

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/11  
Reading Passage (Core)

## Key Messages

- It is important for candidates to engage not only with the wording of each question but also with the connotations of key words within the passage.
- In **Question 1**, candidates are advised to take notice of the number of marks per question as this will help them to focus their responses clearly on how to achieve these – especially in the vocabulary **Question (1 g)**.
- Centres are advised to emphasise the importance of vocabulary building in the years leading up to the IGCSE examination and, in particular, the importance of morphology in helping candidates to achieve a precise understanding of key phrases.

## General Comments

- In general this paper appeared to be well received and allowed candidates of a range of abilities to demonstrate their reading understanding in **Question 1** and writing skills in **Question 2**. The paper and the tasks were accessible for the vast majority of the candidates. As in previous series, some of the more advanced vocabulary and the response to the third bullet point in **Question 2** were the most discriminating elements of the Question Paper.
- There was clear evidence that the subject matter of the passage was interesting and accessible although, in some cases, this interest resulted in an over-concentration on the sections about bears and dangers.
- Overall, the majority of responses to the Reading questions revealed that candidates had a secure general understanding of the passage about Kamchatka. As mentioned in the Key Messages section, it is of the greatest importance that candidates focus closely on the precise wording of the questions and attempt to ensure that they deal with specific details in order to produce complete answers. It is also important that they take note of rubric instructions, such as those indicating that 'own words' should be used to answer some questions, in order to give clear evidence of understanding.
- There was no evidence that candidates felt constrained by any lack of time in which to complete the tasks. Where there were questions where no response was given, the evidence was that this was caused by a lack of comprehension, rather than a lack of time.
- Most candidates wrote to at least adequate length in their responses to **Question 2** and many showed awareness of the requirement to use a spoken register for this task. The most successful responses swiftly established a convincing persona for the speaker and responded both imaginatively and perceptively to the content and implications of the passage, using quite sophisticated writing skills. Less successful responses to this question tended to be over-reliant on the content and language of the original, repeating, rather than developing details.
- Centres are reminded that from June 2015 there will be a revised format for this paper (details can be found in the 2015 Syllabus). In particular, there will be two reading passages with a summary question based on the second passage. From June 2015 the summary will be marked for both Reading and Writing, and Centres are advised to emphasise to candidates that indiscriminate lifting from the original passage will be penalised under the Writing marking criteria.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

- (a) This proved to be an accessible question for the candidates, with the majority securing at least one mark. The most frequently correct responses were that the writer and his companions were confronted by a large adult bear and that it was a mother that was separated from its cub. Fewer candidates made the equally valid point that the writer and his companions had intruded on the bear's territory although some showed understanding of this by relating the statement 'we were in the one spot humans should never be' to the question. Less successful responses tended to focus on the fact that the intruders were close to the bear or simply made reference to guns/weapons. In some responses, there was confusion as to whether the mother bear was looking at the visitors or beyond them. The more successful responses showed awareness that two reasons had to be offered in response to the question, reflecting that the layout of the paper was generally successful in guiding candidates with regard to both the length and format of the response. This trend appeared throughout the paper.
- (b) Most responses gained at least one mark by focusing on the idea of photographs being taken by the 'intruders', although some took 'huddled together' as indicating fear. Very few candidates referred to the actions of the bears, often interpreting *them* as the intruders, reflecting a misreading of the question and the passage.
- (c) Many responses focused on the area being unpopulated. At times this was combined with a sense of the size of the area. Fewer just referred to the fact that it was the size of the area which made gathering information difficult which was necessary for the mark to be awarded. With these answers, 'huge', 'very big', 'vast' and 'massive' were the main descriptions offered. Many responses, however, did not quantify the 'big' or 'large' sufficiently to gain a mark; others cited the size of the bear population as being the source of the difficulty in calculating the size of the population indicating a failure to grasp the significance of the question.
- (d) Most responses identified that the visitors were uncertain where to look or to point their binoculars. There was greater difficulty, however, in providing a clear explanation of 'frenzy', and often the attempt to explain the word consisted of simply repeating it (or by using the related adjective, 'frenzied') which gained no marks. The most frequent successful explanation was to say that the birdwatchers became 'very excited' at the sight of the sea eagles ('excited' without any qualification was not sufficient to gain the mark). Attempted synonyms such as 'happy' and 'shocked' did not gain the mark unless they were qualified but words such as 'crazy', 'astonished', 'amazed', 'in awe' 'beside themselves' were deemed acceptable for the excitement point.
- Some responses did not identify the requirements of the question appropriately, focusing instead on the sea eagles' physical attributes.
- (e) (i) A large number of responses successfully identified a relevant fact about Mount Koryaksky. Some misinterpreted the requirements of the question, however, offering information about the region ('300 snow dusted volcanoes') rather than the volcano itself ('last erupted in 2009').
- (ii) Only a small number of responses correctly interpreted 'decade' as meaning a span of ten years. In a significant number there appeared to be some confusion with the homophone 'decayed', with explanations such as 'worn away' or 'falling apart' suggested as a result. Some answered the question in a circular fashion claiming that the word 'decade' implied that the volcano had erupted a 'decade ago' whereas a significant minority thought that the word referred to one hundred years.
- (f) Most responses answered this question successfully, correctly identifying Alexey's rifle, flare gun and the electric fence as sources of protection. Incorrect responses included references to the bears' relative lack of aggression (compared with the American grizzly), their largely pescovegetarian diet or the metres of scrubland separating the bear from the visitors.

- (g) (i) As in previous series, the questions requiring explanation of vocabulary proved to be difficult, although it is encouraging to note that for both 1 (g) and 1 (h) far fewer candidates attempted to write about words or phrases that were not required by the questions. In general, responses were more successful in paraphrasing 'overdue', offering 'late' as the preferred synonym, than they were in explaining 'mauling'. An explanation of the latter word proved more difficult, with many offering 'attack' as an alternative, which did not convey the savagery of the original word and the severity of the potential physical injury. Many chose to paraphrase one of the words only whilst keeping the other in its original form.
- (ii) This proved to be a more difficult question than 1 (g)(i) and a number of candidates omitted it altogether. When responses were offered, many showed that they understood the word 'terrain' but few appreciated that it was 'impassable'. Having noted the impact of the prefix on the rest of the word, some, however, were able to identify the extremity of meaning, suggesting 'too hard to build on' or 'too hard to get through' as a result. This would imply that some Centres have profitably explored key aspects of morphology in preparing their candidates for the examination.
- (iii) In many responses 'positively' was correctly identified as an intensifier even if the meaning of 'menacing' had not been successfully explained, suggesting that some candidates had a grasp of grammatical relationships within the phrase, even though its precise meaning eluded them. In the more successful responses, 'very scary' was the most common phrase offered for which two marks were awarded. Many responses, however, completely miscued on this question, thinking presumably that 'positively' meant good/desirable/nice, and continued on from this misinterpretation to translate 'menacing' as 'worth visiting' or 'beautiful'.

Clearly candidates with an appreciation of grammar were often at a distinct advantage with questions such as 1 (g)(ii) and 1 (g)(iii). It should be emphasised that those who score most highly are those who engage directly not only with the meaning of the passage but also with the precise requirements of each question.

- (h) Full marks were very rare for these three sub-questions. Whereas many were able to offer a relevant paraphrase, relatively few were able to move beyond this by commenting further on how the writer's use of language helped to convey the nature of the bears' behaviour. Some responses used some of the wording of the question to focus their answer as in, 'This gives me the impression that they are laid back'. While this strategy was partly successful, it sometimes resulted in candidates commenting on their impression at the expense of giving a clear explanation of the bear's behaviour which engaged with the precise wording of the passage. Both elements were needed in order to gain full marks.

With regard to the phrases explored, most candidates understood that 'barging' indicated strength. Whereas 'strolling' was regularly understood as 'walking', giving, as one candidate suggested, 'an impression that the bear is relaxed and calm'; others interpreted the word as meaning 'patrolling', suggesting that the bears were guarding the perimeter, either in the search of predators or even looking for a way to escape which showed a less secure understanding of the passage. 'Gorging' was often correctly interpreted as 'eating to excess', although some interpreted it as 'goring', thus giving rise to responses which commented on the bear's vicious, deadly behaviour. 'Lumbered out from behind a bush' was the most problematic phrase for many as they interpreted this as an indication of the bear's predatory instincts and consequently missed the reference to the size, plodding nature and slow movements of the bear, and concentrated instead on inventing a sly bear, lying in wait for victims, and dashing/rushing out of the bush with homicidal intent. A few, perceptive responses saw that the four phrases complemented and reinforced one another to present a composite picture of the bear in its various moods.

- (i) Most responses gained between 4 - 7 marks for this question with many instances of full marks being awarded. The least successful responses came from those who apparently did not register fully that the summary required details of the *geographical* features of the area and consequently focused on such details as the size of the bear population and the flight time from Tokyo. However, most responses were able to identify appropriate geographical features, stating the location and name of the mountain as a minimum. The relevant points listed in the mark scheme were as follows:

1. A peninsula / Kamchatka Peninsula / a fish tail attached to the mainland / nearly an island
2. in Far East Russia / Siberia / Eurasia
3. between two seas / between the Sea of Okhotsk and the Bering Sea

4. very large
5. sparsely / unpopulated region / less than one person per sq km / half of residents (200,000) live in the area as a whole / the capital / 400,000 live in the area as a whole
6. has a lake / Kurilstoye Lake
7. has (open) meadows
8. (crystal-clear) rivers
9. no roads / impenetrable terrain
10. (designated) wilderness reserve
11. 300 (snow-dusted) volcanoes / 29 active volcanoes / Land of Fire and Ice / Mount Koryaksky is 28 km from the capital

## Question 2

### Reading

The responses indicated that most candidates seemed to have understood the passage quite well and were able to use much of its content as the basis of their answers to the set task, although some concentrated on creating an appropriate register at the expense of the question's reading requirements. Almost all responses were able to comment on what the writer enjoyed about the visit. Although many showed a good understanding of the passage, not all aspects of the question were addressed fully. Often one bullet point was addressed at the expense of the others, which meant that a top band mark could not be awarded, although nearly all responses fell into Bands 1 - 4 with very few in Bands 5 - 6 for either element of the question. Although the requirements of bullet points 1 and 2 were often addressed relevantly, bullet point 3 proved more problematic as despite referring to 'the need to maintain wildlife habitats' in their final paragraph, the subsequent information in many responses often reflected a lack of understanding of the phrase's implications. Some responses interpreted this bullet point as the need to protect oneself or the residents of Kamchatka from a potential bear attack. Others took the need to express information in their own words to extremes by giving details of trips to other locations, encountering a completely different range of animals, thus limiting the marks available.

Centres should continue to emphasise to candidates that, of the 50 marks available on the paper, 40 (i.e. 80%) relate specifically to Reading. It is therefore essential that candidates' responses are firmly grounded in the text under analysis. The third bullet point proved to be a key discriminator for the higher bands and its omission in some responses serves to emphasise how important it is for candidates to read the instructions for this question very carefully and to incorporate this guidance in their planning. Less successful responses to this question often comprised excessive lifting from the passage resulting in a lack of organisation, with random information about bears and volcanoes being lumped together with no clear reference to the guiding bullet point. The most successful responses seamlessly incorporated such references, usually in the candidate's own words, and included a credible conclusion to the speech as well as a suitable beginning, while at the same time sustaining a convincing oral register.

In general, the third bullet point proved to be successful in distinguishing the more successful responses with candidates referring to the fragility of the ecosystem, the significance of the salmon for the bears and the importance of animals enjoying their natural home. Less successful attempts remained focused on the view that 'wildlife habitats *should* be maintained' and did not develop their response any further than this. The least successful tended to repeat much of the passage, sometimes simply copying phrases and sentences with little sense of order or understanding.

### Writing

The talk format was sufficiently accessible to allow all candidates to write at length and most wrote enthusiastically, managing to include some hints of a spoken register through ellipses, parenthetical phrasing, tag questions and direct address and successfully tailored their responses to the target audience. The majority of responses achieved Band 3 or above. In the most successful responses, paragraphs were used confidently, particularly where the three bullet points were used as a structural guide and responses at this level contained vocabulary choices which were both pertinent and sophisticated. Less successful responses, however, revealed an absence of paragraphing with a failure to paragraph even when moving from one bullet point topic to another one. There were frequent spelling errors despite many of the misspelt words being printed in the passage and serious limitations in sentence structure (largely through comma splicing). Other punctuation marks – the question mark for example – were rarely used when needed. Many responses which were otherwise praiseworthy were spoiled by the failure to punctuate correctly.

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In conclusion, it would appear that this paper allowed for successful discrimination across the range of performance and that each candidate was able to respond to it at her/his own level. The overall performance was of an encouraging standard and the vast majority of candidates approached the tasks with sense and commitment and with clear evidence that they had been well prepared for the examination. Perhaps the key point to bear in mind for those sitting this paper in future series is to remember that 80% of the marks awarded for reading skills and concentration on these should be central to all preparation.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/13  
Reading Passage (Core)

## Key Messages

- It is important for candidates to engage not only with the wording of each question but also with the connotations of key words within the passage.
- In **Question 1**, candidates are advised to take notice of the number of marks per question as this will help them to focus their responses clearly to achieve these marks – especially in the vocabulary **Question 1 (g)**.
- Centres are advised to emphasise the importance of vocabulary building in the years leading up to the IGCSE examination and, in particular, the importance of morphology in helping candidates to achieve a precise understanding of key phrases.

## General Comments

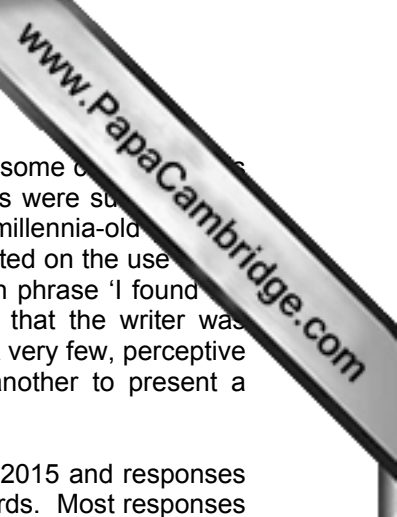
- In general this paper appeared to be well received and allowed candidates of a range of abilities to demonstrate their reading understanding in **Question 1** and writing skills in **Question 2**. The paper and the tasks were accessible for the vast majority of the candidates. As in previous series, some of the more advanced vocabulary and the response to the third bullet point in **Question 2** provided the expected discriminators.
- There was clear evidence that the subject matter of the insert was found to be interesting and accessible although, in some cases, this interest resulted in an over-concentration on the section about Tutankhamun and the building of tombs.
- Overall, the majority of responses to the Reading questions revealed that candidates had a secure general understanding of the passage about a visit to Nile and the Valley of the Kings. As mentioned in the Key Messages section, it is of the greatest importance that candidates focus closely on the precise wording of the questions and attempt to ensure that they deal with specific details in order to produce complete answers. It is also important that they take note of rubric instructions, such as those indicating that 'own words' should be used to answer some questions, in order to give clear evidence of understanding.
- There was no evidence that candidates felt constrained by any lack of time to complete the tasks. Where there were 'no responses' to questions, the evidence was that this was caused by a lack of comprehension, not a lack of time.
- Most candidates wrote to at least adequate length in their responses to **Question 2** and many showed awareness of the requirement to use an appropriately formal register for this task. The most successful responses swiftly established a convincing persona for the writer and responded both imaginatively and perceptively to the content and implications of the passage using quite sophisticated writing skills. Less successful responses to this question tended to be over-reliant on the content and language of the original, repeating, rather than developing details. Presentation of many scripts was sometimes untidy with frequent crossings out and poorly formed handwriting.
- Centres are reminded that from June 2015 there will be a revised format for this paper (details can be found in the 2015 Syllabus). In particular, there will be two reading passages with a summary question based on the second passage. From June 2015 the summary will be marked for both Reading and Writing, and Centres are advised to emphasise to candidates that indiscriminate lifting from the original passage will be penalised under the Writing marking criteria.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

- (a) This proved to be an accessible question for the candidates, with the majority securing the one mark available by identifying the time of day as being evening or sunset. The most common error on this question was where candidates put several conflicting times of day e.g. 'midday, afternoon and evening'. The mark could only be awarded where a candidate gave an unambiguous statement of the time of day.
- (b) There were three marks available on this question and most responses gained at least one mark by focusing on the ruins of Karnak. The most successful responses added some comment on the silence, the sense of freedom to wander and the thoughts that the writer might have whilst walking around the site. A number of candidates also identified that the writer enjoyed looking for signs of the original colour scheme left behind on the plaster. It was important in answering this question that the candidate made some attempt to select information and to put it in their own words – answers that simply quoted the whole of the first sentence would not be credited as this did not demonstrate selection or clear understanding.
- (c) Many responses focused on the expectation being caused through our over-saturation by Hollywood images of the region. To gain the second mark candidates needed to make some comment regarding the contrast between expectations and the reality of the actual experience when visiting the temple.
- (d) Most responses identified that the presence of a fast food restaurant at the site was unexpected or seemed out of place. There was greater difficulty, however, in providing a clear explanation of the idea that the presence of the fast food restaurant did not spoil the writer's experience of the site.
- (e) A large number of responses successfully identified the writer's feeling that despite the beauty of the paintings they were no more than paintings. Fewer candidates identified that the reason for this comment was that the expectation had been that there would be painted carvings.
- (f) (i) As in previous series, the questions requiring explanation of vocabulary proved to be demanding although it is encouraging to note that for both **1 (f)** and **1 (g)** far fewer candidates attempted to write about words or phrases that were not required by the questions and that the majority of candidates focused very clearly on the italicised words in **1 (f)**. Relatively few responses gained both marks for **1 f (i)**. To get both it was necessary to explain that there was a 'continuous line' and that it 'moved slowly'. Many responses got sufficient sense of this to gain one mark, but many candidates had difficulty in understanding the word 'trickles' as it was used here.
- (ii) This proved to be a difficult question and few candidates obtained two marks for it. The word 'starkness' was explained clearly by a large number of candidates (as 'bleakness' or 'emptiness'). However, the use of 'keenly' proved more complicated and only a relatively small number of candidates gave an acceptable explanation (e.g. 'strongly' or 'sharply').
- (iii) As with **1 f (i)** and **1 f (ii)**, a large number of candidates gained one mark for this question by giving an explanation of 'impossibly' (e.g. something that was 'difficult to believe'). However, fewer candidates found it easy to explain the word 'slight' and some did not offer any explanation of this word. Acceptable explanations here were: 'very small' and 'insubstantial'.
- (g) Full marks were very rare for these three sub-questions; there were many cases of candidates getting 3 – 4 marks, but few got above that. Whereas many were able to offer a relevant paraphrase, relatively few were able to move beyond this by commenting further on how the writer's use of language helped to convey the atmosphere inside the Temple at Karnak. Some responses used some of the wording of the question to focus their answer as in, 'This gives me the impression of a mysterious atmosphere'. While this strategy was partly successful, it sometimes resulted in candidates commenting on their impression at the expense of giving a clear explanation of the effect which engaged with the precise wording of the passage. Both elements were needed in order to gain full marks.

With regard to the phrases explored, most candidates understood that 'crumbling' and 'silent' suggested a place that caused the writer to reflect on the past although fewer gave any explanation



of 'evocative'. 'Free to wander in solitude' was generally well understood and some candidates commented on the writer's connection with idea of the writer being able to connect with the past. Fewer responses were seen exploring the phrase 'traces of original colours have managed to cling to millennia-old walls' and many again commented on reference to the remains of the past, few commented on the use of the word 'cling' which might be seen as implying strength or tenacity. The fourth phrase 'I found the temples magnificent and mysterious' was generally understood to suggest that the writer was overwhelmed by the experience or that what she saw was unusual or eerie. A very few, perceptive responses saw that the four phrases complemented and reinforced one another to present a composite picture of the temple ruins and the presence of the past.

(h) As noted above, this question is subject to a slightly different approach from 2015 and responses will be credited for a candidate's attempt to express key ideas in their own words. Most responses gained between 4 - 6 marks for this question and there were a reasonable number of instances of full marks being awarded. The least successful responses came from those who apparently did not register fully that the summary required details of the *architectural* features of the area and consequently focused on more generalised comments about the age and beauty of the temple or who copied indiscriminately from the passage. However, most responses were able to identify appropriate architectural features, and generally those responses that kept this focus scored in the range noted above. The relevant points listed in the mark scheme were as follows:

1. Sandstone/carved columns
2. more than one building/a 'complex'
3. Great Hall/chamber
4. 134 columns/capitals of columns in flower shapes
5. vaulted roof (now collapsed)
6. marble floor
7. statues (with faces)
8. a sanctuary
9. a courtyard
10. main walkway
11. stone floors (in temples).

## Question 2

### Reading

The responses indicated that most candidates seemed to have understood the passage quite well and were able to use much of its content as the basis of their answers to the set task, although some concentrated on creating an appropriate register at the expense of the question's reading requirements. Almost all responses were able to comment on what the writer enjoyed about the visit. Although many showed a good understanding of the passage, not all aspects of the questions were addressed fully. Often one bullet point was addressed at the expense of the others, which meant that a top band mark could not be awarded, although nearly all responses fell into Bands 1 - 4 with very few in Bands 5 - 6 for either element of the question. Although the requirements of bullet points 1 and 2 were often addressed relevantly, bullet point 3 proved more problematic either through not being addressed in any detail or because the candidate lost focus on the nature of the trip and focused more on more generalised aspects of the education of candidates.

Centres should continue to emphasise to candidates that, of the 50 marks available on the paper, 40 (i.e. 80%) relate specifically to Reading. It is therefore essential that candidates' responses are firmly grounded in the text under analysis. The third bullet point proved to be a key discriminator for the higher bands and its omission in some responses serves to emphasise how important it is for candidates to read the instructions for this question very carefully and to incorporate this guidance in their planning. Less successful responses to this question often comprised excessive lifting from the passage resulting in a lack of organisation with random information about sites and experiences in the Nile valley being lumped together with no clear reference to the guiding bullet point. The most successful responses seamlessly incorporated such references, usually in the candidate's own words, and included a credible conclusion to the letter.

In general, the third bullet point proved to be successful in distinguishing the more successful responses, linking the writer's experience to the potential for an educational experience for fellow candidates with clear reasons being advanced, while at the same time sustaining a credible and suitably formal register. Less successful attempts tended to repeat the details of the passage and say that other candidates would enjoy



the experience too. The least successful responses repeated much of the passage, some copying phrases and sentences with little sense of order or understanding.

### Writing

The letter to the Head teacher format was sufficiently accessible to allow all candidates to write at length and most wrote enthusiastically, managing to include some hints of an appropriately formal register and to use persuasive techniques appropriate to their target audience. The majority of responses achieved Band 3 or above. In the most successful responses, paragraphs were used confidently, particularly where the three bullet points were used as a structural guide and responses at this level contained vocabulary choices which were both pertinent and sophisticated. Less successful responses, however, revealed an absence of paragraphing with a failure to paragraph even when moving from one bullet point topic to another one. There were frequent spelling errors despite many of the misspelt words being printed in the passage and serious limitations in sentence structure (largely through comma splicing). Other punctuation marks – the question mark for example – were rarely used when needed. Many responses which were otherwise praiseworthy were made less successful by the failure to punctuate correctly.

In conclusion, it would appear that this paper allowed for successful discrimination across the full range of performance and that each candidate was able to respond to it at her/his own level. The overall performance was of an encouraging standard and the vast majority of candidates approached the tasks with seriousness and commitment and with clear evidence that they had been well prepared for the examination. Perhaps the key point to bear in mind for those involved with this paper in future series is to remember that 80% of the marks are awarded for reading skills and concentration on these should be central to all preparation.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/21  
Reading Passages (Extended)

## Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for **Reading (40 marks)**. In addition, there were up to **10 marks** available for **Writing**: 5 marks in **Question 1** and 5 marks in **Question 3**. Candidates are advised that in order to aim for high marks in this component they should:

- read both passages carefully, paying attention to detail
- read all questions carefully, paying attention to key words and the specific focus of each section
- give equal attention to each section of a question
- spend time planning answers before writing
- use their own words and not rely on the language of the passages to convey their ideas
- select just the material that is appropriate for the response to the question
- only make a point once in a response
- ensure ideas are fully explained in **Question 2** responses
- adapt writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- practise note-making, sequencing and concise expression.

## General Comments

Candidates' responses to this paper indicated familiarity with the rubric and general understanding of what was required in each question. Answers suggested that both passages had been equally accessible. Almost all candidates offered responses that at least attempted to address the task as set with very few writing less than the suggested length. Those who wrote significantly more than the question recommended might in many instances have been better advised to spend a little more time planning and editing their response to ensure they were not drifting off course. Instances where candidates had missed all or part of a question were rare across the cohort as a whole.

There were very few significant misunderstandings of the content of the passages, although at times details had been missed or misinterpreted. For example, in responding to Passage A **Question 1**, a number of candidates had evidently not noticed that the rats were *outside* the building and a few made no mention of the manager, Jed.

Copying was rarely an issue in **Question 1**, though lifting of key phrases was not unusual – 'welded shut' and 'flickered spasmodically' counted amongst the most popular. Those who found ways to incorporate these details through the voice of the response rather than the passage were not only demonstrating more secure writing skills but usually found it more straightforward to take their ideas further. For example, commenting that it was impossible to open the windows rather than simply stating that they were welded shut often meant answers could go on to consider the significance of that more naturally. Some suggested that this might make the dormitory uncomfortable due to a lack of fresh air, others that a lack of ventilation might encourage the spread of disease, or that not being able to escape could be a problem in the event of a fire. In both **Question 1** and **Question 3**, understanding the need to rework material to meet the demands of the task rather than repeat or replay it is important.

When answering **Question 2**, candidates must select appropriate choices of words and phrases and then go on to offer specific and detailed comments in relation to each choice. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to ensure they are giving precise explanations of the effects of those choices, demonstrating understanding of the writer's purpose and unpicking the images they have selected.

Whilst the number of choices should ideally represent a range in each half of the question, producing long lists with little or no effective explanation is to be avoided. Similarly, offering labels for devices used without considering how the choice itself is effective in context is self-limiting. Time spent choosing a range of the

most interesting examples rather than offering every word they thought could be significant. This approach resulted in more efficient explanation from some candidates and fuller exploration of strong points and weaker considered choices. For those who struggle with teasing out effects, considering the meaning of the words in context is a good place to start.

In **Question 3** many candidates managed to find a good number of points though not always balanced over the two passages. There was a noticeable improvement in candidates' use of own words though some tendency to include comment and unnecessary detail. In **Question 3**, candidates must be aware that whilst using their own words is important, the meaning must not change so that the summary is factually inaccurate or points become over-general. There were fewer examples of excessively long responses. Where candidates submit typed scripts however, it should be noted that the guidance of a page is for *handwritten* scripts. Typed scripts typically include far more words per line; this needs to be considered when answering **Question 3** and the length adjusted accordingly.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to remember that 20% of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. It is important they consider the quality of their writing - planning and editing their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, awkward expression or over-reliance on the language of the original passage. Most responses were written in an appropriate register and many were ambitious, if not always precise, in their use of vocabulary. Some candidates however wrote far more than the guidelines for each question resulting at times in responses that lost focus. Candidates should be advised that whilst **Question 1** requires an extended response, writing at great length can be self-penalising. Lengthy answers for **Question 3** suggest limited focus on the task itself.

A strong focus on the actual wording of the questions during the planning of each answer will allow candidates to ensure that there is no repetition between sections of a question, that they are all given equal attention and coverage, and that there is a coherent and logical structure to the response.

Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

**Imagine you are Mrs Wilkie. Write a letter to the Public Health Department of the city, demanding that 'Sammy's Place' be shut down. In your letter you should write about your concerns about the conditions at the hostel, the mismanagement of the hostel and the likely consequences of allowing the hostel to stay open. Base your letter on what you have read in Passage A. Address all three bullet points. Be careful to use your own words**

**(20 marks)**

Stronger responses to this question selected, modified and used well the relevant ideas from the passage to create a highly convincing case for closure of Sammy's Place from the perspective of the ferocious and forthright Mrs Wilkie. Her voice was often heard in expressions of horror, parental outrage and various admonishments about the fecklessness and unprofessional attitudes of the staff, as well as the inadequacies of the accommodation on offer. Strong answers were able to integrate supporting detail from the start and express firmly their displeasure at the conditions they discovered at the hostel, tethering any development to the passage. Mrs Wilkie's methodical criticism of Jed and his over-relaxed management style was often a feature of the very best answers. Rather than simply repeating the evidence of inefficiency around the hostel, strong responses teased out the separate aspects of management failure she may well have noted.

The best responses continued the attention to detail when incorporating their ideas for the third bullet and offered a convincing catalogue of likely disasters drawn from clues in the text, often with further development. For example, there were warnings of the faulty wiring leading to fire, made worse by inadequate escape routes from overcrowded dormitories. Similarly, a possible gas leak leading to an explosion was considered all the more worrying since ineffective management meant they were unlikely to cope in an emergency. There were many ways in which the hints in the passage might have been drawn out and developed. Better answers exploited a range of those possibilities. A feature of the strongest responses was full and equal attention paid to the three bullet points.

Mid-range responses made reasonable use of the passage, but tended to stick closely to the events and ideas as they were presented in the original. In these answers the ideas frequently appeared in the same order as in the passage, often using some of the same words and tending towards retelling the narrative of Mrs Wilkie's visit. Whilst there was some awareness of the need to address all three bullets, responses at this level were often uneven. It was quite common for candidates to present a reasonably convincing overview of conditions but then offer only the more obvious points in the remainder of the answer. Picking

up on there being no-one at reception, and a noisy party taking place late at night was straightforward; competent answers went further than this and explored a little more fully the management incompetence and irresponsibility before moving on to their warnings in the final paragraph. Those answers that offered a fairly good range of ideas up to the last bullet and then made only general assertions of unspecified health hazards and disasters – or restricted their suggestion to disease or the need to move indoors – also missed opportunities.

Relatively few answers failed to at least attempt to address the third bullet, though a small number lost the direction at this point and introduced mitigating positives like low priced Internet access and help with visa applications – points better suited to **Question 3** and suggesting a loss of focus on purpose. Others drifted into offering ways to improve the hostel or issued threats of prosecution – sometimes losing sight of the audience too and addressing the management or an imagined owner of the hostel.

A minority of responses did not write from the perspective of Mrs Wilkie, as was asked for in the question. Whilst this did not limit the success of a candidate's response in itself, candidates needed to ensure that they used an appropriate tone and persona for a letter of complaint. A few recognised the need to complain but chose to write as Sacha, a small number as Mr Wilkie and some began as Mrs Wilkie but signed off with their own names.

In some answers, careless reading was evident in the misuse of facts. There was some confusion concerning sinks, where the rats were, and what exactly was cracked. Some suggested the imminent collapse of the building having misread the cracks as being in the walls rather than the dormitory sink. Contrary to details in the passage, some had Mrs Wilkie staying at Sammy's Place for days or even weeks.

A few candidates lost both time and focus by inventing their own material – introducing disreputable owner Sammy for example, or even Ariana the sub aqua course teacher. A small number focused so completely on expressing Mrs Wilkie's outrage that they forgot to make good use of the passage.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity, fluency and coherence of the response and how well it used language to capture Mrs Wilkie's character and unwavering determination to get the hostel closed down. The better written responses often adopted a formal and over-bearing tone, using the overwhelming evidence in the passage to support her purpose. Responses frequently included language appropriate for Mrs Wilkie's character and status. Many were firmly expressed and convincing.

### Advice to candidates on Question 1

- read the details of the question carefully to determine its voice, style and purpose
- select the most appropriate ideas from the passage and modify to suit the task
- plan the answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- extend and develop a number of the ideas relevantly
- create and maintain a suitable voice, tone and style for the persona in the response.
- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- use own words rather than repeat material from the passage

### Question 2

**Re-read the descriptions of (a) the dormitory in paragraph 5, beginning 'Her dormitory was actually rather unpleasant...' and (b) Mrs Wilkie in paragraph 8, beginning 'Later that evening, Sacha suddenly became aware ...'. Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.**

**(10 marks)**

Credit is given in **Question 2** for the ability to select interesting or unusual examples of words and phrases relevant to the focus of the question – in this case the dormitory in part a and Mrs Wilkie in part b. Very few candidates were unable to suggest any relevant choices. Many were however less precise or selective than they needed to be, diluting the evidence that they had understood where language was being used for effect. Candidates are directed to the relevant paragraphs and so must show that they are selecting examples deliberately rather than happening upon them chronologically by offering 'choices' every few words in each paragraph. Choices often needed to be more carefully targeted. There were frequent examples of putting too much into one quotation and consequently key words within the choice were not considered. For example, 'encrusted with years of dead flies' was often identified as worth discussion but 'years' and 'dead flies' were discussed at the expense of the more interesting choice of 'encrusted'. A few candidates

recognised the general humour of the passage and saw a nice irony of the usage, comparing jewels.

Responses that discuss the specific meanings of the relevant choices they select are credited. Those that go on to consider associations and connotations in relation to those choices are beginning to show a deeper understanding of their effects in the context of the passage. The strongest answers offer clear evidence that candidates have understood how the language is working through precise selection of a range of relevant choices in each half and close consideration of effect.

Whilst many candidates were able to offer a number of choices plus at least some comment in each half, explanation was often better in one half than the other. In mid-range answers, whilst choice was often reasonably secure, the explanation was less so. For example, 'welded shut' was frequently selected with the assertion it 'meant that the room was like a prison'. Some better responses explained their way to that point. For example, some proposed that 'welded shut' suggests it is as if the window has been permanently and deliberately sealed, like metal stuck together using heat so that it is one solid piece and can not be opened at all, hinting that you would not be able to escape from the room and were being imprisoned. For higher marks, candidates need to work to explain how exactly they have arrived at an interpretation rather than offer partial explanation of their ideas.

Many candidates used terms that suggested they were going to discuss language – semantic field, association and connotation – but made only very general suggestions in relation to their selected examples. Attempts to feature spot by some candidates also lead to inappropriate choices at times – for example, offering shame, guilt and annoyance as a tricolon missed the point that it was referring to Sacha not Mrs Wilkie and was not therefore a relevant choice.

Weaker responses tended to offer and repeat slight or general observations. Some explained the significance of the details themselves rather than the way they were described. For example, a number suggested the flickering light bulb was significant as it showed neglect – a valid point for question one – rather than explaining the meaning or effect of the words 'flickering' and 'spasmodically.'

Candidates frequently tended to do better on part **b**, where they responded with more precision to examples of language linked to the military/weaponry. They were often less able to tease out precise effects of the geographical images in part **a**. Dealing with the images of the map, meandering rivers and mountain ranges imaginatively could have produced more thoughtful comment and helped to move candidates on from general comments that the sink was disgusting and dirty. Better responses considered more than one aspect of an image and were not satisfied with a single association.

**The following response from a candidate in this examination series is not intended as a model answer and might well have gone further, but offers an example of an appropriate answer to this question.**

**(a) the dormitory in paragraph 5**

*Overall the dormitory is described as unhygienic and dirty as it seems it has been for some time. The images 'relief map', 'river like cracks meandering' and 'mini mountain ranges' create the effect of the sink being like a challenging physical landscape which has to be navigated. Relief map means a map showing the different contour heights of the area and it means that the reader imagines the toothpaste being much higher and larger than it actually is to exaggerate the disgusting ridged nature of the sink. The river like cracks mean small fractures in the sink which seem so extensive and large are meandering or winding through the sink again exaggerating how run down and broken the sink is. Meandering is a verb personifying the cracks to try to emphasise that the sink and the hostel are going downhill. Mini mountain ranges means small bumped areas that seemed to have been formed by powerful tectonic activity and mountains have connotations of being vast giving the effect that the tooth paste must have accumulated over a huge amount of time to have ended up this large*

*The windows are described as welded shut. This means permanently closed and un-openable but welded has connotations of iron and steel manufacture exaggerating how strongly it was shut, how long it has been closed for and also creating an image of someone deliberately doing this. Encrusted extends this image, meaning stuck down on something or grown on something and sounds permanent linking back to how long this neglect has gone on for. The light is described as having flickered spasmodically. This means the light blinked on and off – but the sound flickered makes it almost onomatopoeic as it sounds like the movement of a candle spasmodically also has*

*connotations of spasms, uncontrollable and random movements emphasising how irritating this light is.*

**(b) Mrs Wilkie in paragraph 8**

*Overall Mrs Wilkie is described as overbearing and combattative – very unpleasant. The words ‘commanded’, ‘demanded’ (mentioned twice for emphasis) and in readiness for battle create a semantic field of control and awaiting an argument. Her attitude being linked to a battle, meaning a war of opposing enemies with lots of death is an exaggeration to portray how cross and fuming she is. Commanded means requests or tells someone that they do not have a choice but to obey which gives the effect that Mrs Wilkie is bossy and controlling. Demanding has similar connotations meaning forcibly asking. Mrs Wilkie’s eyes are described as ‘blazing’, ‘laser eyes’ and having ‘pinpointed’ Sacha. This creates the effect that she is all seeing and that even her gaze is strong. Blazing means burning strongly which emphasises how energised and forceful she is as it has connotations of fire – a force to be reckoned with. ‘Laser eyes’ continues this. A laser can be used in medicine or destruction for malicious purposes. It has connotations of being precise and yet potentially painful. It is as if her eyes can scan like a computer to find who she wants dehumanising her. ‘Pinpointed’ means she has identified Sacha’s location exactly and sounds like the language of combat again. She also hurled her luggage which means to throw with force creating an image of her tossing the bag a great distance. Thunderous compares the woman’s voice to the sound of a whole violent storm exaggerating her anger yet again and making her seem as a threatening or scary figure*

**Advice to candidates on Question 2**

- focus on the question carefully to ensure that all choices offered are relevant
- re-read the paragraphs before making final selections in each
- choose a range of words and phrases that seem powerful.
- do not offer long quotations, or lists of shorter quotations, with a general comment
- remember to identify choices clearly using quotation marks
- avoid just repeating the same explanation – if there is a pattern, consider how each choice adds to it exactly
- avoid repeating the language of the choice in the explanation
- if unsure of effect, try to at least give the meaning in context for each of your choices
- do more than just spot literary devices or techniques- explain how examples found are working in context
- to explain effects, consider the layers of meaning words can have
- include images from each paragraph, and try to explain them.

**Question 3**

**Summarise (a) the reasons why travellers might use hostels, as described in Passage B; (b) what back-packers may appreciate about Sammy’s Place, as described in Passage A.**

**(20 marks)**

To answer this question successfully, candidates needed to identify fifteen points that were relevant to the question and present them fluently and concisely, using their own words as far as possible. Writing for Question 3 needs to be informative, clear and to the point. There were twenty-three content points available in the mark scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. The content points were evenly spread across (a) and (b). There were very few examples of wholesale copying and the majority of candidates attempted to convey relevant material using their own words wherever possible.

Candidates avoided note form on the whole, though many offered answers that dealt with one point per sentence and often became list like as a result. Combining similar ideas is one way to help avoid this and improve the fluency of responses- for example, ‘Travellers may appreciate the cheapness of both the accommodation and access to the Internet.’ Planning a route through the answer and organising content ahead of writing the prose response proved helpful to a number of candidates who scored well as a result. Those candidates who used the same order and organisation of the text often included unnecessary examples of the same idea, repetition of points and irrelevant material as a result. For example, it was not unusual for responses to give details of the history of Youth Hostels from Passage B – unhelpful when identifying reasons in the present for visitors using hostels. A number of weaker answers wrote unselective responses that were too long in part a, leaving limited space for their answer to part b. Others wrote in miniscule handwriting in an attempt to write no more than a page.

Strong responses avoided writing introductory statements and making comments, concentrating on a factual selective summary, more or less equally balanced over the two sections and comfortably within the length guidelines. Passage B contained a number of examples which candidates needed to condense to a single point, for example, learning unusual or specialist skills. In Passage A, a significant degree of selection was required to exclude unnecessary information and ideally the style adopted needed to be far more informative and objective than the original passage. The strongest answers did this successfully.

**Produced by a candidate in this examination series, the following response makes over fifteen Reading points. It offers an example of how a successful response may be presented. It is not intended as a model answer and indeed might well have been further improved.**

**(a) the reasons why travellers might use hostels**

*One reason why travellers might use hostels is that they exist in many countries around the world in many different locations such as tourist destinations, large cities and cut-off locations where other accommodation might not exist. Hostels can be aimed at different groups of people not only School children but also travellers and those at busy festivals and sporting events. Some hostels provide travellers with a unique experience by being situated in a historical building or a building that has been specially renovated for a specific purpose such as wildlife observation. Similarly many hostels serve as a base for outdoor activities and some run special activities due to their location. Not only do some hostels have modern decoration and unique meals but other modern conveniences include free access to the Internet and safes in single bedrooms.*

**(b) what back-packers may appreciate about Sammy's Place**

*One thing that backpackers may appreciate about Sammy's Place is that not only is the accommodation cheap but Internet access is available at low cost and free food is available from a box in the kitchen fridge so living costs are low. Furthermore, backpackers are not obliged to do chores such as washing up and laundry and are offered money to clean the hostel. The hostel management do not mind and in fact take part in parties with loud music and there are no rules about bedtimes. The hostel is convenient for relatively cheap and frequent bus excursions also having a noticeboard from which backpackers can learn about jobs in the area*

Less successful responses did not adopt the correct focus for this question, sometimes presenting **Section (b)** as an account of Sacha's experiences of Sammy's Place or including the drawbacks of Sammy's Place. Some lost focus on the passages and the task – for example explaining at length why young people appreciate Internet access. In responses to **Section (a)** there was some copying of the phrases 'doing chores to keep down costs', 'outdoor pursuits like hill-walking, windsurfing and bike touring' and 'guests are able to learn specialist agricultural techniques' despite these phrases being easy to paraphrase to demonstrate understanding. Occasionally candidates offered indistinct or blurred points in less fluent English as a result of trying unnecessarily to avoid using any words from the passage at all - the free food box became the 'complementary nourishment container'.

**Advice to candidates on Question 3**

- read the question carefully
- re-read the passage after reading each part of the question and identify the precise information required
- plan your answer - list relevant points in as few words as possible
- read through your list of points and organise them - linking any points that are similar or the same
- write up your answer in full sentences – some of which include more than one point
- do not write an introduction or conclusion
- aim to include at least fifteen points balanced over both halves of the question
- use your own words as far as possible but be careful not to lose the sense of the point in hand
- do not copy whole phrases from the passages
- write no more than one side of average handwriting
- do not add to the content of the passage
- make each point only once.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/23  
Reading Passages (Extended)

## Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for **Reading (40 marks)**. In addition, there were up to **10 marks** available for **Writing**: 5 marks in **Question 1** and 5 marks in **Question 3**. Candidates are advised that in order to aim for high marks in this component they should:

- read the passages thoroughly, remembering to take account of the information at the top of each passage.
- read each question carefully
- adopt a suitable voice and register for each of the tasks
- plan answers to target the relevant points for each bullet in **Question 1** and the required focus for each part of **Question 3**
- give equal attention to each section of each question
- focus on the structure and sequence of each answer
- make each point once only in an answer
- avoid copying whole phrases or sections of the passages, and use own words as much as possible.

## General Comments

Many candidates were able to respond appropriately to the passages, showing some enjoyment of the 'wildlife' topics.

Candidates showed understanding of the basic requirements of each question. The use of time was good overall and there were few instances where answers to individual questions were not offered.

To do well in **Question 1**, candidates need to select, modify and develop relevant ideas from the passage, including a range of supporting detail as evidence of close reading. Most candidates were able to show at least some attempt to focus on the three bullets. Stronger answers worked to balance all three bullets, seeing events as if through Tom Murphy's eyes and using rather than replaying or retelling the material.

For **Question 2**, candidates must make appropriate choices of words and phrases and should offer specific and detailed comments about these choices. For marks in the higher bands candidates need to explore and explain the effects of the choices, demonstrating sound understanding of the writer's purpose. The answer should be written in prose and there was negligible use of the restricting 'grid form' of answer this series.

In **Question 3**, there were few excessively long responses. Responses at times needed to be more focused however. Candidates need to avoid including unnecessary material, copying the passages and repeating points made earlier in the answer.

The skills of selection and modification of the material are at the heart of this paper; candidates showed their ability to do this at varying levels over the three questions, each testing a different aspect of reading ability.



## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

**Imagine that you are Tom Murphy. Write a journal entry for the day you took your friend to see a grizzly bear in Yellowstone Park. In your journal entry you should explain what you knew about this bear and its whereabouts, the risks and possibilities once you had found the bear and what you think about your friend's reactions and behaviour that day. Base your journal entry on what you have read in Passage A. Address all three bullet points. Be careful to use your own words**

**(20 marks)**

Having read through the passage, candidates need to understand that they must manipulate the viewpoint, so that Tom Murphy can recount, in his journal, the events of that day and behaviour of his friend. This first question requires a 'shift of viewpoint,' testing the skill of candidates in using what they have read. Those who did not 'become' Tom recounted the events of the passage with little modification and were not able to address the third 'bullet' point, thus missing the opportunity to score higher marks.

It cannot be emphasised enough that careful reading of the instructions and the helpful information preceding the passage will aid candidates to focus their responses correctly. Many were able to write as Tom Murphy, the wildlife expert, showing off his knowledge and his disapproval or amusement at his friend's behaviour. They developed ideas about the friend's fear of bears: the danger of having no trees to climb up if they were chased by an aggressive bear, or his friend's muffled laughter which could have awoken a sleeping bear with an acute sense of hearing. These examples were sometimes given by candidates and count towards 'character' for Tom and the third bullet point. Other points candidates liked to use were the friend's horror of finding the porcupine quill in bear dung and the awesome crunching of bison bones. With these latter examples, it was important that they were used to show the friend's fear or amazement, bullet point three. This can be the difference between developing the given material according to the question and a recount of the story.

Candidates sometimes went into the field of creative writing which would not attract any extra marks, perhaps speaking of tracking friendly bears with groups of friends or giving 'teddy bear' characteristics which were far from the implications of the text. Some responses merely rephrased many of the events in the passage or copied whole phrases, sentences or even paragraphs, attracting fewer marks as a result.

The best answers balanced the three sections of the task. They could take on the character of Tom, making the comments of a wildlife expert and having a sense of authority. 'Tom' could talk knowledgeably about knowing where to find the grizzly, its unpredictable habits, strengths and weaknesses, thus covering the first two 'bullet points.' The third bullet point requires more interpretation of the passage as 'Tom' must comment on his friend's behaviour at each stage of the day.

Stronger responses were able to absorb the material, select and integrate the ideas into a 'wildlife expert's' journal without relying on the format of the passage. These are high-order skills.

Mid-range responses were able to use the passage reasonably well, showing similar features but without such sustained development; they relied more on the order and leaned on the wording of the passage. Here, the first section often predominated with fewer ideas presented for the second and third bullet points. A method for such candidates to expand their ideas would have been to take on the persona of Tom Murphy with conviction, trying to imagine events through his eyes. Using the listed sections or bullet points as a focus, the candidate might have selected details from the passage and considered Tom's thoughts on each point.

Opportunities for expansion of these sections were missed; for example, having understood that the writer of the passage has 'spent so many sleepless hours being terrified of a grizzly bear,' Tom's journal could show growing impatience or amusement as his friend is afraid of being attacked, shocked by the bear being capable of eating a whole porcupine, cringing at the crunching of bison bones, not coming to get a closer look when the bear sleeps, giggling and finally napping instead of appreciating the spectacular bear.

Methodically using the events with the focus of the bullet points will help candidates to make a full response firmly based on the text. Candidates should be encouraged to realise that their work may well be lively and interesting for someone to read, and to think what they themselves would like to read in such an account. In this paper, a journal entry was required; this is less formal than a report and is set in the modern era. These are additional factors that candidates can use in their answers.

The least successful answers retold some of the events unselectively, only repeated the given information in the second section, or were thin in content. Perhaps the second or third sections were not mentioned. Some invented endings, 'back' stories, or even events and different characters. None of these is necessary. There could be confusion of events and details due to careless reading; for example, when the porcupine's quill in the grizzly dung was thought to be a useful weapon in case the bear attacked.

This mark for writing is given for overall style, including structure and order of the writing. Clarity of expression, appropriateness, and fluency are included along with convincing character and sound structure in the higher bands. The frequency and quality of explanation is a further factor. Candidates who made an attempt to create the voice of Tom Murphy, the wildlife expert, could attract a higher mark.

### Advice to candidates on Question 1

- read the question carefully to determine its voice, style and purpose
- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- answer in your own words, adapting material from the passage to make it an appropriate response written in the required style
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- select the most appropriate ideas from the passage
- develop and modify some of the ideas relevantly
- create a suitable voice, tone and style for the persona in the response.

### Question 2

**Re-read the descriptions of (a) the sunrise in paragraph 1, beginning 'The sun was rising ...' and (b) the bear in paragraph 4, beginning 'When we got there ...'. Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.**

**(10 marks)**

The response is written in continuous prose thus enabling the candidates to have sufficient room to express their ideas about the words and phrases. Marks are given for the ability to select these as specified in the question and then to describe how they work in context. This involves the ability to recognise images and explain any connotations they hold. Recognising devices such as metaphors or assonance only attracts marks where the candidate can explain their usefulness.

Marks are awarded for the selection of appropriate phrases in both sections. More are available for explanations of their meanings and up to 10 in total for demonstrating understanding and exploration of the effects created by the writer. This is perhaps for some candidates the most demanding question on the paper as they require good reading skills and a wide vocabulary in order to give added meaning to their explanations.

Understanding how a writer uses devices, such as metaphor, personification or simile can improve answers, but only if a candidate can show what the device provides to a reader, how it works within the context. Naming devices alone does not attract marks.

Precision and close analysis of the words is the key to success in this question. Candidates should avoid generalisations such as 'it creates an effect on the reader,' or 'this caused the reader to read on.' Comments about the uplifting beauty of the sunrise or the character of the bear would not attract marks unless accompanied by selected phrases and explanations to support them. Ideas beginning, 'This gives the impression that...' have to include *how* and *why* the impression is given or they will not progress the answer further.

The best answers selected their examples with care, making sure they fitted the question. It is necessary for candidates to produce an answer which is balanced between the two parts and to discriminate between a good choice and a poorer one. These answers, in A for example demonstrated an understanding of the writer's use of colour and painting imagery and the ideas associated with liquid movement given in the use of 'spilled,' flowing gently,' living expanse of water,' and 'rippling.' These high quality comments would be continued consistently into part **B** to achieve a high mark. Candidates could offer an overview of each section, bringing together their ideas as a whole.

Mid-range responses gave a mainly suitable selection with a mixed range of explanation, possibly focusing on effects at times. Single words or overlong phrases might be included which made the responses imprecise. An overview of the paragraph could be given, correctly saying, for example, 'the sunrise is a beautiful mixture of colours that moved as the clouds blew along the valley,' but not supporting this idea with a selection of phrases from the text, so gaining little credit.

The least successful answers had a sparse selection often mixed with unsuitable phrases. This was sometimes caused by lack of focus on the question, so, for example, 'The sun was rising over the Absaroka Mountains,' was used in (a). Explanations were slight, sometimes repeating the words of the text such as, 'The sunrise was like a moving watercolour.'

**Though not intended as a model answer, the example that follows gives an indication of how candidates were able to respond appropriately to the question**

**(a) the sunrise in paragraph 1**

*Throughout this paragraph the author creates effects by using certain words and phrases to describe the sunrise. Firstly he says, 'The light that spilled,' giving an image of light that is thick or dense, almost like water. The word 'spilled' emphasises this water image, giving us the idea there is so much beautiful light that it overflows and pours out.*

*Describing light as, 'shadowed and broken,' gives us both a physical and metaphorical image. Firstly physical, as the light is seen at different angles and causes the clouds to have shadows, and then metaphorically it tells us how the light has been split and broken from its original form.*

*The author starts to introduce a theme of Art by describing the sunrise as, 'a moving watercolour.' This tells us that its beauty and rich colours are not overpowering but like watercolour paint in a picture which looks translucent yet vibrant. The next addition to this theme comes from the phrase, 'waves of subtle pastels,' showing how the colour is again softer or 'subtle' but still bright. This adds to the water theme by using the word, 'wave.' 'Living expanse of water,' tells us how the sunrise has made the valley bright and alive as it moves with colours on it. The image of the sunlight hitting the waves making it, 'a rippling mirror of shimmering pink and gold,' shows us the movement of the reflection full of beautiful bright colours which change as the wind blows gently. The phrase, 'golden August pastures,' repeats the rich gold colour and tells us it is harvest time and the pink colour gives a warm feeling.*

**(b) the bear in paragraph 4**

*The writer starts by describing the bear's coat as, 'glistening black,' showing its natural beauty and how the light makes it almost shine. The writer extends this image of the shimmer of the bear by describing how its coat 'scintillated in the sun.' He tells us how the rich fur coat of the bear reflects and gleams in the sun making the bear stand out.*

*'Massive' helps us to understand the huge size and potential power of the bear. The writer says, 'his claws were almost delicate.' This could describe an almost gentle side to the bear yet this is a contradiction as these claws are powerful weapons capable of tearing and ripping flesh. 'Bone white' shows the dense white claws and hints at the reality of the danger and killing force of this bear that can easily break and shatter our bones. Another view of this bear is shown when it's digging, 'using its claws very dextrously' in a delicate task. This shows the intelligence and skill of the bear which is also a wild, unpredictable killer.*

**Advice to candidates on Question 2**

- avoid general comments which do not discuss how the language used by the writer is working
- choose single words and phrases of two or three words that seem powerful to you.
- do not write out whole sentences, or the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle.
- 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 spot an example of a literary device or technique being used which you think is important, explain how exactly it is adding to picture or sense at that point
- if you are finding it difficult to discuss effect, expand on an explanation which could cover a 'dictionary definition' and explain how that adds to the reader's understanding

- when explaining effects, think of what the reader sees and feels when reading the word or phrase.

### Question 3

**Summarise: (a) the current threats to the polar bear population, as described in Passage B and the characteristics of grizzly bears and their behaviour, as described in Passage A.**

This question is to be answered in continuous prose and the candidates own words. Up to fifteen marks were available from a possible twenty three, evenly distributed between the two parts of the question.

The summary requires the different skill of writing concisely as the whole answer should only be one page in length (depending on the size of handwriting). Focused selection is required again in this question. Passage B contained plenty of information not required for the answer and was less familiar to the candidates, having not been used in the previous questions. This meant that candidates needed to read and re-read both passages carefully and pay attention to the precise requirements for both parts of the question. Using underlining or highlighting in the text is a good way for them to focus on what is needed.

Candidates mostly seemed well prepared for this question. Answers were usually the correct length and written in continuous prose, although notes or bullet points were seen occasionally. Where the response was wholly in note form, a penalty was applied to both marks. Bullet points should not be used; points should be linked within and between sentences to form a fluent and concise response to the question. For this series, there were fewer examples of the response written as a narrative or commentary and there was little copying.

Points need to be selected precisely as required by the question. For some candidates this was the most difficult skill. Passage B contained examples of the same point, requiring the candidates to focus on the central meaning without repeating the point in a slightly different form. The best answers were well focused on both the task and texts and reworked points clearly and concisely in the candidates' own words. They may have offered more than the fifteen points required for the answer.

Mid-range responses occasionally lost focus and included explanations of points already made, for example: 'Polar bears are dying out because of global warming when the ice melts. They are badly affected by our climate changing.' Where such repetition occurred frequently, the answer became too long. Long answers do not attract a high mark for writing.

The least successful answers may have been written in the wrong form such as commentary or narrative, for example retelling part of the story from Passage A. There could be copying and inclusion of parts of the passages that were nothing to do with the focus of the question, such as describing how the grizzly bear reburied the carcass, dug another hole and went to sleep in it which looked very funny. Using Passage B, these candidates would paraphrase the section about historical polar bear numbers, thus failing to gain marks for content and also losing marks for focus.

Some points offered by candidates were not made sufficiently precisely to attract marks. Candidates needed to be aware that when looking to avoid the words of the passage, they should reword ideas carefully to retain their specific meaning. Examples here include:

'As the ice melts, polar bears come into contact with humans,' whereas the passage shows it to be coming 'into *conflict* with humans' that poses the threat.

'Grizzly bears have white *paws* when they are older.' This is incorrect as it is the *claws* that turn white.

'Grizzly bears can break bones.' This is insufficient as *the strength of their jaws* is required to gain a mark.

**Though not intended as a model answer, the example that follows gives an indication of how candidates were able to offer points clearly and for the most part using own words.**

**(a) the current threats to the polar bear population**

*The main cause of the drop in polar bear numbers is global warming. The polar bears are losing some of their land as the ice caps are melting earlier and freezing later after the summer. The polar bears lose the access to their main food, seals, because of the melting ice. They get weak because they have to live longer on stored body fat in the summer. Baby bears die because their mothers can not find food for them and also the litters are smaller.*

*As there is more industry in the Arctic, there is more pollution and some oil spills. The white fur of the bears that they need for camouflage and can make their fur fall out. When they themselves, they eat the poisons which can give them kidney failure, brain damage and kidney*

**(b) the characteristics of grizzly bears and their behaviour**

*The grizzly bears have dark, thick coats and long delicate claws that are white when the bear is older. They can use their claws delicately like fingers to dig out a bison carcass. They can hear much better than humans although their eyesight is poor. They can kill bison and porcupines and crunch their bones with their strong teeth, then dig a hole and go to sleep in the sun.*

**Advice to candidates on Question 3**

- read the question carefully and underline the key words
- re-read each passage after reading each part of the question, in order to find the precise information required
- plan your answer carefully by listing relevant points in as few words as possible
- read through your list of points and link any that are similar or the same
- write up your answer in full sentences
- do not write an introduction
- aim to include at least fifteen points balanced over both halves of the question
- do not copy whole phrases from the passages
- write no more than one side of average handwriting
- write in an informative style and never add to the content of the passage
- make each point only once.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/04  
Coursework Portfolio

## Key messages

In this component, candidates should aim to:

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

## General comments

While the choice of tasks, much of the writing and the assessment by Centres were competent, many opportunities to gain higher marks were lost.

## **Good Practice:**

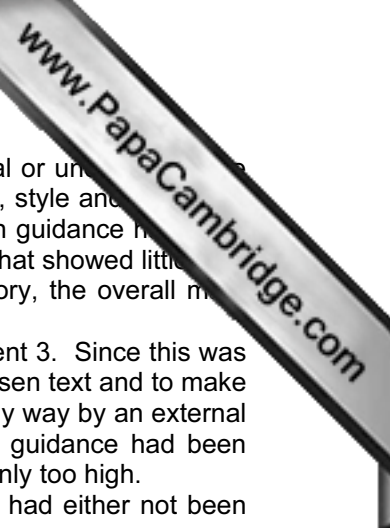
- There was an understanding that coursework provided an opportunity for candidates to learn to be better writers over a period of time, by expressing their own ideas and experiences of the world about them.
- After initial, brief guidance by teachers as to the nature of tasks, candidates were left to 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. Successful candidates were correct in their use of full stops at the ends of sentences and were sparing in their use of semi-colons, showing understanding of where they were appropriate.

Candidates aiming for the highest grades demonstrated independence as writers, formulating their own versions of tasks and thinking inventively and at a high level of maturity. The best Centres used at best only a small amount of stimulus material for the first assignment, briefly introduced tasks capable of flexible responses, allowed a short time for candidates to discuss possible approaches and then set candidates to work on their own. Some Centres prepared for coursework by teaching skills, such as how to structure an effective speech and the type of language that was appropriate, or how a short story works, studying the presentation of characters, the build-up of tension and the provision of an effective climax. They were careful to ensure that tasks were appropriate and that they required a suitable level of thought and the opportunities to demonstrate skills. They understood that coursework was provided for educational reasons so that by practice, each candidate could improve as a writer and thinker.

Many Centres clearly understood the rationale behind coursework and approached it with enthusiasm and energy.

## **Bad Practice**

It sometimes appeared that coursework had been undertaken without an understanding of the work that it entailed. Some of the points listed below are detailed further in later sections of the report.



- Candidates were frequently not left to work independently of published material or unhelpful guidance by teachers. They are reminded that marks are awarded for content, structure, style and accuracy. Moderators reported that in one particular task, that set on WaterAid, too much guidance had been given on both the content and the structure. This resulted in similar responses that showed little originality of thought. While the style and accuracy may have been satisfactory, the overall mark was frequently too high. This task proved unsuitable for CIE coursework.
- It appeared that a writing frames had been used by some Centres for Assignment 3. Since this was a test of reading, it was for the candidate to understand the main drift of the chosen text and to make individual selections for comment, and this should not have been provided in any way by an external source. Please note, therefore, that writing frames are not allowed. Where guidance had been given as to the selection of ideas and opinions the mark for reading was commonly too high.
- For reading, it was clear in some cases that the mark scheme in the syllabus had either not been used or had not been understood.
- Some of the tasks set were potentially too simple for the candidates. An example of this was 'Don't get me started...' which led to poor choices of content, uncertain structure, and insecurity of language register. This proved to be a task that was suitable for candidates at the middle or lower end of the marking criteria. Only a few candidates were able to make something effective out of it.
- A disturbingly large number of candidates were unaware of the need to place a full stop at the end of a sentence or to use an appropriate conjunction to join sentences into a fluent pattern of thought. As a result they wrote groups of short sentences with commas between. In addition, some candidates used virtually no commas at all. There were many examples of the wrong use of semi colons, sometimes splitting a simple sentence into two halves for no reason. Often there were far too many semi colons in a piece of work. What was more concerning was that frequently there was no indication that these errors had been noticed, or if they were, had not been taken into consideration when awarding marks. As a result, many Centres had their marks adjusted. Given the excellent opportunities for drafting and redrafting and for considering the effectiveness of one's work that candidates do not have in examinations, it was expected that these errors would have been corrected.
- There were also some issues with drafts. Please see the comments given below.

Centres are strongly warned about providing candidates with too much support, particularly about the content and structure of assignments and about specific corrections made on drafts.

Details regarding the educational aims and objectives are set out in the Syllabus, in all published reports to Centres and in the Coursework Training Manual. It is vital that all Centres offering the coursework alternative read these documents and understand and follow the advice.

### Task setting

In general, task setting was appropriate and there were very few examples where the choice did not meet the requirements of the syllabus. The only exceptions were where the genre of Assignment 1 was too similar to that of Assignment 3, which occurred when candidates had been set an argument based on a stimulus article for Assignment 1. Where an informative piece had been set for Assignment 1, such as an account of a School visit, there had to be a marked difference in style between it and whatever was set for Assignment 2. This was normally achieved by writing a fictional narrative.

Overall, the more variety of language, genre and content that could be achieved in the three responses, the higher the mark might possibly be, in balancing strengths and weaknesses.

There were some problems in Assignment 2. There were too many stories that were depressingly violent or which dealt with dramatic tragedy. Where these were personal and sounded convincing, they could be moving. However, many stories were gratuitously unpleasant even to the point where the reader was disengaged by the absurdities of the stories.

There was also a great increase in the writing of monologues. These are difficult to do well and come with inherent problems. For more details, please see the comments below.

On the whole the choice of article for Assignment 3 was suitable for the exercise and appropriate to the age group. There were some inappropriate news reports and some very poor articles from the Internet written in disconnected short paragraphs and frequently having very few ideas and opinions for candidates to engage with. Many of the articles were the same ones that have been appearing for some time, and teachers are advised to keep a look out for something new and original. After all controversial articles appear almost daily in the newspapers.

## Assessment of coursework

### Writing

In nearly every case, the rank order of candidates within the Centre was satisfactory and often good. Most candidates were placed in the right Band, but there was a reluctance to use Bands 4 and 5. Some Centres' distribution was too heavily skewed to Band 3.

An unreliable system of annotation leading to assessment has become common. It consists of writing in the margin whenever a candidate appears to hit a targeted objective in a particular Mark Band. For example, a candidate may use an apt phrase that deserves some note, but unfortunately the rest of the response may be written in disappointing vocabulary. The problem with this is that the achievement is often only partial and not sustained, so it is only a slight indicator of where the assignment is to be assessed. The only safe procedure is to list achievements against the Mark Bands that have been made throughout a large part of the response. It is not clear where this system has come from, but it is not sound.

Some Centres were severe in marking writing. This was almost always because the responses were largely accurate but more specifically were written in a good range of language and used fluent sentences.

The chief reason for reducing Centres' writing marks was as follows:

- Punctuation errors, particularly of full stops, commas and semi colons (see above)
- Straightforward, sometimes limited range of language
- Insecure structuring of sentences and lack of fluency
- Simplistic responses to undemanding tasks
- Failure to proof read
- Poor use of the spell check leading to the use of wrong words and wrong spellings.

Of the last two bullets, it is fair to say that some candidates made little use of their time to read their work and to make positive alterations.

### Assessment of reading

The mark scheme was frequently applied correctly. It was comparatively easy to score a mark of 5 or 6 where the selection of ideas and opinions was sound and where there was some value in what were usually simple and undeveloped comments.

It was less easy to score a mark in Band 1. Here there was the expectation of an overview of the text as a whole and an intelligent selection of ideas and opinions to support that view. The best candidates did this and sometimes cleverly used brief quotations of words and phrases taken from various parts of the text to tie together a general argument. They were clearly worth 10 marks. Credit could also be given for candidates who clearly covered the main arguments in the whole text and developed their responses consistently at some length.

A number of Centres were too generous in their award of Band 1 marks. Band 2 was achieved by evaluating at least some of the ideas and opinions. However, a feature of Band 2 was a lack of consistency. For example, one candidate awarded a mark of 9 had only dealt with two ideas at any length and two or three more were tacked on at the end. The mark hovered between 6 and 7. Another feature of Band 2 was that the responses were to ideas and opinions that were not arranged in any obvious order of importance or relevance, and unfortunately, in some cases candidates had obviously been guided as to which ideas to use, which is not allowed because it undermines the principles of the assessment.

Centres should use the published mark scheme which is found in the syllabus under *6:Appendix*.



## 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 (otherwise known as WMS). 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 the CIE marks system. 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.

For the reasons given above CASFs (also known as WMS) were required for all the candidates in a Centre and not just for those in the sample.

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.

Many Centres did not include the top and bottom folder from their mark range in addition to the sample that was requested.

Finally the regulations stipulated that each folder in the sample should be securely fixed and that it should not be in plastic folders, which only added to the complicated handling job that the Moderator had to undertake. For example, where a large number of folders were submitted, the Moderator had to make an initial sub-sample across the mark range and then a subsequent choice of folders to examine certain points in the range. 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.

## Summary of the contents of the folder

- 1: The folders required from each Centre by CIE
- 2: In addition, the top and bottom folder in the Centre's mark range
- 3: The CASFs (WMS) for all the candidates in the Centre
- 4: The Moderator's copy of the MS1 or electronically submitted mark list.
- 5: An early draft (see below) of one of the assignments
- 6: A copy of the article used for Assignment 3, preferably with the candidate's annotations.

## 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. Teachers also provided evaluations of the work at the end of each assignment or in Centre-generated report forms. These annotations and the comments at the ends of assignments gave the Moderator confidence in the work of the Centres.

Moderators make no marks on the samples they receive. However, they are aware of the errors of accuracy and the shortcomings of style in the work. A frequent complaint was that there were few or no indications that such 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.

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. It was important that positive comments were balanced by suggestions where improvements could be made. In many cases all the remarks were positive as if shortcomings were not important in assessment. This often led to over-marking.

## Drafts

Some Centres were meticulous in commenting on drafts at the end of the assignment.

The reasons for a draft is that candidates should be prepared to make amendments by

- Revising and making improvements to whole sections, for example changing an ending or altering the length of a particular section;
- Editing, by changing words and phrases to improve the effectiveness of their communication;
- Correcting punctuation, grammar, proof-reading errors and so on.

These changes should be made in the candidate's handwriting and in a different colour from that of the teacher's notes.

The teacher's notes should be at the end of the work, not in the margin or in the body of the text. There were still examples of teachers who circled individual errors in the text or who corrected them. This is specifically not allowed because it is the candidate's responsibility to make alterations and corrections to a draft, not the teacher's.

There were a number of infringements of this rule, and too many drafts appeared unchanged in their final versions and had no comments from the teacher or indications of alterations by the candidate.

## Internal moderation

In most cases, internal moderation or other forms of standardisation provided a reliable rank order. However, there were occasions where the Moderator could not make a judgement because of lack of agreement with the order. For example, in one Centre there was one set that was severely marked, another generously marked, three inconsistently assessed and a final set that was correctly marked.

Internal moderation must take account of all the candidates in the Centre. The easiest way is for two senior assessors to agree their own marks first and then to sub-sample all the other sets. If they agree severity or leniency of marking, all the mark range or some of it can be adjusted. Where they cannot agree because the marking is inconsistent, the teacher has to be instructed to re-mark at least some of the candidates. The set is then re-moderated.

The reason for disagreement with the rank order is usually because individual set teachers mark to different agendas, giving undue attention to one or more of the objectives.

The results of internal moderation appear on the CASF and a common comment was that there was no evidence that internal moderation had taken place. There must be such evidence.

## Authenticity

Centres will be only too aware that coursework is always under attack because candidates may copy work from a source that is not their own. They should also be aware that Moderators are often able to identify pieces of work that do not seem right. 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. If the work is suspicious, it is wise to check by using an internet search engine. Where cases of copying are discovered the offending work must be removed before the folder is assessed.

While there was no doubt that the work was largely that of the candidates, there were several examples of copying that were detected by Moderators. These included pieces by two candidates that were the same and pieces that could be traced to websites on the Internet.

All suspect cases are always forwarded to the Regulations Team at Cambridge.

## Assignment 1

Once more there was some excellent work in the form of speeches, addresses and talks. This allowed candidates to escape from over-formal English and demonstrate an engaging sense of audience. Where the

choice of topic was the candidate's own, there was usually a sense of individual interest and so the writing. There was a good deal of rhetorical language, but sometimes the use of the quotation was excessive and interrupted the flow of the argument. Most of the work was well structured and avoided traps such as the use of non-standard English.

This was not true of the topic 'Don't get me started', which was often given to weaker candidates. The problem lay in the choice of content. Very often it was limited and development was slight, or even immature, as in the case of the rant about not being able to wear trainers at School. Versions of this topic dealing with School, individually named teachers, referees and buses also descended into argument without logic and sometimes abuse.

Writing a rant usually involved a very insecure range of language, some of it non-standard, and there was often little structure and too much repetition. This was the sort of thing that candidates in lower year groups might have written and was typical of marks far lower down the range than may have been intended.

Of course it was possible to provide a very good response. One candidate wrote about males in a well-structured and entertaining way that constituted good writing, while another wrote a most original piece about abortion; a third attacked homophobic attitudes. These candidates were not tempted by the topic's title to under-estimate their abilities.

There were other forms such as traditional essays (best when the candidate chose an individual topic of personal interest), letters, for example to the head teacher, and reviews of films and plays.

The WaterAid appeal, used by several Centres, undermined the aims of coursework. These were not original but used the same type of content, restructured weakly to make it sound original. Luckily the style and accuracy made it possible to differentiate the responses, but this was an inappropriate topic because too much had obviously been provided for the candidates so that it was very difficult to assess either content or structure.

It was not good practice to set the same topic to a number of candidates.

Some of the topics showed maturity and were developed well. They included:

*Money can not buy love*  
*Feeding the homeless*  
*The corrupting influence of the media*  
*Improving Schools*  
*How to write an essay*  
*Life in Britain is unfair*  
*Green spaces*  
*The one-child policy*  
*Indian women's rights*  
*Monarchy*

There were some good ideas for speeches:

*A Prime Minister's address*  
*A God speech*  
*Five things I would save*

Personal accounts included:

*Pony club camp*  
*Personal rituals*  
*Motocross*  
*My local area*

## **Assignment 2**

This assignment was an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their range of language in descriptive, personal and narrative writing. However, there were some Centres that encouraged their candidates to use vocabulary too freely, with the result that meaning became unclear through the overuse of adjectives. Some of the best writers certainly used a wide range of language but it was sparing and always appropriate. The

use of the words 'cacophony' and 'engulf' was generally excessive and they rarely helped in reader.

More personal writing would have been very acceptable. Centres that set the autobiographical fragment generally succeeded in providing some convincing and moving writing. Although these were often about personal experiences, because they were based on reality, they were engaging. Very few stories of aliens, zombies and violent criminals were. Candidates were carried away with the horrible and the weird and wrote narratives that were scarcely credible. Again it was a matter of maturity, knowing the sort of storyline that was likely to impress or at least knowing how to communicate a storyline.

There were many monologues and these were more challenging than at first might appear. They had to have some structure. Otherwise they became repetitive and often outpourings of emotions that were not always convincing. The language range was not always as good as that of a narrative or description. There needed to be enough content to complete the assignment satisfactorily. There were many monologues based on experiences in the First World War, and while these were readable, they were very similar and it was difficult to find any that were outstanding as writing.

However, Centres frequently set exercise that produced some good writing, for example as follows:

### Own experience

*'What happened when I refused to eat my cucumber at School lunch...'*  
*My most poignant memory*  
*My mad relative*  
*'The stranger in the photograph is me'*

### Descriptive

*In nature's lap*  
*Symphony in yellow*  
*The supermarket*  
*A moment in time*  
*Streets of Thailand*

### Narrative

*Piano in G Minor*  
*Sinister Street*  
*The piercing silence*  
*A warm and sticky liquid*  
*'As my own past opened the door...'*  
*Snake in the orchard*

Finally, a large number of assignments had no title, which was not recommended.

### 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. However, several reports on individual Centres mentioned that the chosen article only had a small number of ideas and opinions and that this was not beneficial to the candidates. These included Bill Bryson's article about walking and Jeremy Clarkson's blog on airport security.

A number of articles, such as the Bhopal advertisement, had been in circulation for several sessions and some were common to several Centres. It is recommended that Centres try to find some new articles.

It was evident that in some cases candidates had been cued as to which ideas and opinions they should discuss, and in one case a writing frame was used to indicate the ideas and opinions. This is not allowed as it is part of the assessment that candidates should understand the text and make the selections for themselves. It was recommended that candidates should respond to ideas throughout the article and not just to a few at the beginning, since they needed to prove that their reading of the whole article had been effective.

However, this assignment was generally done well although it was occasionally over-marked (see above). Some of the articles were well sourced and interesting. These included the following topics:

*Chinese mothers*  
*World cup slavery*  
*Dress code*  
*Gay marriage*  
*Facebook (several different articles)*  
*Sexism*  
*The Syrian crisis*  
*Cruel animal testing*  
*School holidays*

### **Final comments**

This report has underlined some of the issues that urgently need addressing. However, a good deal of the work was well planned and carried out with an understanding of the educational advantages of the component. Where there were discrepancies, it proved that coursework was not something that could be lightly undertaken and that there was a good deal of commitment and hard work that was necessary to achieve the results that Centres obviously wanted.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/06

Speaking and Listening Coursework

## Key Messages

- When planning the schemes of work through which this examination is to be delivered, it is important for a centre to decide which of the two distinct Speaking and Listening pathways, **either** Component 5 **or** Component 6, is to be the chosen route.
- Component code errors, where centres enter for the wrong component, are not uncommon and can cause problems for all concerned. The two components are very different in their format and execution. Component 6 is much more flexible in that three separate tasks are required that can be assessed at any time during the course. This flexibility allows a broader range of topics and skills to be assessed but requires centres to fully embrace the concept that the Speaking and Listening tasks are an integral part of the overall course.
- To successfully implement the course, Component 6 centres are recommended to use both the current syllabus and 'Speaking and Listening Handbook' to ensure the requirements for the administration of the component are met in full. All the relevant information is contained within these documents.
- Cambridge requires a centre to provide four different items in the package sent to the Moderator. These are a **recorded sample** on CD, DVD or USB drive, the **Summary Forms** for the whole cohort entered, a **copy of the marks** (the MS1) that have already been sent to Cambridge and the **Individual Candidate Record Cards** for the candidates included in the sample. Each of these items is very important in the process of assessing a centre's performance. Centres are urged to ensure all four of these items are included in the package sent to Cambridge as the omission of any of them may cause a delay in the moderation process, or in the worst scenario, an inability on the part of the Moderator to complete the process until the relevant items are received.
- In particular, the **Individual Candidate Record Cards** should be treated as working documents that are completed as each task is undertaken. Specific information about the choices made for each task is required by the Moderator and not just generic statements that are unhelpful.
- Clerical and mathematical errors continue to undermine the moderation process. It is an expectation that the sample presented by a centre has been carefully checked before being submitted to Cambridge. This avoids time being wasted during moderation and allows for a more efficient process to take place.
- Please check the quality of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge and confirm that the sample requested is the one sent. A sample representing the full range of the centre's marks is expected with both the highest and lowest performing candidates included. We encourage the use of digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or USB drive in a recognised common audio file format such as mp3, wav and wma, but not AUP, that can be played by standard computer software.
- Please follow the specific instructions in the current syllabus that outline the way in which the recordings of candidates undertaking tasks should be introduced by the Teacher/Examiner. For paired activities it is essential that the Moderator is able to distinguish between the candidates in the activity so that successful moderation can take place. The simplest way of achieving this is for the candidates to introduce themselves and their roles in the activity.
- Unlike Component 5, there is no specified time duration for Component 06 tasks but it is difficult to see how both candidates in the Paired-Task activity can meet higher level criteria such as 'responds fully', 'develops prompts' or 'employs a wide range of language devices' in a performance lasting less than two minutes. Given that both speaking and listening are assessed, it is important that the activities last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. Planned and developed performances will normally justify higher marks in the same way written examination practise encourages more successful outcomes.

## General Comments

- Through the syllabus, Cambridge provides specific forms for use with Component 5 and Component 6. These are the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form. Please use these documents.
- It is worth noting that the Component 5 Summary Form is different to, and is not interchangeable with, the Component 6 equivalent. Any choice as to which component to undertake should be made before any assessment takes place.
- For Component 6, centres are encouraged to be creative in the choice of tasks as long as the assessment criteria are used as a guide to the skills being assessed. The integration of literature into the activities is again encouraged.
- The same is true of any chosen topic in that the interest of the candidate in the subject matter, the level of preparation and the enthusiasm to perform are the key elements for a successful outcome.

### **Comments on Specific Tasks**

Once again, Moderators have noted that the tasks which worked most successfully were the ones which were candidate driven rather than teacher led. Well planned and prepared responses to tasks were generally more successful but, in particular, Tasks 1 and 2 do not benefit from over-scripted and seemingly 'artificial' performances where spontaneity is missing. The balance between preparedness and a candidate's ability to think about changes in the direction of the discussion and to react accordingly needs to be maintained if higher skill levels are to be achieved. It is very difficult to achieve a band 1 response in Task 1 if the performance is heavily scripted.

#### **Task 1**

It was reported that a wide range of topics were being undertaken, but the task generally took the form of an individual presentation. When choosing topics it is important to take into account that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when choices are made. This component allows the candidate and teacher to work together to ensure the topic choice is suitable. Rehearsal and development of the task are encouraged.

*Some examples of productive **Task 1** activities include:*

- My involvement in .....
- A personal experience that is relevant, thought-provoking and developed beyond narrative
- Existentialism (or any philosophical viewpoint on which the candidate is knowledgeable)
- Keeping fit and eating healthily
- Body image and the media
- A review of a film or book that is developed beyond narrative to include analysis and consideration.

#### **Task 2**

There should be only two participants in Task 2. Where there is an extra candidate, a teacher or a candidate who has been assessed may make up the pair. It is unacceptable for this task to be performed by three candidates. In effect, any Task 2 activity comprising of more than two candidates becomes a Task 3 Group Activity. As three distinct tasks are expected in response to Component 6, this becomes a non-compliance issue and will be treated accordingly.

The Pair-Based Activity works best between two candidates of similar ability discussing a topic they have prepared and that they feel strongly about or engaging in a lively extended role play that allows them to fully demonstrate their discursive strengths. The key element is that candidates should be encouraged to hone their skills in choosing the correct register, particularly formal speech, and to extend their vocabulary. With regard to role-plays, it should be borne in mind that this is an assessment of language skills rather than drama skills. Some candidates are adept at assuming a role, but do not really prepare themselves to fulfil the language requirements as well as they might.

Generally, responses to Task 2 that are teacher-led, either with a teacher interviewing a candidate or with two candidates being led by a teacher, are less successful than a developed discussion between two candidates. It is recommended that this approach is only considered where it is deemed the candidates are too weak to initiate the discussion without external assistance.

A pathway that has become popular for Task 2 is the 'interview' where one candidate acts as the interviewer and the other is the interviewee. This can work well but there is an inherent weakness in the activity if all the interviewer does is ask a set of pre-prepared questions. This restricts the level of performance, particularly

for the Listening element. One way to counteract this problem is for candidates to swap through so each has the opportunity to demonstrate a wider range of relevant skills.

*Some examples of productive **Task 2** activities include:*

- Are tattoos and body piercings suitable for teenagers?
- Video games v outdoor sports
- Do we still need the Royals?
- Abortion – for and against
- The influence of reality television on the teenage audience
- Footballers' wages – but this needs careful planning
- Planning an event (where both candidates are enthusiastic)
- Environmental issues
- Should certain drugs be legalised?
- Obesity in children
- The Internet: Good or bad?

### **Task 3**

Task 3 may take the form of a group discussion debating an issue which is topical and possibly controversial or a role-play where each candidate plays the part of a character. Both can be successful as long as the assessment criteria for the group work are met. It is most important that each candidate in the group is allowed sufficient scope within the activity to demonstrate their strengths without being dominated by others. To this end it is advisable to create groups of similar ability levels so that weaker candidates are not disadvantaged and to consider the group dynamic so that each member has the opportunity to contribute to the best of their ability. The role of a group leader should be considered as a more successful outcome usually results from having one of the candidates directing the focus of the discussion.

*Some examples of productive **Task 3** activities include:*

- The Birlings participating in a television debate
- Performing an extra scene from a play that has been written by the candidates
- Dangerous dogs (or any discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint)
- Time capsule
- Championing a character from a film or book where each candidate chooses their favourite.

### **General Conclusions**

- Moderators continue to report that the general standard of assessment by centres is at, or close to, the correct level.
- Where centres have followed instructions and included the appropriate documentation and sample recordings, moderation has been smooth and successful and this is noted with gratitude.
- Conversely, problems have arisen where centres have not followed the instructions regarding sampling and documentation or where clerical errors have occurred because documentation was not checked with sufficient rigour before being sent to Cambridge. It is an expectation that centres provide the requisite documentation and that it is accurate.