can create (new land e.g. jet black sand).
- 6 The craters can resemble lakes of fire/a desert.
- 7 Volcanoes are active/alive/erupt (into the sea).
- 8 They can destroy.
- 9 They can engulf/bury whole towns/no towns left on the southern coast.
- 10 They cause tidal waves.
- 11 The volcanic landscape is beautiful.

## Question 2

### Reading

The most successful responses showed a clear understanding of the requirements of the task, were written in a register that was fully appropriate to a leaflet for tourists and focused not only on the excitements of viewing and exploring volcanoes but also identified other details from the passage (such as the beaches and beautiful landscape) that would appeal to tourists with less adventurous tastes. Such responses achieved a balance of organising and developing passage-based material in their own words in a suitably persuasive tone. Less successful responses tended to lift quite extensively from the passage and, as a result, included a good deal of unnecessary material. The least successful strayed away significantly from the passage, often fuelled by their own holiday experiences in resorts significantly different from the Hawaiian islands; these responses were often both interesting and entertaining but revealed only a limited understanding of purpose. It was noted that some responses that over-emphasised the fear factor relating to the volcanoes may well have discouraged tourists from visiting the area!

### Writing

Only a very small number of responses contained error to the extent that their meaning could not be understood and, as has been the case in previous series, the overall standard of writing was of a pleasing standard for Core tier responses. Some responses were accurately expressed but extremely brief which meant that they denied themselves the opportunity of being placed in the top bands, whereas others were unnecessarily lengthy which led to errors of expression becoming intrusive. This could have been avoided with more careful initial planning. The most successful responses showed clear evidence of planning and checking work for errors, and there were some very good attempts at achieving an appropriate register and tone. Misspellings of straightforward vocabulary (for example 'intressting', 'truley', 'definetly', 'extordinary'), insecure sentence punctuation and misuse or omission of the apostrophe were the most frequent errors made in the less successful responses. There were also problems with the noun 'Hawaii' with uncertainty over whether it was an 'island' or 'islands' and therefore whether to use an article before it as in 'the Hawaii', or just 'Hawaiian islands'.

The most successful responses were well planned and organised through constructive use of paragraphs. Less successful ones tended to have a good opening paragraph but then introduce further material in a somewhat random fashion with the result that the response was out of balance, with too much information on the islands and limited focus on persuasion.

In conclusion, most responses scored within bands 2 or 3 as they were able to identify and, at least, discuss details from the passage and to acknowledge some attractions. Only a small number scored in band 4 and below. This was often because the answer was below an acceptable length.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/13  
Reading Passage (Core)

## Key Messages

- In responding to all questions, it is advisable to consider carefully the **specific implications of key words** within the question or within the phrase under analysis.
- The revised format of **Question 1(g)**, the six mark language question assessing an understanding of vocabulary used in the passage, **clearly identifies the words that are to be explained**, by printing them in italics. It is important that responses **focus only on these words**, and explanations should comprise either acceptable synonyms or a more developed paraphrase. Responses that attempt to define a word by using a different grammatical form of the same word will not be credited.
- Centres are advised to encourage candidates to be aware of the distinction between the purpose of questions such as 1(g), as explained above, and questions such as 1(h), the six mark language question **assessing an understanding of the effects of language choices made by the writer of the passage**. The revised format of the latter question clearly identifies the phrases for comment. Responses should focus primarily on **explaining how the language used helps to convey the writer's experience** (in this case, his feelings while being in the middle of a volcanic eruption). This question does not require a paraphrase or definition of the vocabulary used and any explanation of the meaning of the words should be subsidiary to the main purpose of the question.
- **Question 2** test both Reading and Writing objectives and thus the content if a **response must be closely grounded in the stimulus passage**.

## General Comments

The reading passage for the paper seems to have been well received and proved to be an appropriate stimulus for both the writing and reading questions, as well as an effective discriminator of understanding for a core paper of this nature. There was very little indication that responses suffered from timing problems and most produced answers of adequate length for all questions. There was very little evidence of serious misunderstanding of either the passage or the questions and the paper proved successful in terms of discrimination, in that it required careful reading. However, evidence from a large number of responses would seem to suggest that even those with an apparently secure understanding of the reading passage showed inexperience in slow, careful reading of both question paper and questions, with the result that answers did not focus on the precise details of what was being tested.

Question 2, the Directed Writing task, in general, was answered at least satisfactorily, with a pleasing number of responses making a confident attempt to write in a tone appropriate to the required genre (a journal entry by an experienced climber visiting the hotel), although in doing so, some responses lost sight of the need to write as an experienced climber and tended to focus too much on the idea of being on an exotic holiday and on the excitement of staying in a luxurious hotel.

Although there were reports that some handwriting was very difficult to read, overall presentation and handwriting were generally of a good standard and nearly all responses gave clear evidence that the examination was being taken seriously and all were trying their very best to do well.



## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

- (a) The majority of candidates gained the available 1 mark for this question by identifying that wealthy guests travel to the hotel by plane.
- (b) Again, a pleasing number of candidates gained both of the two marks available for this question by explaining the two essential problems with water – that it had to be carried up to the hotel and that a lot of water is required for baths and to flush toilets.
- (c) Many candidates obtained one mark by identifying that professional climbers are aware of the increased risk of altitude sickness when making a rapid ascent. The more successful answers gained the second mark by explaining that they preferred to spend time acclimatising before ascending the mountain.
- (d)(i) Many candidates obtained the one mark available for this question by stating that the hotel deals with the problem of altitude sickness by providing oxygen for their guests.
- (ii) Again, many candidates gained the 1 mark available by identifying the hotel as being unique, in being the only hotel to provide oxygen via room service.
- (e) This 3 mark question proved quite demanding for candidates with many obtaining either 1 or 2 marks and far fewer gaining the full 3 marks. In order to do so it was necessary for candidates to provide quite carefully detailed responses: to identify clearly that modern climbers tend to not take rucksacks for ease of climbing; that this means they do not carry oxygen (the cylinders containing the oxygen being carried in these rucksacks) and that this was an unwise decision (hence 'leaving their common sense in the rucksack').
- (f) There were three points that candidates could, any one of which would have been acceptable in gaining the 1 mark available for this question. The majority of candidates obtained a mark either by identifying that with airtight doors guests would have to spend most of their time indoors, or that they would be less likely to suffer from altitude sickness. A smaller number gained the 1 mark by stating that there would be less for guests to do if the doors were fitted.
- (g)(i) Many candidates gained at least 1 mark for this part of the question by showing an understanding that 'progress' meant development/movement. It was sufficient for the second point that they explained 'rapidity' – however, many saw that frightening rapidity meant great speed. The most common error on this question was by candidates who were distracted by the word 'frightening' and attempted to account for a sense of fear (possibly of becoming ill).
- (ii) A very large number of candidates obtained 2 marks for this question – the majority of candidates understanding that an estimate was a guess of some sort. The second mark was gained by the additional understanding that this guess was an underestimate, or a careful guess.
- (iii) Again, many candidates obtained 2 marks for this part of the question giving clear explanations of 'confusion' and 'disorientation'. Candidates who gained only 1 mark tended not to distinguish between the two words with sufficient care.
- (h) Many responses did not clearly explain *how* each of the selected phrases helped the reader to understand how the writer was expressing hostility towards the wealthy tourists. Many merely paraphrased the phrase in question or repeated it, changing one or two words, or rearranged the syntax. Frequently, the 'explanation' offered was done for all three phrases without reference to the context. The phrases most appropriately commented upon were: 'a pretty superficial appreciation' and 'if you simply hop on a private plane' where candidates identified the different (lesser) experience that a wealthy tourist had by not putting in the effort to climb the mountain. The least successful explanation tended to be for the phrase 'a form of sickness which affects fast-lane tourism everywhere' as there was no indication that the writer was using 'sickness' metaphorically and it was not usually clear that candidates had understood the phrase: 'fast-lane tourism'. Only a small number of responses did not use the given phrases and selected others randomly from the text or, indeed, split one given phrase into three smaller parts. The least successful responses tended to give an explanation that encompassed ideas from all three phrases chosen, hence mostly gaining 1 or 2 marks overall. Only a relatively small number successfully confronted the requirement to 'explain how the phrase helps you to understand his

dislike' and did so sufficiently fully to gain more than 1 mark for each phrase. As mentioned at the beginning of this report, Centres are advised to focus on this aspect of the paper when preparing candidates for this examination.

- (i) The most successful responses to this question showed a secure understanding of the requirements of the 7 mark summary question, with scores of 5 or more being quite common from those who focused closely on the need to identify points related to causes, effects and treatments for altitude sickness. Less successful answers tended to focus less clearly on the stated topic and to include irrelevant details about the hotel and its services. Another feature of such responses was that they contained much unnecessary repetition, for example by devoting too much of the answer to identifying details of the effects and symptoms. The least successful responses tended to copy sections of the passage randomly, without evidence of attempting to isolate individual points. There were fourteen points (stated below and divided under the three headings) from the passage which could have been identified up to a total mark of 7. It was not necessary for the candidate to divide their answer with headings:

### Causes

- 1 Low air pressure.
- 2 Lack of oxygen.
- 3 The speed of ascent.

### Effects

- 4 Fluid accumulates in the lungs and brain tissue.
- 5 The mild form produces coughs/headaches.
- 6 Difficulty in sleeping.
- 7 The more serious form leads to breathlessness/mental confusion/loss of co-ordination.
- 8 It can result in death.
- 9 The onset can be very rapid.
- 10 The sickness increases with the speed of ascent.

### Treatments

- 11 Can be treated with oxygen.
- 12 Can be treated with drugs.
- 13 Getting the sufferer quickly down the mountain.
- 14 The Gamow bag.

## Question 2

### Reading

The most successful responses showed a clear understanding of the requirements of the task and were written in a register that was fully appropriate to a journal; the key to obtaining a mark in the top bands was the recognition by the candidate that the writer is an experienced climber (for example, knowing about the causes and effects of altitude sickness) and conveying a convincing sense of the writer's attitude towards the wealthy tourists (and 'fast-lane tourism'). Such responses achieved a balance of organising and developing passage-based material in their own words and conveying a believable response to the attractions of Everest and the need to experience it the hard way. Less successful responses tended to lift quite extensively from the passage and, as a result, included a good deal of unnecessary material, or simply reproduced the article. The least successful strayed away significantly from writer's attitude as expressed in the passage, often giving the sense of an inexperienced tourist, perhaps by suffering themselves from altitude sickness, and of too great an enthusiasm for the luxuries and comforts provided by the hotel.

### Writing

Only a very small number of responses contained error to the extent that their meaning could not be understood and, as has been the case in previous series, the overall quality of writing was of a pleasing standard for Core tier responses. Some responses were accurately expressed but extremely brief, which meant that they denied themselves the opportunity of being placed in the top bands, whereas others were unnecessarily lengthy which led to errors of expression becoming intrusive, and which could have been avoided with more careful initial planning. The most successful responses showed clear evidence of

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planning and checking work for errors, and there were some very good attempts at achieving a good register and tone. Misspellings of straightforward vocabulary (for example 'intressting', 'truley', 'extordinary'), insecure sentence punctuation and misuse or omission of the apostrophe were the frequent errors made in the less successful responses.

The most successful responses were well planned and organised through constructive use of paragraphs. Less successful ones tended to have a good opening paragraph but then introduce further material in a somewhat random fashion, with the result that the response was out of balance, with too much information on the hotel and limited focus on conveying opinion.

In conclusion, most responses scored within bands 2 or 3 as they were able to identify and at least discuss details from the passage and to acknowledge some attractions. Only a small number scored in band 4 and below and this was often because the answer was below an acceptable length. It is worth noting that many candidates gained a slightly higher reading mark than their writing mark for Question 2 and this suggests that some more focus on expression would be of great benefit.



# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/21  
Reading Passages (Extended)

## Key Messages

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- Centres are advised to encourage candidates to be aware of the distinction between the purpose of questions such as **1(g)**, as explained above, and questions such as **1(h)**, the six mark language question **assessing an understanding of the effects of language choices made by the writer of the passage**. The revised format of the latter question clearly identifies the phrases for comment. Responses should focus primarily on **explaining how the language used helps to convey the writer's experience** (in this case, his feelings while being in the middle of a volcanic eruption). This question does not require a paraphrase or definition of the vocabulary used and any explanation of the meaning of the words should be subsidiary to the main purpose of the question.
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### Question 1

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- (b) Many responses to this 2 mark question showed some appreciation of the difference between the literal and figurative meanings of the two phrases but failed to explain it clearly. Often, answers were simply a paraphrase of the question on both counts or did not quantify the degree of 'amazement' experienced by the writer in the metaphorical sense of the phrase. Words such as 'surprised' and 'shocked' did not adequately portray the writer's feeling of wonder and did not gain the mark. The literal interpretations were often paraphrases or too brief, such as 'the power of the volcano' and did not offer any explanation as such. One very good answer was: 'Physically moved by the power of the volcano' and 'metaphorically blew my mind'.
- (c) (i) A large number of responses gained the 1 mark available for this question and successfully identified the writer's disappointment at seeing what looked to be like a desert or 'dessert' (which was not penalised) but some, despite showing some evidence of understanding, did not gain the mark as the reference to 'desert' was not made.
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  - the dangers of inhaling the clouds of hydrochloric acid
  - the irony in the word 'reassuring' and the negative content of the leaflet (a clear explanation of this point would have gained both available marks).
- (f) The introductory comments to 1(e) apply equally to responses to this question. In addition, responses that referred to a wall of lava stopping the writer parking could not be rewarded. Again, there were three points that could have been mentioned:
- no path/jagged/rough slabs of rock
  - the surface can rip skin to shreds/risk of falling over
  - risk of being scalded by hot steam.

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- (h) Many responses did not clearly explain *how* each of the selected phrases helped the reader to understand what the writer's experience was like. Many merely paraphrased the phrase in question or repeated it, changing one or two words, or rearranged the syntax. Frequently, the 'explanation' offered was done for all three phrases without reference to the context. The phrases most appropriately commented upon comprised the sudden thud and knees buckling and the 'slow-motion nightmare'. Explanations of these in terms of shock, fear and even horror would have gained one mark per phrase for showing straightforward understanding and answers that clearly identified and commented on the use of such words as 'nightmare', 'slow-motion', 'thud', and 'buckle' would have gained a further mark. The 'fiery pool' phrase was occasionally explained in terms of its potential menace and gentle popping but usually as 'very hot' and the bright orange/black moonscape phrase was only explained in terms of its startling contrast by the most successful responses. A significant number of responses misunderstood the 'black moonscape' to be the sky and not the ground.

Only a small number of responses did not use the given phrases and selected others randomly from the text or, indeed, split one given phrase into three smaller parts. Others attempted to describe the feelings of the writer at this point in the passage, but only a small number successfully confronted the requirement to 'explain how the phrase helps you to understand the experience'. As mentioned at the beginning of this report, Centres are advised to focus on this aspect of the paper when preparing candidates for this examination.

- (i) The most successful responses to this question showed a secure understanding of the requirements of the 7 mark summary question with scores of 5 or more being quite common from those who focused closely on the need to identify points related to volcanoes and their effects on the Hawaiian islands. Less successful answers tended to focus less clearly on the stated topic and to include irrelevant details about the islands' population and culture or to focus too narrowly on the engulfed towns and related consequences to the exclusion of other relevant details. Another feature of such responses was that they contained much unnecessary repetition, for example by identifying details about creating new land and rising from the sea and so on and then repeating them, especially in relation to the black sand beach etc. The least successful responses tended randomly to copy sections of the passage without evidence of attempting to isolate individual points. There were eleven points (stated below) from the passage which could have been identified up to a total mark for the question of 7:

- 1 Volcanoes are powerful/have primeval power.
- 2 Islands are formed by eruptions of submarine volcanoes/thrust 6,100 metres up from the ocean floor.
- 3 Volcanoes die and sink back into the sea.
- 4 Some are 4,000 metres high.
- 5 Eruptions lead to a continually changing landscape/ can create (new land e.g. jet black strip of sand).
- 6 The craters can resemble lakes of fire/a desert.
- 7 Volcanoes are active/alive/erupt (into the sea).
- 8 They can destroy.
- 9 They can engulf/bury whole towns/no towns left on the southern coast.

- 10 They cause tidal waves.
- 11 The volcanic landscape is beautiful.

## Question 2

### Reading

The most successful responses showed a clear understanding of the requirements of the task, were written in a register that was fully appropriate to a leaflet for tourists and focused not only on the excitements of viewing and exploring volcanoes but also identified other details from the passage (such as the beaches and beautiful landscape) that would appeal to tourists with less adventurous tastes. Such responses achieved a balance of organising and developing passage-based material in their own words in a suitably persuasive tone. Less successful responses tended to lift quite extensively from the passage and, as a result, included a good deal of unnecessary material. The least successful strayed away significantly from the passage, often fuelled by their own holiday experiences in resorts significantly different from the Hawaiian islands; these responses were often both interesting and entertaining but revealed only a limited understanding of purpose. It was noted that some responses that over-emphasised the fear factor relating to the volcanoes may well have discouraged tourists from visiting the area!

### Writing

Only a very small number of responses contained error to the extent that their meaning could not be understood and, as has been the case in previous series, the overall standard of writing was of a pleasing standard for Core tier responses. Some responses were accurately expressed but extremely brief which meant that they denied themselves the opportunity of being placed in the top bands, whereas others were unnecessarily lengthy which led to errors of expression becoming intrusive. This could have been avoided with more careful initial planning. The most successful responses showed clear evidence of planning and checking work for errors, and there were some very good attempts at achieving an appropriate register and tone. Misspellings of straightforward vocabulary (for example 'intressting', 'truley', 'definetly', 'extordinary'), insecure sentence punctuation and misuse or omission of the apostrophe were the most frequent errors made in the less successful responses. There were also problems with the noun 'Hawaii' with uncertainty over whether it was an 'island' or 'islands' and therefore whether to use an article before it as in 'the Hawaii', or just 'Hawaiian islands'.

The most successful responses were well planned and organised through constructive use of paragraphs. Less successful ones tended to have a good opening paragraph but then introduce further material in a somewhat random fashion with the result that the response was out of balance, with too much information on the islands and limited focus on persuasion.

In conclusion, most responses scored within bands 2 or 3 as they were able to identify and, at least, discuss details from the passage and to acknowledge some attractions. Only a small number scored in band 4 and below. This was often because the answer was below an acceptable length.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/23  
Reading Passages (Extended)

## Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for reading (40 marks), although there were 10 marks available for writing: 5 marks in **Question 1** and 5 marks in **Question 3**. The requirements for doing well were to:

- give equal attention to all sections of each question
- explain points concisely, but in sufficient detail to show their significance in the context
- use your own words where appropriate; do not copy whole phrases from the original
- be careful to give only information that is focused on the question
- only make the point once
- give thought to the structure and sequence of the material in the response
- adopt a suitable voice and register for the task
- pay attention to length.

Key messages about how candidates can improve their performance for each of the three types of questions will be considered in greater detail below.

## General comments

Taken as a whole, this paper was similar in difficulty level to last year's paper and produced a range of responses to all three questions. Some candidates were able to access both passages and most were able to finish the paper within the time allowed. For **Question 1** and **Question 2**, marks in the top band were given to answers which demonstrated thorough use of the passage and a wide range of discussion on language. Candidates wishing to score high marks should have a wide, appropriate vocabulary, both to express themselves and to understand the use of language in the reading passages.

In **Question 3** some candidates managed to earn a mark in double figures by finding a reasonable number of points, but occasionally responses contained examples of lifting phrases and sentences from the passages rather than the use of own words. Less secure answers included repeated information, but phrased differently. It is important that candidates use their own words since to do otherwise suggests that they do not understand the wording of the original. On the other hand, when they rephrase a fact, the meaning should not change. It is vital that responses are not overlong, well beyond the one page of normal handwriting required. The mark scheme for Quality of Writing indicates the marks awarded where the response exceeds the permitted length. If a response was a whole or partial copy of the passage, the candidate would not score highly. Where a response was not all in own words, the mark was between 0 and 2 depending on the amount of copying. Some responses relied on listing of features for **Section B**.

There did not seem to be any common misunderstandings of Passage B. Passage A was open to a number of interpretations and some candidates seemed unsure of what to make of it. To achieve well, responses were required to develop and assimilate the material in Passage A for **Question 1**, to differentiate between the dissatisfaction deriving from the man's daily working life and the features of one particular night's journey on a train which had brought him to make a decision to change his life. It then also required a consideration of what might ensue if changes were not made.

While quality is more important than quantity on this paper, there needs to be enough of a response to meet the top band descriptors and for all parts of a question to be covered. It is essential that the skills of selection and modification are demonstrated in all three questions. In addition, there needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions. The importance of planning cannot therefore be over-emphasised. There was occasional evidence that some Centres now expect their candidates to plan first, with a corresponding improvement in the structure of such responses, especially in **Question 1**.



Most answers were in appropriate English. There were no marks given for accuracy in this paper. Some responses were affected by unclear or limited style, or over-reliance on the language of the passage. Some responses were within the recommended length guidelines and thus were focused and well-structured, but some were repetitive, which can come with excessive length. Some scripts were brief across all three questions, with a lack of coverage a consequence. A few candidates chose to make no response to any of the questions.

### Comments on specific questions

**Question 1: Imagine that you are the 'you' in the story. When you eventually get home to your family, you decide that you need to change your lifestyle. You write an entry in your journal, explaining why you have arrived at your decision. Write the entry. In your journal entry you should explain why you are generally dissatisfied with your daily working life, how tonight's journey has forced you to make your decision and the possible consequences of not making these changes.**

**(20 marks)**

Some candidates had difficulty appreciating that the 'you' in the story was a man in his thirties and that he travelled in a train. Most candidates understood that the task was to write a reflective piece later the same evening as the train journey, rather than a letter to a family member. Most responses showed an attempt to focus on the three bullets.

Better responses concentrated on the man's working life in the first part, citing the routine nature of his work, the long hours, tiredness and hunger in the evenings and the frustration felt, without merely lifting the sentence 'You are tired, hungry, frustrated'. Such better responses often also contained a range of factors about that evening's train journey which had brought about the life-changing decision, such as the train stopping at many stations, the unfriendliness or grumpiness of other commuters and the rudeness of the stationmaster when the narrator finally got off the train. The best responses tackled the encounter with the man in the yellow raincoat and the warning which seemed to be contained in the haiku he left on his seat. These responses attempted an interpretation of the haiku and drew conclusions from it. In response to the third bullet, better responses captured the man's feeling of being trapped in his life, that looking back on it in later years it would be seen as a mere existence rather than a positive experience, that he would become increasingly isolated from family and friends, with a resultant increase in stress, possibly leading to insanity or depression. Very occasionally a response would consider the possibility of being attacked or robbed at some future date.

Better responses were able to incorporate a range of supporting detail like the narrator's watch, the compartment he and the other man shared, the window, their reflections, that the man in the yellow raincoat was staring, the paper (not plastic) bag, and the narrator's final thought as he walked home of 'Enough is Enough'. There were plenty of other details which could have been woven into a response, like the rain on the window, the intrusive bells and lights, and the cityscape viewed from the window.

Some less confident responses did convey the central thrust of the story, that the protagonist had an unusual encounter with a strange man whose haiku prompted a decision. Some considered that man was a reflection of his own self. Others presented him as someone who had cut free from convention and perceived in the narrator a need to do likewise. Overall some of these responses were less successful because they did not deal with either the first or third bullet of the question and/or using virtually no supporting detail.

The least assured responses concentrated on the second bullet almost to the total exclusion of the other two, in some instances carefully avoiding any mention of the man in the yellow raincoat or the poem. Others used the passage as a springboard into personal soul-searching, some elaborating on what was seen as current or future problems in their own lives, for example to do with weight gain, failure to exercise, or plans to go to college before taking up a first job. Some of the latter type of response had virtually no relevance to the question or the passage.

Most of the marks for this question were given for showing understanding of the passage and for using ideas within the framework of the question's three bulleted sub-sections. Those who planned effectively ensured that there was no repetition between sections and that they were all given equal attention and coverage. The use of ideas demonstrates explicit understanding, whereas the use of detail is necessary to show close reading. There is, however, a difference between details from the text and wholesale copying of long phrases or complete sentences. Development proves implicit understanding. Responses need to convey all three levels of reading comprehension to attain higher band marks.

The first section of the answer required a focus on the man's daily working life rather than life in general. The first paragraph of the story mostly contains information useful in answering the second bullet point, for example the frequent stops at dull stations and the unsmiling commuters. It is possible that it is for this reason some responses moved straight to the second bullet without consideration of the first.

The second section of the answer required an appreciation of that evening's journey. This was the section where the most explicit understanding could be demonstrated. Some responses showed the candidates had experienced difficulty understanding the exact focus of the question, i.e. that it is about features of one journey and not events experienced over a period of time. Elsewhere, details were lifted from the text without it being made clear that there were points to be made, for example that a whistle blowing signals the train's departure from the station, without actually stating the point that the narrator had missed his stop.

The third section of the answer was the most implicit and any ideas from earlier in a response needed to be recast, so that, for example, finding the job boring which was an appropriate point early on in the response might become a fear of spending years trapped in a meaningless job. Once again, careful reading of the question would have revealed that actual plans for what the narrator might do in the future were not required.

The Writing mark reflected the fluency and convincing nature of the voice of the narrator. Better responses conveyed disappointment with the current situation and a determination that it should end, allied to fear of the future if changes are not made. A number ended with triumphal determination summed up in 'Enough is Enough'. Such characterful writing did not overwhelm the informative content or detract from the central focus. These responses were well-structured and avoided repetition.

Here are some ways in which this type of response could be improved:

- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three sections;
- answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to the form and viewpoint of the response;
- be aware of the main issues and themes in the passage and use plenty of detail to support your ideas;
- develop and extend some of the ideas relevantly;
- create a suitable voice, tone and style for the persona(e) in the response.

**Question 2: Re-read the descriptions of (a) what you see and hear in paragraph 5, beginning 'A light rain...' and (b) the man's actions and your reactions in paragraph 7, beginning 'The man has begun...'. Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.**

**(10 marks)**

Marks in the top band require precise focus at word level. The two parts of the question tended not to be answered equally well, with (a) often being fuller than (b). Some responses provided relevant choices, including imagery, in both paragraphs. There was some evidence that candidates stopped when they thought they had written enough, without considering the balance of their response. Many responses said something about 'clang' in paragraph 5, 'gaze ... frozen' and 'like a wild beast' in paragraph 7. Comparatively few picked 'buckled' and virtually no responses paired 'grow' with 'fading', or 'blinking' with 'unblinking eyes', both pairs of which constituted one choice each. Some responses might have included 'grow', 'fade', 'unblinking' and 'unblinking eyes', counting them as four choices when they were actually two.

A wide vocabulary is essential for scoring highly on this question in particular. Close reading is necessary in order for misunderstanding to be avoided. Weaker responses gave a commentary with quotations incorporated in it, and needed to examine the writer's use of vocabulary and imagery. Repeating language of the passage can gain no credit, as understanding is not thereby demonstrated. Naming literary or linguistic devices, even when accurately identified, attracts credit only when accompanied by an explanation of how it is working in this particular context. Candidates should avoid explaining an image in the form of another image. Some responses consisted of a paraphrase of each paragraph.

The first level in approaching this question is to identify words that have an extra layer of meaning, and the second level is to be able to explain why the writer used them. An example from paragraph 5 is the 'clang' of the bell which 'sounds loudly in your window'; weaker responses simply quoted it or said it is a loud noise usually made by pieces of metal hitting each other. Better responses went on to say that it is an unpleasant, disturbing sound demonstrating the fear the central character felt that the sound is coming through the window and is threatening him. Bells are a traditional symbol of death or summoning one to account.

Some responses were only a few lines long. Other candidates chose to use page 6 of the answer book for (a) and page 7 for (b). The length of response itself is no guarantee of a quality answer. However, a full page of writing is unlikely to produce a range of choices, with their explanatory meanings and effects, for each half of the question. One or two choices from each paragraph are not sufficient; the response would be considered to be 'thin' and therefore given a mark in Band 5 or below. A significant number of responses were limited to only three choices for each section, though there were many possible appropriate choices from each paragraph; a significant number of responses focused on only one or two choices per section.

Where selections occurred, they were sometimes of individual words and short phrases, each being treated separately, but some responses gave choices which were restricted to only one word when the effectiveness depended on two or three words being used in combination, e.g. 'waiting patiently, like cows' has a different and more subtle connotation than just 'cows'. Overviews were rare.

Many responses contained, in both sections, lists of choices or overlong quotations containing several choices, followed by general comments. Large chunks of quotation from one short paragraph do not demonstrate the skill of selection, and they can only be credited as one choice regardless of how many they contain. Some responses used the words of the choice in an attempt to explain its meaning or effect, e.g. for 'hair's breadth', it showed the distance between the men was a hair. Responses which relied on words from within them were not demonstrating clear understanding. Similarly, explanations which depended on other phrases from the passage did not show an appreciation of the choice, e.g. 'gaze ... frozen' explained as the man being unsure where to look.

The key to paragraph 5 (**Section (a)**) is that the sights and sounds are transitory and blurred, creating a disconcerting and dream-like effect in the dark. Some more successful answers focused on the depressing nature of the 'light rain (streaking)' the window, and the cars 'waiting patiently, like cows' given that the commuters driving the cars are little better than farmyard animals, docilely in a herd, demonstrating that the narrator is leading a depressing life over which he has little control.

In **Section (b)**, based on paragraph 7, 'like a wild beast' was often quoted but the incongruity in the context of a commuter train of a sudden transformation from a smiling fellow passenger to a predatory animal was rarely noted. 'Hair's breadth' and 'buckled' were rarely selected.

The following specimen response includes the selected quotations in the mark scheme, and fewer choices than this would be more than sufficient for the award of the top mark, provided that the quality of the explanation was high and consistent enough. This sample answer is given so that Centres and candidates can appreciate what constitutes an appropriate type of response to the question.

**(a) What you see and hear in paragraph 5**

*This paragraph creates the impression of impermanence and alienation. Raindrops create a veil between the man and the outside world as 'light rain streaks..' There is a smearing quality to 'streaks' like tears slowly seeping down cheeks – a sad image. At one point the man is aware the bells 'grow' and later they are 'fading'. Clearly bells neither grow nor fade, yet the moving train gives this surreal effect to the passenger as the train approaches them and then leaves. At the point where the train passes them, the bells 'clang', an onomatopoeic word enhancing the harshness and the fact they are 'in' the window is frightening as soon they might invade the carriage. There is then a disconcerting juxtaposition between the 'blinking' of the red lights and the 'unblinking' eyes of the car headlights. These headlights are full on, a stare, making the man feel uncomfortable. The cars are compared to '..waiting patiently, like cows..'. We associate cows with herds; they are not individual, and are also thought of as rather stupid. These cars (with their drivers) have no more sense than to behave in a controlled and herd-like manner. The writer is also, therefore, saying commenting on the unthinking and controlled lives the drivers must lead.*

**(b) The man's actions and your reactions in paragraph 7**

*In contrast the second paragraph has much action from both characters, one extreme and aggressive and the other uncertain and fearful. Initially the man is staring 'intently'. He has an intention, unknown, which provides suspense. In response the narrator's 'gaze (is) frozen'. His face muscles cannot move as if he has been turned to ice by fear or surprise. The other man now moves 'abruptly', a sudden, unexpected movement which disturbs. He 'rushes impulsively'. This fast movement is without thought, a contrast to the intensity of the stare earlier. Such a sudden change might indicate mental instability; the narrator could be in danger. The man 'leaps up', an energetic movement again suggesting some purpose. We associate leaping with animals and soon we are told he is 'like a wild beast'. The smiling man has become a predatory*

animal, one who cannot be reasoned with nor escaped. The response of 'throwing up arms helplessly' is a panic reaction, limbs flailing without any real hope of self-protection. The man stops for 'hair's breadth'. This is most strange. He has gone from sudden, fast actions to a standstill, yet there can only be a hair separating the two men. Danger has been narrowly averted but for how long? Finally the narrator has his legs 'buckled', like twisted steel. He has crumpled both physically and mentally.

Here are some ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- avoid general comments such as 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there' or 'this is a very descriptive phrase'. Such comments will not earn any marks at all.
- re-read the whole paragraph before making selections; choose the best and not those which happen to come first. Remember that you are not being asked to write about the whole paragraph but only about the language which relates to the particular question.
- your first task is to choose some words and phrases that seem powerful to you. Do not write out whole sentences but use single words or phrases of two or three words. Do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle.
- try to remember to put quotation marks around your choices. This makes it easier for the Examiner to identify them and makes it easier for you to focus on the exact wording.
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them.
- if you are not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning, in the context, for each of your choices. This type of response can give you up to half marks for the question if the meaning is accurate. Explain in your own words what the word or phrase means in the context of the passage.
- when you explain effects, think of what the reader sees and feels when reading the word or phrase. It may suggest more than one thing.
- learn to recognise images and explain them (but you do not need to know or give their technical names). Say what they convey within the paragraph, and how they reinforce each other, if this is the case.

**Question 3: Summarise (a) what tourists found memorable about 'The Palace on Wheels' and their tours, as described in Passage B; and (b) the sights and sounds outside the carriage window during the journey, as described in Passage A.**

**(20 marks)**

To answer this question successfully candidates needed to identify 15 points that were relevant to the question and to present them succinctly in their own words. This is an exercise in informative writing, which should be clear and to the point. There were 23 possible answers in the mark scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. This was the highest-scoring question for many of the responses. Most candidates were aware of the appropriate form, style and tone for a summary. Better responses avoided introductory statements and commentary and concentrated on factual summary, more or less equally balanced across the two sections.

**Section (b)** was generally more successfully done in terms of giving relevant points and adopting an appropriate writing style. Less effective responses concentrated on Passage B and were dominated by lengthy examples, e.g. the 'pink upholstery, silver-embroidered curtains, teak wall panels and traditional carpeting' which were lifts as well as being unnecessary to gain a point about internal decor. Some answers of this nature extended to nearly a full page in length for (a). Successful responses were the result of a methodical reading of both the passages. Better summaries avoided repetition and listing explanatory information, for example the details of the spacious accommodation. While it was acceptable to give the points in the order in which they appeared in the passage, more able responses changed the sequence so that related points could be grouped together. For example, in Passage A all the sights might be put together, followed by the sounds. Some candidates found it easy to identify relevant material in both passages and picked up a reasonable number of Reading marks in both sections. There was some lack of precision, for example the ways in which the steam engines of Point 4 might be memorable. Responses could have scored three separate points with regard to light/s from Passage A, but they needed to be clearly differentiated: thus Point 16 was to do with the changing of lights in different areas, Point 19 about the lights of the crossings and Point 17 for the reduction in daylight. Candidates need to be aware that this question is a test of the ability to summarise given information in a selective way: rain is seen in the passage, not heard; cars are stationary, not moving. Some responses did not always make it clear that the point was being covered, thus passengers disembarking at a station were seen yet the station was an accidental reference.

Less successful responses needed to be expressed in complex sentences with different beginnings rather than presenting points in lists. In Passage B, there are several long sections which are lists, to do with the steam engine, the decor, the extra carriages, the features of the historic cities and what constituted a



welcome on platforms. Candidates should be advised that comparisons between the two passages are required. Unusually, for this paper some responses to (b) became an attempted analysis of the text used to describe the sights and sounds, which would have been more appropriately dealt with in Question 2.

Candidates should be advised that responses should follow the guidance for length as responses longer than the permitted length will achieve low writing marks for this question. The expectation is a side of A4 of average handwriting (8/9 words per line). Responses which are 'excessively long' (i.e. more than a page and a half of average handwriting) score 0 marks for writing. Some candidates with very small handwriting clearly wrote at too great a length, even though their answers fitted onto a page; small handwriting can fit up to 16 words onto a line, and this must obviously be taken into account. Even where responses paid no attention to the length requirement, they rarely gained all 15 reading points, yet lost Writing marks. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the amount of material included in a summary, as well as to the language in which it is expressed.

Attention should be paid to the amount of copying from the passages. From Passage B the information about the suites in the train and the welcoming party on the platform was often lifted word for word or were very closely paraphrased; there was also some copying from Passage A of the 'fading lights of the metropolis' and 'the approaching lights of the outer suburbs'. These are all examples of wording that needed to be changed to show understanding. On the other hand, it would prove difficult to find an economical substitute in Passage B for 'Taj Mahal' and 'train whistles' in Passage A, and a paraphrase was not expected.

**Section (b)** asked what were the sights and sounds outside the carriage window during the journey. Some responses included what could be seen inside, for example, the reflection of the other man, or what could be seen later on, for example, the stationmaster and his newspaper. While no marks are deducted for adding in points which are not related to the focus of the question, the inclusion of extra points like these reduced the likelihood of scoring full marks, not only for the Reading but also for the Writing.

Higher marks for Writing are awarded where there are varied and fluent sentence structures, and just enough information is given about the points to convey each one clearly. Summaries which were written clearly, concisely and fluently, without long explanations or repetition, and in own words, scored the full five marks for aspects of Writing.

When reading the following specimen answer, candidates should note that the points are explained simply, and are also paraphrased into the writer's own words. The response includes all available points, but if handwritten it would fit onto a side of paper with space to spare.

### Section (a)

*Tourists would remember the beautifully and historically interesting cities visited on this tour, which had the added enjoyment of a lively and colourful welcome at certain stops, lunch in a palace, as well as a visit to the famous Taj Mahal. The train itself has many historical associations with famous people and the impressive engines which haul it have been named to stress associations with iconic Indian places. Externally the carriages are colourful and highly decorated. Rich decoration is continued inside, and guests would remember the spacious suites they occupied while being waited on by servants. Superb food and wines would be recalled. A range of extra carriages cater for different needs.*

### Section (b)

*The man in Passage A saw rain on his window, through which he glimpsed the changing cityscape of backyards, malls and housing. The lights in these areas came and went. It was getting dark so the red lights of the level crossing were obvious. Here were cars waiting for the train to pass. He watched passengers leaving the train at various stations. He could hear the noise of warning bells and the train's whistle.*

Here are some ways in which summaries could be improved:

- make points briefly, but in sufficient detail to show what they mean.
- use your own words as far as possible. Do not copy whole phrases from the original.
- write no more than one side of average handwriting; small handwriting will not deceive the Examiner.
- write informatively and never comment on or add to the content of the passage.
- be careful to give only information that answers the question.
- make a point only once.
- be specific; do not generalise.



# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

**Paper 0524/04**  
**Coursework Portfolio**

## Key messages

In order to aim for high marks in this component, candidates should:

- reflect in their writing their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them;
- demonstrate variety of style, use of language and genre in the three assignments;
- choose assignments that challenge them to write at the highest standard of which they are capable;
- write in fluent and varied sentences separated by full stops;
- proof-read their work carefully, as marks may be deducted for typing errors.

## General comments

There was a great increase in candidate entries for this component, particularly for Syllabus 0522. Many Centres successfully took the coursework option for the first time.

The moderating of this component was often a very pleasurable experience, and Centres are thanked for the hard work they undertook to provide the finished work. Coursework is a commitment and it is extremely valuable if it is viewed educationally, with the aim of making all its participants into better writers.

While the choice of tasks, much of the writing and the assessment by Centres were competent, many opportunities to gain higher marks were lost. The most successful Centres demonstrated the following:

### **Successful Practice:**

- There was an understanding that coursework provided an opportunity for candidates to learn to be better writers over a period of time, by expressing their own ideas and experiences of the world about them.
- After initial guidance by teachers as to the nature of tasks, candidates were left to write as individuals and to think with originality for themselves.
- Teachers monitored their efforts, checking for authenticity and offering general suggestions on early drafts, but remembering that their advice should not constitute corrections.
- Candidates were encouraged to proof-read their work, looking particularly for errors of punctuation. Common errors for correction were sentence separation, the use of commas, correct use (if any) of colons and semi colons, and the sequences of tenses.

### **Less Successful Practice:**

- Centres treated coursework as a way to get good marks, rather than as a course of educational value.
- Tasks were not always well chosen. For example, some tasks did not stretch the best candidates sufficiently, and there were some folders that contained work that had been submitted as controlled conditions for other Examining Boards and was not appropriate for this component.
- There was evidence that some teachers had taught candidates what to put into their responses which sometimes contained identical ideas and even in the same order. This was particularly true of Assignment 3.
- Checks on authenticity had not always been carried out, and drafts frequently had no indication of advice as to revising, editing and (in general) correcting. However, some drafts had been corrected in detail by teachers. This is not allowed.
- Some very badly punctuated work was submitted, and the final versions often lacked any annotation of errors by teachers.

Detailed advice concerning coursework and its educational aims and objectives is available in all published reports to Centres and in the Coursework Training Manual.

### Task setting

The choices of the assignments were generally appropriate. The best Centres gave a certain amount of choice or freedom once the parameters of each task had been set. This was most common in Assignment 2 where, for example, the description of a place might be set, then allowing freedom of choice concerning the nature and detail. Some Centres offered a choice for Assignment 1 between writing in normal prose, the words of a speech or a letter to a specific person. They then gave a list of possible topics, or left the candidates to choose their own. Where a single topic was set, or a very limited choice, there was often similarity of content, or some candidates were faced with a topic with which they found it difficult to engage.

Assignment 3 was a different sort of exercise, and it was perfectly feasible to set the same article across the Centre's entry, though it was common to provide a choice of three. Here it was important that the different articles should present the same degree of opportunity to identify ideas and opinions and that they should be similar in difficulty. Some candidates were disadvantaged by their choice of article. There was still some misunderstanding of what was required by this assignment.

The mark of a good folder was that all three assignments showed the same qualities of writing but that there should be variety of genre and style. This consistency could be taken into consideration when awarding the final mark.

The following lists of tasks were from one Centre that gave a good deal of freedom in the choice of topics:

- Candidate 1: The Bass guitar; my visit to Egypt; my response to an article attacking *Facebook*.
- Candidate 2: Designer clothes; the opening of a gothic novel; my response to an attack on sport.
- Candidate 3: Gambling; *The Window*; my response to the Prince Harry Las Vegas scandal.

### Assessment of coursework

#### Writing

The assessment of the folders was generally good. The most common reason for leniency in the marking was that the responses had too many punctuation and grammar mistakes. This was especially true where there were sentence separation errors. Writing that consisted of simple language and sentence structures was sometimes over-marked. Where the assessment was severe, it was generally because of the quality of the language, or the consistency of the work over the three assignments.

Because of the special circumstances under which coursework takes place, allowing time for drafting and redrafting and with access to spell checks, it was expected that accuracy would be complete at the top of the range. Accordingly, Moderators kept a record of punctuation and grammatical errors as they read the work. Sentence separation was the main area that required further attention, affecting the quality of the sentence structures, since commas rather than connectives were used to join sentences. A common omission in word-processed work was that of the comma to denote a division within a complex sentence. A third error was that of the apostrophe, often omitted or wrongly used. Fourthly, semi colons were sometimes used in the middle of sentences where there should have been a comma. There was overuse of the semi colon in some responses, and there was confusion between colons and semi colons. Finally, a very common error was the lack of control of tenses, particularly in Assignment 2. Good work was often made less successful by moving from present to past tense several times within a description or narrative.

Apart from the lack of error, there were two features of the very best work. One was an assured use of a wide range of vocabulary, where the choice of the word always defined precise meaning and where appropriate, engaged and entertained the reader. The range was immediately apparent and would be different in say, informative, expressive and argumentative writing. The other feature was the use of fluent, well-constructed sentences that used connectives to show the relationship of one idea or argument to another.

Less good responses used relatively simple vocabulary and the sentence structures were repetitive and did not create any effect for the reader. The least good responses consisted of a limited vocabulary, with sentences that were often single clauses or very simply joined together.

## Assessment of reading

The marking of reading was generally accurate, with most of the marks awarded between 5 and 9, equivalent to those awarded in Paper 3, Question 1. Where there was leniency, it was because the task had not addressed the mark scheme properly or because the choice of article needed to be more appropriate for the award of the highest marks. Occasionally, although a response engaged with ideas and opinions in the article, the quality of the counter-arguments or development was too simple for a mark of 6 and above and was more appropriate at 5.

## Use of the Reading Mark Scheme

The Band descriptions for reading were found in the syllabus *Appendix*. This required that the award of 9 and 10 marks was for 'analysing and evaluating several ideas and details from the article and developing lines of thought'. 'Analyse' suggested a detailed interpretation of what the writer says, and 'evaluate' suggested the identification of inconsistencies and bias. In Band 2 the demand was clearly not so great, and in Band 3 most of the response was taken up with summary with simple views. There was a considerable scale of difficulty between Band 3 and Band 1 that suggested that many marks should have been between 6 and 7. Responses at Band 1 often gave an overview of the article as a whole and assimilated their individual comments into a well-structured answer. There was sometimes a tendency to give 9 or 10 marks to responses that did not do this.

Overall, the assessment of the reading and writing together was realistic. Where candidates were not strong performers, many Centres gave few folders a mark in the top mark band and concentrated candidates in Bands 2 and 3, often bunching them at the borderline. It was here that there was some inconsistency and leniency. There was also a reluctance to mark in Band 4, with the result that there was some crowding at the bottom of Band 3.

## Administration by Centres

The work of the Moderators was not merely to scrutinise the quality of the work but also to make a number of clerical checks on the marks submitted by Centres.

The first document that was needed was **the Coursework Assessment Summary Form**, or CASF. This was required for all candidates and not just those in the moderation sample. The Moderator noted all the changes that had been made at Internal Moderation and also used the document to check the range of marks awarded for reading. The document also gave some guidance as to the marking of different teachers in the Centre.

The Moderator then checked the marks on the CASF against those on the copy of the **MS1** (or electronic equivalent). Where there was a discrepancy, this was recorded on a Coursework Amendment Form that was then sent to the Centre. A check was also carried out against the marks on the folders in the sample. There were frequent discrepancies that were discovered during these checks.

Copies of all articles used for Assignment 3 were required by the Moderator who had to read them before addressing the work. There were several cases where these were not supplied.

An early draft of **one** piece of work was also required. This was usually included and in some cases there was a draft for all three pieces of work. The Moderator needed the draft to make two separate checks, although this did not normally affect the marking of the folder.

Finally the regulations stipulated that each folder in the sample should be securely fixed and that it should not be in plastic folders, which made the handling job that the Moderator had to undertake more complicated. It was not always safe to use paperclips, and a few folders were not fixed together at all. The most convenient method was by stapling.

## Annotation

Many Centres were meticulous in their recording of errors on the final versions of the assignments and it was clear that the marks awarded reflected this. These annotations and the comments at the end of the assignments gave the Moderator confidence in the work of the Centres.

Good practice was to comment on content and structure, and style and accuracy, and to balance strengths and weaknesses for the benefit of each candidate's progress as a writer.

In some cases, there were few or no indications that errors had been taken into consideration in awarding the marks, or had even been noted and accepted as errors. Some work bore no marks or comments at all.

## Drafts

The best of the drafts included teachers' comments and perhaps candidates' comments as a dialogue. This constituted excellent practice. Many drafts were used to give guidance in order to improve work. A common suggestion by teachers was to lengthen an undeveloped response. Some sections of a story were perhaps too long or a climax was not sufficiently sustained. It was appropriate that a teacher should draw attention to such matters and leave it to the candidate to improve a piece of work. This constituted revising. An indication that a piece of work could be improved by changing the wording was an example of editing.

Most drafts however, were restricted to comments about corrections. Teachers were allowed to make general comments such as 'Please read through and add full stops between sentences', or 'check that you have used the present tense throughout this description'. They were definitely not allowed to make specific corrections on drafts, which could then be copied by candidates. It was expected that the responsibility for the correction of drafts lay with the candidates themselves.

## Authenticity

Centres will be only too aware that coursework is always vulnerable because candidates may copy material from a source that is not their own. In order to counteract this, it is important to plan the work so that it is monitored and the possibility of copying from elsewhere is diminished. The easiest way to do this is to set tasks that reflect the candidates' personal experiences and thoughts and to create the first draft in class. This can be checked. The next stage, presumably the second draft, can be done at home and can then be checked against the first draft. The final draft can be done in class, (or the second and third stages can be reversed). In any case, monitoring should ensure that teachers feel confident that the work is original.

## Assignment 1

In response to this assignment, the best writing always reflected the personal views of the writers. The more conviction with which the work was written, the more effective it was. It was, of course, perfectly appropriate to write in the first person, and this made a good deal of difference to the tone.

The practice of making this assignment an academic essay has become less significant. There were still some essays about abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment and most of these were very similar in nature and lacked any personal conviction or enthusiasm.

While some of the writing was impersonal, some of it had either a definite audience or an assumed one. It was useful to write in the form of a letter, an article or a speech, provided that the same genre was not used for Assignment 3.

Many Centres borrowed a task from another Examining Board and wrote pieces under the umbrella title of *Do not get me started...* Some of the results were very good and the writing was entertaining. Conversely, it was often easy to fall into the trap of writing a 'rant'. The danger was that there was an ineffective structure and that the language became limited in its informality. In the attempt to make points, the arguments were frequently not expressed firmly enough.

Another general title that needed a good deal of care was *'A Day in the Life of...'*. One Centre took an interesting set of professions, such as a forensic biologist, a lawyer and a nuclear submarine officer, did the necessary research and finally stepped into these persons' shoes. The result was excellent and the task successfully stretched the ablest writers. However, the original published articles for this genre are not always well written and contain a good deal of unimportant detail, such as what the person has for breakfast. As a result, some of these articles were weak in content.

Some Centres were still writing about the programme *Supersize me*, usually as a review. The feedback that candidates wrote was repetitive and not very original, and it is suggested that this topic should be avoided in the future.

There were also some leaflets. The danger here was a lack of opportunity to demonstrate extended writing. However, some were more extended and original, and the most successful were leaflets to guide candidates who were new to the School.

Most of the words of speeches were good, properly structured and developed, and contained interesting arguments on topics of importance to the writers. These were rarely 'rants', but attempted to persuade the supposed audience, while also informing them.

The following list of examples shows the sort of variety that teachers encouraged for this assignment:

*Young people are indulged and pampered*  
*Urban myths*  
*The scary world of surgery*  
*Healthy eating at School*  
*Women and the armed forces in my country*  
*Should you have robots as teachers?*  
*Beauty pageants*  
*A letter addressing gun crime*  
*The Paralympic Games*  
*Media violence*

## Assignment 2

This was an opportunity for writers to show how they could use a range of descriptive and creative language. The important thing was that the content should sound realistic, so that wildly violent or ghostly stories were unsuitable. The language should be appropriate for conveying ideas and images with accuracy.

Many candidates wrote descriptions of places that were important to them or which had stayed in their memory. These were frequently very good and were judged on how well they conveyed the atmosphere and details of the place. There were many descriptions of visits to other countries, which were again successful because they showed ability to record experiences and images that were different from those at home.

Another main category was the autobiographical fragment. These topics were frequently moving and realistic because they had really happened and were important to the writer. They often involved visits to elderly relatives or experiences with friends, perhaps tackling some new and testing challenge. Some candidates showed an ability to build a relatively small moment in time into a convincing and well-developed piece of writing.

The stories were more effective if they were based on something that the writers could understand within their experience. They were also better if they followed the sort of structure one expects from a narrative. Climaxes needed to be sustained, and an unexpected ending was always welcome to the reader. Many Centres had taken the advice to study a short story or two before setting the genre as an assignment.

The following is a list of successful titles used in folders:

*My dramatic day*  
*Stay strong*  
*What shall I do?*  
*A bright beginning*  
*Red Moon*  
*Grandma's bedroom*  
*The sombre wood*  
*The girl who seemed ordinary*  
*The magic door*  
*Diary of a slave*



### Assignment 3

Many of the articles chosen for this assignment were appropriate. However there were some exceptions as follows:

- Newspaper stories that just recorded events and did not discuss them
- Internet articles written in short, unstructured paragraphs, with much repetition and little argument
- Multiple articles, usually in twos or threes, that gave candidates too much to deal with
- Overlong articles of more than two sides of A4
- Whole literary texts (for example *Romeo and Juliet*)
- Advertisements where there was virtually no reading material

Most articles were controversial, contained at least some identifiable arguments, ideas and opinions, and were about themes that candidates could easily relate to.

Tasks were generally in the form of a responsive article, a letter or a speech. It was important that candidates confined themselves to their views on the arguments, ideas and opinions. The practice of writing critically about the language or the layout of the text had no place in this assignment and did not relate to the mark scheme. Candidates who took this path in their responses were generally over-marked by one or two marks for reading.

The best responses showed an understanding of the text as a whole and their responses were properly structured. Weaker responses consisted of a series of paragraphs in no particular order, providing several disconnected ideas.

Once the article for this assignment had been successfully chosen, it was relatively easy for all response to be marked in the top three bands for reading. The writing was good, sometimes the best on the folder, because candidates had the article to provide them with a structure, and frequently the words came to them more naturally and fluently.

The following list will give some guidance as to the type of topic that is suitable for this assignment:

*An article attacking private Schools*  
*Reality TV*  
*The English do not eat horsemeat*  
*Animal fur*  
*Too young to be a criminal*  
*Boredom does not exist*  
*The dangers of technology*  
*Computers dehumanise children*  
*An attack on Twitter*  
*Eroded childhoods*