

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

<p>Paper 9093/11 Passages</p>

Key messages

- Candidates need to ensure that they read a wide range of material from a range of diverse sources – such as travel writing, memoirs, biographies, autobiographies, newspapers articles, blogs, advertisements – so that they can assess not only the conventions and language associated with different formats and genres but also comment on the effects and qualities conveyed by specific words and phrases; they should be able to comment on how a particular extract is structured in the way that it unfolds and develops in term of subject, mood and tone.
- Candidates should be able to explore the contrasts and differences between the sections of a given extract; they need to move beyond identifying essential aspects of language and style such as personification, alliteration and punctuation, so that the effects of such features are considered in relation to their context and the extract as a whole.
- Candidates who write precisely and economically, maintaining a close focus upon style and tone, are those who tend to achieve best results. They also need to be able to adapt their own writing style to incorporate diverse directed tasks – for example, letters, articles, diaries – and demonstrate secure familiarity with their conventions and style.
- A secure degree of technical accuracy – especially in the use of spelling, punctuation, and tenses – is required at this level.

General comments

The three passages selected for this paper each offered a wide range of features and provided, in different ways, suitable opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their understanding of each writer's style and language. The rubric was generally well followed, though some candidates exceeded the stipulated word boundary in directed writing responses.

Commentary writing was sometimes hampered by a tendency for candidates to repeat the introductory wording of the question. This was often accompanied by speculation about the nature of the intended audience and sometimes resulted in a lengthy opening paragraph. Such introductions and, similarly, summary concluding paragraphs became a feature of weaker essays, and candidates would do better to use their time and word count focussing on the style and language of the given passage, as stipulated in the question.

Better responses were often characterised by greater clarity in the critical terminology employed in examining and defining style and language. Conversely, weaker responses often described style, mood, and vocabulary as having 'positive connotations' or 'negative connotations', or summed up a range of precisely constructed language effects as 'creating an interesting image' or 'stopping the reader from being bored'; such commentary would be improved by further elaboration or definition. The wider the critical vocabulary of the candidates, the more able they are to describe the precise effects of language and style.

Candidates would also be well advised to avoid dependence on too formulaic an approach to the passages. The categorisation of elements of the passage as representative of 'ethos' or 'logos' or 'pathos', for example, needs to be precisely developed by reference to exact effects of language.

Candidates should be reminded to be selective in their use of quotations from the passage, rather than using extensive excerpts to demonstrate relatively minor points. Most worthwhile language points can be supported by the use of single words or phrases, and excessive quotation generally diffuses the point being made.

Many responses would have benefited from more precision and economy. Wordiness and irrelevance was often the result of failing to establish a clear overview of the passage. Prominent features of the passages were often addressed as they were encountered, in a line-by-line approach, rather than addressing the passage as a cohesive whole. Another consequence of the line-by-line approach was the repetition of the same point, such as the author's use of alliteration. It is worth remembering that a point will only be credited once, e.g. for **Question 1(a)** a sense of man's helplessness in the face of a natural disaster.

The directed writing tasks produced some fluent and skilful writing. Candidates often engaged very successfully and poignantly with the material of the piece of the destruction of the city of San Francisco.

Not all candidates wholly fulfilled the instruction, 'Base your answer closely on the style and language of the original'. Some responses lifted phrases and key vocabulary directly from the passages and, in the case of the weakest answers, the content as well.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Candidates were invited to comment upon a journalist's account of the famous San Francisco earthquake of 1906, and to explain how style and language were used in the passage. This passage proved to be both accessible and engaging to the majority of candidates and most responses made some pertinent comments relating to style and language.

Candidates noted that this was an account of an earthquake in San Francisco and that there was a clear link to the city's destruction through fire, with an understanding of the speed with which the city was demolished.

The majority of the candidates found some engagement with the passage, though there was a tendency to concentrate on the first half of the passage at the expense of the eventual surrender of the city. Almost every candidate was able to comment on some of the methods which enabled the extent of the destruction to be conveyed. Many noted that the opening sentence is short and stark, conveying absolute loss and a sense of 'stunned' recognition. Many also commented on the repetition of verb phrases to reinforce the total destruction – 'wiped out' – and the use of listing and parallel sentence constructions to emphasise the complete destruction of all quarters of the city and throughout all social classes.

The theme of man versus nature was often considered; many noted the sudden and absolute destruction represented as a battle of supremacy between man and nature; more successful responses considered that nature has won the battle through the slight action 'twitching', with the sense that nature has triumphed in this destruction. The military references in the battle for the city were also a popular point for consideration. There was little reference to the Biblical quality of some of the imagery and the structure of the passage; particularly 'the dead calm' confused some candidates. Strong responses considered the Biblical references throughout, for example with the phrasing 'for three days and nights', the image of the tower of flame and the darkened day. Some of these more successful responses commented on the dispassionate recording of third person point of view with the journalist's personal involvement, suggesting a sense of veracity and truth, a personal testimony. Many of these responses noted that only the central section of the passage is chronological, covering one day and with variations within it.

Weaker responses considered the imagery created but did not always develop points, discuss the language used in detail or offer examples from the text to support their comments. Some weaker responses demonstrated some confusion over personification and third person versus first person narrative.

- (b) Candidates were asked to write a section of a follow up report as if they were the same journalist returning to San Francisco a month later, based closely on the style and language of the original passage.

Candidates offered generally sound responses replicating a sense of register and voice, and there was some good use of techniques such as anaphora. More successful responses focused on the

changes to the city caused by the earthquake, established a good narrative voice, and managed to avoid lifting material from the original text yet still included repetition and other echoes of the source material. Difficulties that some weaker candidates demonstrated were with writing in the style of a report and reflecting the style of the original.

There was much evidence of difficulty in using correct verb tenses for the recent past with links to the present; such tense errors lead to the reader losing the sense of what is the intended tense.

There was a tendency, particularly among weaker responses, to repeat the phrasing patterns of the original; for example, repetition of 'wiped out' was often used, with some slight adjustment, to describe the ruins. Candidates would do better in such instances to exhibit their ability to use original phrasing to create their desired effect. Considering the original text is set in 1906, some estimates of what could be built in a month in 1906 were overly optimistic; an awareness of context would have added credibility to such responses.

Question 2

- (a) Candidates were invited to comment on the language and style used in text from a company website which sells lifestyle events and experiences. This question was the most popular of the alternative options.

Almost all candidates understood the tone, purpose and audience of the passage. The language of the passage was approachable and significant features such as the repeated use of rhetorical questions were generally commented on. Among weaker responses, there tended to be a need for more depth of language analysis beyond these significant features. Quite a large number slipped into summary of each section, but equally there were very many confident answers about the style and methods of persuasion used.

There was recognition of the second person sequence of questions in the first paragraph, along with general recognition of the sensory imagery. Weaker candidates identified 'the secrets of the wind' and the 'songbird's melody' as instances of personification rather than just metaphoric use of language, though credit was given for the personification in 'Mother Nature'. There was a general sense of structure regarding the headings, and commentaries were usually developed along the lines of the 'soft' sell tactics of the activities listed (through asyndeton) with some recognition of the 'spiritual' reconnection with nature, with the 'astrological', 'planetary transits' and/or 'mythology' or 'karma' in mind.

Higher band responses recognised the use of imperatives and changes in tense and the upbeat tone in 'hit the trails', 'Hop on and enjoy the ride' and 'It's time to shine.' There was some recognition of the changes in number and person i.e. the direct 2nd person address is largely maintained throughout and the direct address and, possibly, challenge to readers, 'when was the last time you stepped out?' is interwoven with 1st person plural to reinforce collegiality of shared dreams and purposes: 'Nature is our playground'. These responses gave close attention to vocabulary choice and in particular the extensive use of abstract nouns to indicate positive states of mind: 'intention', 'stress', 'energy', 'introspection'. They also commented on the use of listing, extensive noun modification and hyperbole – 'we could go on for days ... the benefits are endless' – to show the breadth and benefits of the lifestyle.

The voice of this piece was generally identified as friendly, with one or two candidates suggesting that this was a website text for hippy types. A few commented that paragraphs tended to end with injunctions to self-improvement. A handful of stronger candidates commented on the final conscious narration of the author with the corporate 'we', summarising the benefits through the mix of colloquial, advisory, assertive statements which use hyperbole and assertions to reinforce their life changing plan.

Many weaker responses were characterised by generic comments about the elements of promotional writing; these candidates needed to apply their comments to the passage. Many candidates needed to elevate their comments beyond obvious and formulaic elements. Perhaps because many commented on typical elements and gave generic effects, these weaker responses were fractured and Examiners were unable to award marks above Band 4. More successful responses included a higher degree of detail and observation.

The irony of using technology to advocate the message of getting in touch with Mother Nature was rather too subtle for most candidates.

- (b) Candidates were asked to write a section of a feature for the same company website considering the value of spending time with family and friends. They were asked to base their responses on the style and language of the original passage.

There were some heartfelt pleas and delightful examples of the value of time spent with close friends and family. It was clear that some candidates drew on experiences relevant to their life and they wrote with a lot of conviction and some humour.

The rhetorical questions used in the passage were an irresistible model for the opening as was the use of subheadings. Whilst there were many attempts to emulate the style of the piece in the opening sequence, these were often quite lengthy openings that lead to a loss of focus on rubric: 'the value of spending time with family and friends.' These less successful responses were often vague or implicit or one sided, focusing on friends or family in isolation rather than on both, and listing events – such as picnics, swimming, games and meals – in which one *could* spend time with family and friends or 'loved ones', rather than focussing on the value of such occasions. Many of these responses often lifted phrases from the original: 'When was the last time...?' and 'If the message above ...'. It was evident that some had misinterpreted the phrase in the question, 'for the same website', which led to a mirroring of the original text too closely by linking family and friends to nature; candidates should note that the question asks them to base their writing on the style and language of the original, rather than on the content.

More successful responses came from candidates who engaged with the key phrase 'the value' and addressed that in their writing: family and friends have value because they help 'you' to de-stress, providing comfort and support, for example. Some of these more successful responses combined elements of the passage with their response, as if it were a continuation of the passage but with the physical and psychological benefits of including friends and family.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates were asked to comment on the language and style of a passage from the opening of Jerome K Jerome's novel, *Three Men in a Boat*.

Many candidates who chose this question struggled with the tone and author intention. The setting was the cause of much of the misunderstanding, notably the inclusion of smoking which prompted several candidates to assume that the narrator's problems were drug related. The humour of the passage often passed candidates by: 'It's clear that the man is in hospital with a mental disease ... the audience may question what being in hospital has done to him'. This resulted in some confusion and many overlooked the self-delusion and irony of the character's hypochondria.

First person narrative was recognised and the repetition of it in every paragraph led to comments on the obsessive nature of the persona which reinforced the notion of his hypochondria. Much was made of the lexical field of diseases and the listing and use of dashes that signified his rapid thought processes (often discussed in terms of stream of consciousness). Low frequency lexis 'virulent', 'indolently', 'malady' and metaphoric phrasing 'my liver that was out of order', 'frozen with horror', 'a hospital in myself' and the contrast of 'a happy, healthy man' and 'decrepit wreck' were the common features that were discussed. The reference to the British Museum Reading Room (often misidentified as allusion) and the reference to 'hay fever' aided a few candidates in identifying the language of the text as British English.

Stronger responses focused on the persona's hypochondria and the humour of the situational or dramatic irony and the comical imagery which was farcical in places: 'I could not feel my heart. It had stopped beating'; the latter being dealt with in a literal way by weaker candidates who discussed the improbability of this at length. Stronger responses sometimes commented on the hyperbolic exclamatory reflections; which reinforced the narrator's self-absorbed character, 'what an acquisition I should be to a class'; they noted that humour was also achieved through hyperbole and the extravagant development of the narrator's belief in his illnesses: 'I was a hospital in myself.'

Weaker responses focused on what they saw as the writer's 'paranoia', and present-day attitudes towards smoking were brought to bear; there is no indication that this is a contemporary text and candidates should remember that passages presented to them in the exam may come from a variety of different contexts and therefore attitudes may vary. There was much reading that got caught up in personal response, with candidates feeling empathy for the 'persona' (or not, because of the smoking); these candidates needed to focus back on analysis of the language and style of the text. Many treated the text as an autobiography despite the introductory guideline about it being a novel.

- (b) Candidates were asked to write a continuation of the story. They were required to base their response closely on the style and features of the original extract.

Candidates who produced weaker textual analyses in **3(a)** sometimes seemed at ease in reproducing the style and developing the occasion.

One very clever response ended with the narrator deciding that the only cure for the group hypochondria was to go off on a boat trip down a river.

The most successful writing came from candidates who, even though not discussing it in their commentary as a structural feature of the text, did by implication recognise the flashback and circumlocution devices that were used. Their continuations of narrative involved returning to the room in which the four men were all sitting smoking – despite the implications of the title, *Three Men in a Boat*. Most responses, however, involved a recapitulation of ailments and/or visits to a doctor or hospital.

Many of the weaker responses focused on the content rather than the style of the original. These were often adequate or clear; candidates who summarised the original narrative would have done better to have focussed closely on the rubric instruction to create a continuation to the story.

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<p>Paper 9093/12 Passages</p>

Key messages

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- Candidates should be able to explore the contrasts and differences between the sections of a given extract; they need to move beyond identifying essential aspects of language and style such as personification, alliteration and punctuation so that the effects of such features are considered in relation to their context and the extract as a whole.
- Candidates who write precisely and economically, maintaining a close focus upon style and tone, are those who tend to achieve best results. They also need to be able to adapt their own writing style to incorporate diverse directed tasks – for example, letters, articles, diaries – and demonstrate secure familiarity with their conventions and style.
- A secure degree of technical accuracy – especially in the use of spelling, punctuation and tenses – is required at this level.

General comments

The passages selected for this paper each offered a wide range of features and provided, in different ways, suitable opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their understanding of each writer's style and language. There were striking contrasts between the texts: the stylistic quality of the *Tigress* passage crammed with rich description, alliteration, onomatopoeia, consonance and personification, the clear structural features aided and guided by headings and sub-headings; direct address and second person narrative of the *Silent Disco*; and the characterisation in *Mr Biswas* which was enlivened by the dialogue.

The rubric was generally well followed, though some candidates exceeded the word boundary of directed writing exercises, particularly in responses to **Question 3(b)**.

There was some strong and detailed writing in the commentary responses, notably for **Question 1**, where the compelling content and range of features led to some very effective writing.

As always, the stronger responses tended to use a wider stock of critical vocabulary to describe the effects of specific language examples. In weaker responses, definitions of style and tone were sometimes confined to 'formal' or 'informal', with 'conversational' as a popular addition. A higher degree of precision in defining the overall tone of a passage leads to similar precision in defining the specific effects of language examples.

Some weaker responses were in need of a clear overview of the passage, and these responses often took a line-by-line approach which led to the consideration of a few features rather than the whole effect of a text.

Candidates should be reminded to be selective in their use of quotations from the passage, rather than using extensive excerpts to demonstrate relatively minor points. Most worthwhile points can be adequately supported by the use of single words or phrases. Some candidates substituted analysis with substantial extracts from the texts, whereas responses would be made stronger by using quotation as supporting evidence for analysis.

Other responses simply needed to be fuller and to offer a wider range of relevant points. All selected passages will offer a substantial range of language features to comment upon. Candidates need to show full engagement with a text, going beyond a few paragraphs highlighting the use of rhetorical questions and occasional examples of alliteration.

There was some confident and sometimes perceptive directed writing, the responses to *Breaking Down the Silent Disco* being particularly perceptive and well-focused.

It is worth reminding candidates of what is meant by the instruction to base their responses 'closely on the style and language of the original'. Elements such as phrases and key vocabulary from the original text should not be transferred directly to the response, rather candidates should base their writing on such elements as tone and register from the original.

Comments on specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) Candidates were asked to comment on the language and style of an extract from Sooyong Park's autobiography, where he writes about his search for the elusive white tiger in Siberia.

This passage offered a range of accessible language features. The more obvious features such as the use of onomatopoeia were almost always commented on, with varying degrees of success. Many responses made attempts to engage with the vivid imagery and metaphors. A feature of weaker essays was an evident difficulty in selecting precise words to develop their points.

Most often, candidates commented on the 'creepy environment' suggested by 'ghostly white skulls', 'the bitter ghosts of the dead', 'the thick fog' and the 'deer bones look[ing] eerie in the milky darkness'. Comments were sometimes reinforced by the sense of threat suggested by the 'dark blue rag[ing] toward the shore', the anticipation of being pounced upon by Mary 'approach[ing] soundlessly' and the 'ghostly wet swamp I did not want to cross'.

There was some engagement with the sensory aspects of the writer's style, with reference being made to the 'artist's' colour palette (although grey and mustard were often referred to as vivid) and to the temporal, climatic and geographical aspects of the setting. The simile of 'like a rag stitched and mended' was often identified, though analysis on this often needed more development. The sense of anti-climax/cliff hanger was usually noted but with some candidates mis-identifying the writer as the killer of Mary. General points were made about the use of first person and past tense. Many candidates would have done well to then consider transitions to third person and present tense. Onomatopoeia was usually noted; this point often needed to be developed in terms of the precarious nature of life for Ussuri deer in such a forbidding landscape.

The stronger responses analysed the sense of desolation and threat in the landscape and there was often detailed and interesting consideration of the colours. More successful responses commented on the use of contrast, which was identified with some development, for example winter and spring; life and death which was linked with the precarious existence of the Ussuri deer; the dual aspects of the forest and the evocation of pathos and bathos. The irony of the successful existence of Mary in 'The Basin of Skeletons' was developed in the most successful commentaries, together with the use of foreshadowing in the final line of how Park builds a relationship with the tigress he is hunting.

Some candidates managed to find linguistic techniques for the focus of their analysis, for example the use of colour, personification and comparisons. Weaker responses gave a narrative overview of the passage. These weaker responses used vague expressions, such as 'a lot of imagery is used' and features in these responses tended to be dealt with in isolation and rather than considered as part of a whole.

It is worth noting that there is evidence among all levels of response of a general misunderstanding of the term 'personification'. Candidates would do well to revise this in order to gain a full and accurate understanding that they can apply to their passage analyses.

- (b) Candidates were asked to imagine that they were a reporter for an international environmental organisation and to write a formal report on the first sighting of Mary, the rare white tigress. They were required to base their writing closely on the material of the passage.

Whereas most candidates could write with some sense of purpose, there was generally a need for a sense of the style required for a formal report. Most writing was purely descriptive and or narrative and employed either first, second or third person or a mixture of all three. The use of onomatopoeia, as observed in the passage, featured strongly in the writing. Often responses were literary, while others were very colloquial, neither achieving an appropriate style for a formal report. Many were subjective and/or narrative. Candidates should be reminded to read the preamble thoroughly – many had missed the fact that the passage was an autobiography, so merely imitated the style, and some also used the same perspective.

The most successful pieces matched the appropriate style for a formal report by employing third person passive voice and selecting relevant factual material from the original passage.

Question 2

- (a) Candidates were asked to comment on the language and style of text taken from a blog post from the website of a company which sells lifestyle events and experiences.

This was the more popular of the two optional questions.

Candidates generally recognised the direct address engagement and commented on the colloquial language linked as it was to a stereotyped notion of youth culture on a 'Friday night' – just 'plain ol' fun'. Candidates commented on the FSL or jargon-related lexis, for example 'mad auditory scientist spinning obscure technology', 'wireless headphones' and 'DJ is reading the vibes' and the listing of artists in an attempt to create an upbeat tone and to appear hip or in-the-know.

There was some engagement with the imaginary scenario of the opening, with its present simple/continuous tense, with its elided simple sentences ('Sun's out'), with its alliteration ('funky, fun friend'), and with the mock dialogue ('Yeah, what's a silent disco? [...] Grab a pair of headphones, she responds.')

The analogy of the silent disco with yoga was often misread in weaker responses. There was a tendency among these to go no further than to pay homage to the fact that the text had a title and two subtitles, generally tending to omit from their commentaries the section of text under 'The Gift of Personal Space'.

More successful responses developed points referring to isolation and self-absorption, the calmness of 'floating', the normal appearance of the disco but one without sound. These responses explored images of freedom, such as 'uninhibited moves, glistening brows', and 'an incredible measurement of immersion'. They examined the detail of vocabulary which stresses the 'buzz', the 'vibes', and set it against the notion that the movement began as eco-friendly and is still associated with yoga, meditation and mindfulness. They also explored the contrast between the language of peace and that of more conventional musical events.

The most successful commentaries came from candidates who engaged fully with the structural features of the text as suggested by the structural pun of the title itself: *Breaking Down the Silent Disco*. They commented on the use of sub-heading to mark change in style to a more factual section on the history of disco and reasons for silent discos.

- (b) Candidates were asked to write a section of a letter to their Head Teacher requesting to hold a 'silent disco' in school and explaining how candidates will benefit from this. They were required to base their writing on the material of the original extract.

The requirements of the content of this letter writing task were generally understood. There was some amusing and engaging writing in this exercise, with some humour and sense of context. The need to set out a range of benefits and to provide some assurances to the Head Teacher was recognised, with most candidates focusing on a 'silent disco' as an antidote to their stressful school

careers, especially around exam time. The most successful responses articulated a convincing case which benefited both students and school alike.

Some responses were weakened by the lack of a letter format or an appropriate tone and register for a letter addressed to a Head Teacher; many candidates adopted the colloquial style of the original; some were untitled emails rather than letters. Weaker responses wrote well over the word limit, sometimes in an attempt to list as many benefits as possible of holding a silent disco, which often consisted of lifted material. Conversely, responses in the higher bands were mindful that they had been directed to write only a section of a letter.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates were asked to comment on the language and style of an extract from the opening of V S Naipaul's novel, *A House for Mr Biswas*.

Several candidates missed the guidance notes on this text and proceeded with their commentaries on the basis that the text was autobiographical. The family quarrel was identified, as was the fact that it was ongoing or ritualistic itself, but many misread the nature of the family relationships and who was related to whom. Weaker responses confused Raghu with the fatalistic father. The superstitious nature of this Indian family and culture was generally noted, with its various rituals, for example the hanging of the cactus strips to ward off 'an evil spirit', the pundit arriving with his 'astrological almanac' and the need to keep Mr. Biswas away 'from trees and water'. Weaker responses tended towards generality and vagueness.

Many candidates commented on the midwife's horror at the birth of this six fingered child – his 'disability' causing her 'shrieks' – but little was made of the inauspicious nature of his birth in arriving at 'midnight', or of an ostensibly favoured gender being 'born in the wrong way', or of his being referred to, seemingly, as Mr. Biswas from birth. The dialogue between characters was commented on in some instances. There was a general need among the responses for recognition of the effect of isolating elements of the dialogue, and comment on the way in which language is used to develop character. Some candidates commented upon the several references to luck and fate. Most surprisingly, there was little speculation as to why the baby was called Mr. Biswas or to the effect this had upon the passage. There was evidence that, generally, the bleak humour of the passage was not fully understood.

The most successful responses identified Naipaul's mocking tone throughout and his parody of the pundit suggested by his astrological almanac being 'brown with age' and with a 'musty smell' and his having 'a sharp satirical face', presenting as he does a caricature of aged wisdom. These more successful responses commented on the irony of Mr. Biswas' physiological characteristics determining his fate as 'a lecher and spendthrift', the complete opposite of his father's 'miserliness'.

- (b) Candidates were asked to continue the narrative in their own words. They were required to base their writing closely on the style and language of the original extract.

This task offered opportunities for quite imaginative development of the storyline, with characterisation and style sometimes well echoed. The language patterns of the original, which were scarcely mentioned in the commentary, were sometimes accurately replicated and there were some inventive continuations.

Candidates generally recognised the need to write from the perspective of an omniscient narrator coupled with dialogue. Where candidates used dialogue to continue the passage, they were usually well punctuated. At times, extensive use of dialogue somewhat limited the range of vocabulary choices. Some were clearly quite alarmed by this child who was different, others felt that the recommendations from the pundit were very significant and must be closely followed; a few chose for the family to ignore the advice.

Weaker responses offered a literal interpretation, with repetition of the events of the source text without development or extension of the plot.

The most successful writing came from candidates who recognised the need to re-introduce Raghu in the narrative: he turns up at the house of Bissoondaye, as fate would have it, thus ensuring that the 'evil' brought upon this household by Mr. Biswas' birth is not mitigated.

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Key messages

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- Candidates who write precisely and economically, maintaining a close focus upon style and tone, are those who tend to achieve best results. They also need to be able to adapt their own writing style to incorporate diverse directed tasks – for example, letters, articles, diaries – and demonstrate secure familiarity with their conventions and style.
- A secure degree of technical accuracy – especially in the use of spelling, punctuation and tenses – is required at this level.

General comments

The three passages selected for the paper each offered a wide and diverse range of language features and provided suitable opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their understanding of the style and language employed.

The rubric was well obeyed and there were relatively few candidates who significantly exceeded the word boundary; those who did mostly did so in the directed writing task.

There is a continuing need for greater range and clarity in the presentation of the commentaries. Meaningful examination of a passage's language and style needs as wide a lexicon as possible, and candidates need to develop their analysis of language beyond the bare definitions of having 'negative/positive connotations'. Similarly, the description of a writer's style as formal/informal will generally demand amplification.

Some responses would have benefited from much sharper and more precise explanations of the effects of language features. In order to obtain higher marks, candidates need to explore these features further than giving such generalised definitions as 'getting the reader's attention' or 'keeping the reader interested'.

There were some imaginative and accomplished responses in the directed writing for all three passages. The passages produced perceptive writing and there was an encouraging sense of engagement throughout the paper.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Candidates were asked to comment on the language and style of a blog post taken from the website of a company which sells lifestyle events and experiences.

Most responses were able to comment on some features of language use, notably the use of colloquialisms, short sentences and rhetorical questions.

Many commented on the use of second person to engage an audience, along with the rhetorical question 'Who knew?' There was some focus on individual words such as 'braved' suggesting heroism and some focus on the virtuosity of the friend in suggesting going barefoot. Candidates focused on the use of the personal, light hearted or friendly tone of the piece to either persuade or inform. Reference was made to the anecdotal recount of the adventure. Some responses included comments on some of the structural elements of the blog post.

A minority of responses referred to the tone of the passage as 'hippyish' or more often as 'spiritual'. Other areas that candidates could have paid more attention to were the effect of italicisation and the conclusion.

Successful responses made developed comments on spiritual experience, referring to words such as 'converted' and 'transformative' from the text. The extensive analysis of the use of jargon (such as 'earthing') and justification of its use formed part of these successful responses. Often these candidates made reference to the 'plethora of new scientific research' noting that it gives validity to the argument, and the very best commented on the lexical field of 'electrons' and 'physiological dysfunctions', followed by the humour of the question 'Who Knew?!' These responses also considered the metaphorical and literal accounts in the closing stages of the extract, and the sibilance in the penultimate paragraph which slows the reader and also produces soft soothing tones. Reference was made to the pun of 'step' in the last line, which lightens the more serious points made earlier in the passage.

Weaker responses tended to focus on content rather than analysing features. There was some engagement with the first-person voice; in weaker responses, the colloquial uses of second person needed more effective establishment. Another aspect of weaker responses was the use of a chronological approach to the passage.

There was a tendency in these less focused responses to comment on the contents of the passage rather than maintaining concentration on the effects of style and language. Candidates should always bear in mind that no matter how engaged they are in the contents of a passage, the purpose of the response is to examine the effects of the style and language employed.

- (b)** Candidates were asked to imagine they had joined the writer of the blog on a 'barefoot hike' and write their comments on the experience on a travel review website. They were required to base their writing closely on the material of the original.

The majority of responses were built round being converted to the author's point of view; however, there were several resolutely common-sense responses which enjoyed pointing out the drawbacks of the scheme.

There were some effective responses exploring the trepidation and anxiety before embarking on the experience of walking barefoot. Some successfully used humour by describing hiking barefoot as a terrible experience, never to be repeated. These successful responses contained few clichés.

Weaker responses did write in a review format and style and did not adhere to the stipulated context of the travel website, often not appreciating the fact they needed to write from a different perspective. There was some confusion that the review needed to focus on the hike advertised in the passage. These weaker responses frequently mimicked the original extract and used material lifted from it.

Question 2

- (a)** Candidates were asked to comment on the language and style of a nonfiction account of a writer recalling her work in her beauty salon on the morning of her friend Roshanna's engagement party.

This question was the most popular second choice.

Candidates responded well to this passage, capturing the sense of occasion and the close relationship between the women when exploring the language choices. Many demonstrated detailed knowledge of specialist lexis. There was good exploration of the use of colour and specific details in the preparations for the bride. The chronological ordering of events was sometimes noted and there some general remarks on imagery and the cacophony of an Afghanistan morning.

Some candidates were able to understand the humour in the first paragraph ('cursing the neighbour's rooster') and were able to distinguish that the narrator's feelings and actions were contrasted to this being a special day: 'Roshanna's engagement party'. They were able to convey the positive feelings portrayed with regards to the narrator's relationship with Roshanna and some responses were able to develop on this, referring to evidence from the text and how language created effect. Additionally, some candidates focused on imagery relating to the wedding party.

More successful responses commented that the first-person account was at odds with the factual opening. They explored the detail of the passage: the repetition of 'still' and its emphasis of time and usual routine to show that this day is different. There was comment on the use of parallel structure to show the street background with its emphasis on noise and confusion through the verbs, the listing and onomatopoeia. These successful responses also explored structure: that the second paragraph adds narrative detail, emphasising the social status of the fiancée with 'ghost', 'tiny' and the description of the burqa which seems to dominate Roshanna ('billowing'), and is then then reduced by the bathos at the end of the paragraph when it is put over the dryer. There was some consideration of contrast used to emphasise how bright and enthusiastic this girl usually is. The colours of her traditional clothes contrast with the grey of the city and the clothes of other women. The use of the simile, 'stands out like a butterfly' emphasises this. The best then contrasted this with the expectations of cultural traditions, the clothes and the makeup, which are emphasised by the hyperboles.

Weaker responses offered a narrative approach, repeating the events of the morning. Some of these weaker responses were persuaded that the writer was lazy, using 'I'd still be in bed' and other details in the first paragraph to support this point of view. There was also some confusion about the relationship of the characters, as well as some very short responses.

For many candidates, some elements of the passage passed them by, such as that the narrator was a newcomer to Afghanistan, or that Roshanna was a former student of the narrator and 'first and best friend' in the country. Such responses often commented on a perceived jealousy from the writer of the bride. Whilst there was a considerable amount of comment on Afghan traditions, words and meanings, the less successful responses needed to link their comments to the effects created, adding more to their exploration of the passage. Many saw Roshanna as being an outgoing personality, conflicting with the language in the passage which describes her as a 'tiny, awkward, blue ghost'. Another factor that was missed in weaker responses was the use of the third person opening and its implications.

- (b)** Candidates were asked to continue the account. They were required to base their writing closely on the language and style of the original passage.

Many candidates were able to continue the passage and maintain the style, as well as write in the voice of the original character. They sustained a high level of descriptive language and conveyed the emotions of the narrator fittingly, including her pride in her work and her personal affection for Roshanna. More successful responses engaged with the 'girly' and gossipy nature of the context, written from the point of view of the narrator, and addressed her hopes and aspirations for the future of her friend whilst brushing and washing her hair.

Weaker responses lacked continuity with the narrative. Although these responses seemed generally to understand the purpose of continuing with the account and adopting a similar style to the extract, much lifted material was used. Some weaker responses referred back to, and focussed on, the local detail of the first paragraph, rather than continuing the narrative.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates were asked to comment on the language and style of an extract from the opening chapter of Barbara Kingsolver's novel, *The Lacuna*.

There was a general tendency to struggle to engage fully with the language in the passage, although most seemed to understand its content well enough; consequently, not all candidates managed to frame a developed response.

Most candidates focused on the imagery of the text, such as 'the hem of the sky', the monkeys groaning 'like a saw blade', and the 'roaring trees'. They engaged with the essential contrast of the text: the fairy-tale image, aspirations and hopes of a better life, versus the reality of a life with Enrique. Enrique's controlling personality and his cynicism were commented upon and his condescending and scornful retorts: 'Every ignorant Indian in the village knows what they are. You would too, if you went out in the morning instead of hiding in bed like a pair of sloths.' The entrapment suggested by 'the spiderweb of bedspread' was also noted.

Stronger responses explored the use of onomatopoeia and how it assisted in creating a fearful mood through the use of 'howls' and that usually a dangerous animal is associated with such a sound. They also noted that verbs such as 'bellowing' and 'groaning' contributed to the overall fearful tone and mood explored. Moreover, these candidates were able to understand how the audience gained sympathy for the boy and the mother through exploring their innocence (or even ignorance) in their belief of those which would 'consume human flesh'; they were able to understand the characters' extreme fear through their actions.

More perceptive responses recognised the perspective of the boy and the disappointment involved in growing up: realising the fantasy that he was 'sold' but also the rather happier realisation of Enrique's insignificance in 'the grand scheme' of things ('the tiny man on top of a wedding cake').

Weaker responses showed some confusion about the relationships within the passage and the particulars of the situation. There was some attempt to explain obvious language techniques – e.g. the simile 'like a pair of sloths'. Weaker responses often demonstrated a need for a higher degree of organisation.

An element of the passage that candidates would have done well to explore, but which was often missed, was the irony in the idea that a successful man would need 'no imagination at all'.

- (b) Candidates were asked to write an extract from the mother's journal after a typical day during her first year in Mexico.

Most candidates were able to understand the style of a journal and explore closely the feelings portrayed by the mother. There was generally some sense of the woman's terror and the strangeness of the situation. There was recognition of the need to write in first person and to record some feelings.

However, some candidates misinterpreted some of the text as well as the names, and this affected the content of their directed writing; a very few assumed that Enrique was the woman's son, although the responses showed understanding of the concept of recording thoughts and feelings. Weaker responses were very reliant on the source passage and there was much lifted material.

The most effective writing came from candidates who created a confiding tone about the reality that the mother now faced in disappointing her son and the fears of daily life with Enrique as a 'truly evil man'.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 9093/21
Writing

Key messages

- Candidates should manage their time carefully, allocating an equal amount of time for each section of the paper. Candidates are advised to allocate a set amount of time to: identifying factors for writing; planning to write; writing; checking; and correcting.
- When reading the questions, candidates should concentrate on the instructions and should carefully interpret and deconstruct the question. For example, in **Question 1** the key instruction is to 'write a story', creating a sense of 'drama and suspense' and in **Question 6** the key instruction is to 'write the script of the talk and to 'create a sense of the rewards and challenges'. To ensure that candidates do understand the key requirements of each question, it may be helpful to underline key words within the question.
- Effective planning, following on from successful interpretation of the question, leads to better crafted and well-shaped responses, therefore minimising irrelevant detail and generic content.
- Candidates should also consider the following as part of the planning stage: the *purpose* of the piece, the prescribed *form* and *audience* as well as the most appropriate *voice* or persona to adopt, the *mood* and *tone* that they should try to create in their writing and the most suitable *structure* to employ. One key aspect of the most successful and effective writing in **Section A** is a convincing and credible narrator/persona, while the key aspects of the most successful and effective writing in **Section B** are a clearly developed, logically sequenced structure, together with an authentic sense of voice.
- Candidates must understand the importance of writing in clear, properly punctuated English, with accurate sentence demarcation, to perform well in this exam, including those scripts that have good content. One error that occurred regularly was that of separating sentences with commas rather than full stops. Clear expression in simple and compound sentences without much variety is preferable to expression in long, rambling sentences that do not flow easily. Candidates must be aware of the need for appropriate paragraphing in their responses, including paragraphing for direct speech.
- Candidates should be encouraged to proofread carefully, particularly for accurate sentence demarcation and for tense confusion/inconsistency. Such errors impede, sometimes seriously, the overall sense of fluency and cohesion.
- In preparing for **Section A**: Imaginative writing, candidates should develop skills in differentiating between 'showing' versus 'telling', to improve both descriptive and narrative skills. When preparing for **Section B**: Writing for an audience, candidates should be encouraged to read a wide variety of newspaper and magazine articles, both print and online, as background preparation. Candidates should be exposed to the tone, register and format of magazine articles, newspaper correspondence, speeches and voiceover scripts.

General comments

Technical accuracy tended to be more secure in **Section B** than in **Section A**, where tense errors and confusions often caused problems. **Section B** responses were also often structured more effectively than **Section A**. Overall, it was pleasing to note that more responses were paragraphed effectively than in previous sessions.

Quite a number of submissions self-penalised on the grounds of rubric infringement: some responses were appreciably short of the minimum word limit. Candidates should practise writing time-limited tasks to a specific word count.

There was sometimes a tendency to write stories in **Question 3**, when descriptive writing was required, although this was not as evident as in previous years. For **Section A**, strong responses were those with an original flavour and a convincing sense of place, character or atmosphere. For example, the reader was able to feel a sense of drama and suspense in the story in **Question 1**; appreciate the contrasting atmosphere of the two descriptive pieces in **Question 2**; or visualise the colour, sound and movement in **Question 3**.

Imaginative writing could often have been improved with a higher degree of structural control (for example, ensuring the use of paragraphs) and employing suitable language devices to create effects. Some weaker responses included tense confusions, especially in attempts to create drama or a sense of time passing in **Question 1**. Candidates should be encouraged to utilise one main tense in their stories.

The more successful **Section B** answers kept the target audience in mind throughout and adopted language and structural techniques to match that audience. Weaker responses revealed difficulties with using the conventions of different forms, establishing a mature, credible voice, or developing a well thought-out, logically organised line of argument.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Imaginative writing

Question 1 – Story

Write a story called *Surprise*, about an unexpected visitor. In your writing, create a sense of drama and suspense.

This was the most popular question by far and most candidates wrote complete stories. Some responses were story openings; these needed to be rounded off to form a complete story, as instructed in the question.

Stronger candidates managed to generate drama and suspense by skilfully creating character and setting from the opening of the story, for example, 'Dusk encroached onto the terrace of our house faster than usual; black clouds gathered casting an ominous shadow across the landscape.' These candidates also kept the reader guessing by gradually revealing plot details that allowed for rising tension and suspense.

Manipulation of narrative viewpoint and character perspective proved to be successful. In one successful response, the writer adopted a third person narrative viewpoint of a break-in to a house. The robber was referred to as the intruder and, through the deployment of subtle clues, the reader was left under the impression that this was no ordinary thief, before the final reveal that the intruder was in fact a raccoon.

Weaker responses often started with mundane and routine detail which was not relevant to the task, for example, 'My alarm buzzed with its usual annoying buzz, it was 7.30 am, time to get ready for school'. They tended to demonstrate a more limited use of imagination and often wrote about surprise birthday parties, other celebratory events or being reunited with long lost family members, or took the title too literally, ending with someone shouting 'Surprise!'. There were quite a number of answers where the visitor seemed scary but turned out to be a kitten or puppy. Many also mimicked popular genres of horror/thriller and there was a disconcerting amount of violence in some scripts.

Question 2 – Contrasting descriptive pieces

Write two contrasting descriptive pieces (300 – 450 words each): the first about a brand-new stadium built for a national sporting event; and the second about the same stadium, disused and abandoned, ten years later. In your writing, create a sense of atmosphere and place.

Most candidates who answered this question were able to provide a clear contrast between the two pieces. Stronger candidates described emotions as well as the physical stadia, for example, 'It was almost a religious experience going into this massive architectural masterpiece'. Some had the stadium hit by a tornado, replicating the problems that occur in the Florida region. Others used figurative language effectively in their descriptions, for example, 'The gleaming plastic seats kept watch as though expecting an invasion. They were right to: the crowds flooded into the vast expanse of the stands, swarming like bees to their seats.'

Weaker candidates often took a narrative approach to the task and included a personal story such as a family reunion or bereavement. Their descriptions were often very literal, for example, 'There were many seats in rows with colours of the team,' and the contrast was often just the opposite of what had been described earlier but with a sense of decay/dereliction, such as, 'The outcome of the stadium was not good, the field was a mess, the seats were not good they were pulled off'. Some candidates commented on a game in the first section, whereas they needed to describe the stadium. Others over-used lists of adjectives dealing with the technology and new features of the stadium, needing to create a sense of atmosphere.

Question 3 – Descriptive writing

Write a descriptive piece called *Floating*, about a ride in a hot-air balloon. In your writing, focus on colour, sound and movement to help your reader imagine the scene.

Quite often, description was structured within a narrative framework and sometimes this was very effective, as long as the focus of the writing remained descriptive.

Stronger candidates produced some powerful imaginative writing. They were able to keep to the descriptive stance throughout the piece and colour, sound and movement were described with subtlety and precision. They often featured precise environments for the balloon ride and a specific time of day, such as over a forest for a dusk excursion in autumn; they also employed a focus on the balloon's movements in conjunction with phases of the ride, such as boarding and ascent, utilising a narrative framework to facilitate specified descriptive focus. These candidates used imagery, powerful adjectives and senses to create a vivid and believable scene, for example, 'The ride was like a piano symphony on air' and, 'a blue as faded as denim jeans, the red as deep as the Red Sea'. Some effective description was characterised by the use of different language devices in the same sentence, to intensify the scene: 'The mist blanketed the peaks in a thick cloud of pale hues, like a veil.'

Many other strong candidates used a zooming-in technique to focus on specific landscapes being flown over in the balloon, such as this example which incorporated all three sensory prompts outlined in the question: 'Emerald fields were dotted with gaily-coloured flowers – clusters of blushing peonies and sentinel-like tulips and swathes of bright yellow daffodils and pretty, white daisies. All swaying gently to the soft symphony produced by a tranquil evening's breeze.' Other strong responses took different perspectives, such as one which answered the question from the perspective of a bird that landed on the basket and hitched a short ride.

While the stronger responses started immediately at the balloon with it taking off, the weaker ones often began with a long section of narrative starting from leaving home and eventually arriving at the balloon launch. Many went through the prompts in a pedestrian manner, first writing about colours, then sounds and finally movement. Other weaker responses, rather than producing a descriptive piece, got absorbed in narrative, such as someone's fear of flying and heights, getting caught in a storm, or even a balloon malfunction that ended in tragedy. They often listed adjectives extensively to produce catalogues of colours and sounds, rather than incorporating these into a full and effective description.

Section B: Writing for an audience

Question 4 – Magazine article

In your class, you have been discussing the problems caused by the amount of plastic that people throw away. Write an article for your school magazine called *No More Plastic!* In your writing, create a sense of the scale of the problem and the importance of action.

This Question produced many responses which showed a good level of knowledge about the topic and clear engagement with it.

Stronger candidates used rhetorical language effectively to persuade the audience, linking the topic directly to their lives. One candidate, like many others, began by using a rhetorical question and also personalised the issue thus, 'Do you remember a time when our local beaches were not covered in plastic straws, bottles and bags?' Many used sub-headings and topic sentences effectively to assist them in structuring their talk. Another effective feature was the purposeful use of discourse markers to consolidate structure, for example, 'Another, more obvious example of plastic waste is...', 'Furthermore...', 'Considering our wider environment...'. There were also some particularly effective and convincing concluding messages, in some cases succinctly expressed, with impassioned pleas, such as, 'Small steps can lead to big changes',

'Everything you and I do today determines our tomorrow,' and, 'Earth, our home, can no longer be viewed as disposable.'

Weaker responses provided lots of facts and information, but needed to support their claims with evidence. Many would have done better to remember the form (magazine article) and audience (school) and thus address the school directly. Lengthy digressions on climate change science and tenuous links made to the plastic waste issue caused some responses to lose focus. Candidates needed to balance their responses by fully addressing the second part of the question about the importance of action beyond saying, 'We must do something about it'.

Question 5 – Contrasting reviews

A new TV series about cooking has just ended. Write two contrasting reviews (300 – 450 words each), which will be published on a website called *Your TV*. One of the reviews is positive about the series, the other is critical of it.

The most successful answers for this question were those who conveyed a genuine interest in cooking.

Stronger candidates demonstrated a confident first-person voice and a good understanding of the form of a review. Some clearly focused on unique aspects of their imagined show, criticising it for considered reasons, for example, 'Another factor that led me to conclude that the show was truly horrible was its use of racial stereotypes in a segment called "Food of the inner city"'. Stronger candidates had a good grasp of culinary vocabulary: 'the blends of forest green lettuce, blood red tomatoes, and sunbeam orange carrots created such a sense of elegance', 'whoever fries their eggs in half butter, half oil?' and, 'each episode whisked away our troubles and stirred the inner chef in us'. They also often reviewed a variety of aspects of the programme, such as the personalities of the host and guest chefs, the range of culinary techniques and specialised equipment featured and the usefulness of the programme's own website.

Weaker responses were often more vague, with some eschewing to mention the name of the programme they were reviewing. They tended to answer the task in the form of a recount or report of a particular episode, rather than reviewing it critically. Reviews providing exaggerated opposite opinions – for example, 'Wow, what an amazing show!' contrasted with, 'What was this mess of a show?' – needed to go beyond this to include more subject-specific detail. Some focused on the personalities of the chefs and guests in 'mirrored' reviews and could have explored further aspects of the show. The fact that the show had just ended suggests that reviewers would need to use a variety of past tenses, which brought out some grammatical weaknesses in some writing.

Question 6 – Script of a talk

A young teacher is going to give a talk to a group of 16-year-old students who are interested in teaching as a career. Write the script of the talk. In your writing, create a sense of the rewards and challenges that this type of work can bring.

Most candidates showed a real understanding of the challenges facing teachers, and were able to balance this very well with the rewards.

Stronger candidates gave some careful explication of personal professional experience of 'highs and lows' in and out of the classroom, with an equitable focus on 'rewards' (such as moulding young minds, educating future leaders, one's own emotional and professional development) and 'challenges' (such as disrespectful or problem students, lack of resources and unreasonably large class sizes). Stronger candidates noted that they were supposed to be a young teacher and gave convincing examples of their experience and helpful guidance for future teachers. They were able to discuss the topic in detail and used language features to persuade their audience, providing more sophisticated reasoning, for example, 'Teaching is a healthy way to keep your brain functioning and learning new information' and, 'balancing time might be tricky sometimes'.

Weaker candidates sometimes used an informal register that was not appropriate to the context of the talk, such as, 'you know bro' or, 'like, right?' Examples of experience also needed to sound more realistic at times. Some responses were framed as an article or letter, and there were other instances where 'talk' was interpreted as 'conversation', resulting in a transcription of an imagined exchange between the young teacher and the audience that did not best facilitate the 'rewards/challenges' emphasis in the question.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 9093/22
Writing

Key messages

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- When reading the questions, candidates should concentrate on the instructions and should carefully interpret and deconstruct the question. For example, in **Question 1** the key instruction is to 'write a story', creating a sense of 'excitement and anticipation' and in **Question 6** the key instruction is to 'write the script of the talk' and to focus on 'the sense of achievement and on the challenges and rewards'. To ensure that candidates do understand the key requirements of each question, it may be helpful to underline key words within the question.
- Effective planning, following on from successful interpretation of the question, leads to better crafted and well-shaped responses, therefore minimising irrelevant detail and generic content.
- Candidates should also consider the following as part of the planning stage: the *purpose* of the piece, the prescribed *form* and *audience* as well as the most appropriate *voice* or persona to adopt, the *mood* and *tone* that they should try to create in their writing and the most suitable *structure* to employ. One key aspect of the most successful and effective writing in **Section A** is a convincing and credible narrator/persona, while the key aspects of the most successful and effective writing in **Section B** are a clearly developed, logically sequenced structure, together with an authentic sense of voice.
- Candidates must understand the importance of writing in clear, properly punctuated English, with accurate sentence demarcation, to perform well in this exam, including those scripts that have good content. One error that occurred regularly was that of separating sentences with commas rather than full stops. Clear expression in simple and compound sentences without much variety is preferable to expression in long, rambling sentences that do not flow easily. Candidates must be aware of the need for appropriate paragraphing in their responses, including paragraphing for direct speech.
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General comments

Technical accuracy tended to be more secure in **Section B** than in **Section A**, where tense errors and confusions often caused problems. **Section B** responses were also often structured more effectively than **Section A**. It was pleasing to note that more responses were paragraphed effectively than in previous sessions.

Quite a number of submissions self-penalised on the grounds of rubric infringement: some essays were appreciably short of the minimum word limit. Candidates should practise writing time-limited tasks to a specific word count.

There was sometimes a tendency to write stories in **Question 3**, when descriptive writing was required, although this was not as evident as in previous years. For **Section A**, strong responses were those with an original flavour and a convincing sense of place, character or atmosphere. For example, the reader was able to feel a sense of excitement and anticipation in the story in **Question 1**; appreciate the contrasting atmosphere of the two descriptive pieces in **Question 2**; or visualise the movement, sound and colour in **Question 3**.

Imaginative writing could often have been improved with a higher degree of structural control (for example, ensuring the use of paragraphs) and employing suitable language devices to create effects. Some weaker responses included tense confusions, especially in attempts to create drama or a sense of time passing in **Question 1**. Candidates should be encouraged to utilise one main tense in their stories.

The more successful **Section B** answers kept the target audience in mind throughout and adopted language and structural techniques to match that audience. Weaker responses revealed difficulties with using the conventions of different forms, establishing a mature, credible voice, or developing a well thought-out, logically organised line of argument.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Imaginative writing

Question 1 – Story

Write a story called *A New Start*, about going to live in a new place. In your writing, create a sense of excitement and anticipation.

This was the most popular question by far, with nearly two-thirds of candidates answering this question. A large number of candidates wrote about moving to a new house or about leaving home for the first time to join university.

The moment a young person leaves home to be on his own is one filled with anticipation and excitement, so this was quite an effective storyline for stronger candidates, who managed to generate excitement and anticipation by focusing on specific details and elaborating on characters' thoughts and feelings. For example, one candidate, writing about leaving home for university, wrote: 'Maa nodded, tears rolling down her red, puffy cheeks. I could tell by her heavily sunken eye bags, puffy, almost swollen cheeks and raspy voice, that she had been up the whole night, balling her eyes out. But I had to do this. For myself. For Maa. For us.' Stronger candidates also moved smoothly through their narratives, creating a sense of excitement and anticipation both in the language used and in the sequencing of events in their narratives.

Weaker candidates needed more originality in the beginnings and narratives of their stories, to provide more detail and to make the reader feel more engaged. An example of an extract from such a response which would benefit from this direction is: 'I would meet different people, different neighbours and different lifestyle. Changing a place to live would be going to hard for me leave the place where I used to live for more than years would be hard.'

Question 2 – Contrasting descriptive pieces

Write two contrasting descriptive pieces (300 – 450 words each): the first about a large train station at rush hour; and the second about the same station in the middle of the night. In your writing, create a sense of atmosphere and place.

It was sometimes evident that candidates found it more difficult to describe the station late at night, leading to some descriptions that were a bit unbalanced.

Stronger candidates were able to bring out a clear and balanced contrast between the two pieces, using a range of language effects to create a sense of atmosphere and place. The more engaging answers brought out the disorder, noise and near chaos in the train station during the rush hour, compared to the sheer peace and silence in the middle of the night. Many candidates focused on the different people in the setting to very good effect, sometimes with humour, for example, 'There was even a bespectacled boy who was carrying a large trunk, on top of which was a cage containing an owl. Honestly, you get all sorts of people in this station!'

Others demonstrated familiarity with the ingredients of platform life around a large station in their country and recalled smells, sounds and sights effectively: 'As you make your way towards the entrance of the central station, a foul smell hits you, a smell created by the sweat of hundreds of people and other factors like the most unhygienic washrooms.'

Weaker candidates needed to address the 'sense of atmosphere and place' part of the question, and tended to write vignettes about separate groups, activities, and events or relied on listing: 'During rush hours one can struggle to purchase tickets due to the long waiting hours for tickets, people usually reach early in the morning at 5am to get tickets first.'

Question 3 – Descriptive writing

Write a descriptive piece called *On the Dancefloor*. In your writing, focus on movement, sound and colour to help your reader imagine the scene.

Some very good pieces were written in response to this question. Quite often description was structured within a narrative framework and sometimes this was very effective, as long as the focus of the writing remained descriptive.

Stronger candidates produced some powerful imaginative writing. They were able to keep to the descriptive stance throughout the piece and movement, sound and colour were described with subtlety and precision. Figurative language, especially metaphor, played a large part in a lot of these effective responses, for example, 'The music is steady. Fluid. It urges the candidates to succumb to its temptation, persuading them to follow its intoxicating rhythm. The tune is so potent that you can taste it in the charged air, mingled with the palpable excitement and nervousness in the room.' One candidate took an original approach, describing an ice cream parlour as the dance floor, with the dancers becoming the combinations of ice cream colours that swirled and combined together in their containers as they were mixed for the customers. Another candidate wrote effectively about colour, moving beyond the simplistic listing sometimes evident in responses: 'The walls were painted a shade of red so dark that at first glance it appeared black. They seemed depthless if one stared at them for too long.'

Weaker candidates wrote mostly in narrative form, which hindered attempts to achieve movement, sound and colour effectively. Others relied on listing adjectives for their description, producing catalogues of colours and sounds, and went through the prompts in a pedestrian manner, first writing about movement, then sounds and finally colour, rather than incorporating all of these elements into a full and effective description.

Section B: Writing for an audience

Question 4 – Review

You recently saw a TV documentary about natural life under the sea. Write a review of the documentary, which will be published in your school magazine.

Most candidates who answered this question showed awareness of the hazards of water pollution. The majority of candidates achieved an appropriate sense of voice and directed their discourse at an appropriate audience.

Stronger candidates wrote enthusiastically about the documentary and used an appropriate tone for a school magazine. One began thus: 'Did you know that 95 per cent of the seas are still unexplored? And we have already found hundreds of species in the five percent we have explored. Who knows what kind of monsters we'll find down there? Maybe scary enough to give Hollywood a new angle for monsters in sci-fi films.' One candidate showed gentle humour appropriate to the readership of a school magazine, contrasting this documentary with so many others which, 'drone on and on – and are always narrated by Benedict Cumberbatch'.

Weaker candidates gave an account of the documentary's contents without reviewing it. Others started their writing as a review but lapsed into talking about the climate crisis and issues to do with pollution of the ocean, losing focus from their review and struggling to include appropriate content. For example, one candidate wrote: 'Life is fascinating while here on land there's a whole other world in the sea which we know close to nothing about we might know a few fishes here and there but we might not expect the depth that it holds.'

Question 5 – Contrasting letters

A local newspaper recently published an article about plans to prevent cars from driving into the centre of town where you live. Readers were invited to write letters to respond to this article. Write two contrasting letters (300 – 450 words each): one supporting the plans in the article; and the other criticising them.

Stronger candidates were able to make sustained arguments, demonstrating a clear understanding of the purpose and format of a letter to the editor. Many candidates focused on discussing pollution, health issues and safety as reasons to ban cars. The critical responses highlighted business interests, mobility issues and lack of decent public transport as reasons to oppose the ban. Some of them also used examples of the issues faced by elderly citizens, children and families while giving statistical evidence to substantiate their views. They used a range of other rhetorical devices such as rhetorical questions, different sentence structures, direct address and powerful vocabulary. The best responses were formal in tone and convincing, challenging others' opinions in an incisive, yet polite, manner.

Weaker candidates needed to develop on their opinions, sometimes presenting them in a list format that doesn't correspond to the required form of the writing: 'It is very good idea that the cars should not be driving in the centre of the town where we live because it is not save for us that cars been driven in the society where we live their children playing old people walking and you never know what is going to happen next.' An absence of paragraphs in many weaker responses affected the organisation of ideas and arguments. In some cases, the candidates did not use sufficient vocabulary to express some of the more complex ideas. Other candidates wrote two contrasting mini-essays without following the conventions of a letter as instructed in the question.

Question 6 – Script of a talk

A student who recently ran a marathon for the first time is going to give a talk at your school about the experience. Write the script of the talk. In your writing, focus on the sense of achievement and on the challenges and rewards that this type of physical activity can bring.

This was the most popular question in **Section B**. Many candidates focused on all three of the aspects stipulated in the question (sense of achievement, challenges and rewards), although there tended to be an overlap between sense of achievement and rewards.

Stronger candidates often built themselves a character as a mover, 'slow', 'lazy' and 'slightly obese' and wrote up a narrative through the challenges, 'I could barely run a kilometre without passing out', then rewards, 'Then soon came a point when I became addicted to the gym and my healthy lifestyle.' More challenges followed in the marathon, 'I could not keep up with some of the athletic runners, but it was enough to be in the middle', and finally achievement, 'I finally felt like a winner. I still feel like a winner'.

Weaker candidates tended to place emphasis on one or two of the aspects stipulated in the question rather than responding to it fully. Rather than write a talk, some candidates wrote a question and answer session that didn't adhere to the form specified in the question. Some candidates seemed to become very emotionally involved in their own or created experiences, and thus neglected to address their audience.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 9093/23
Writing

Key messages

- Candidates should manage their time carefully, allocating an equal amount of time for each section of the paper. Candidates are advised to allocate a set amount of time to: identifying factors for writing; planning to write; writing; checking; and correcting.
- When reading the questions, candidates should concentrate on the instructions and should carefully interpret and deconstruct the question. For example, in **Question 1** the key instruction is to 'write a story', creating a sense of 'suspense and drama' and in **Question 6** the key instruction is to 'write the voiceover script' and to 'create a sense of excitement and focus on the importance of the occasion'. To ensure that candidates do understand the key requirements of each question, it may be helpful to underline key words within the question.
- Effective planning, following on from successful interpretation of the question, leads to better crafted and well-shaped responses, therefore minimising irrelevant detail and generic content.
- Candidates should also consider the following as part of the planning stage: the *purpose* of the piece, the prescribed *form* and *audience* as well as the most appropriate *voice* or persona to adopt, the *mood* and *tone* that they should try to create in their writing and the most suitable *structure* to employ. One key aspect of the most successful and effective writing in **Section A** is a convincing and credible narrator/persona, while the key aspects of the most successful and effective writing in **Section B** are a clearly developed, logically sequenced structure, together with an authentic sense of voice.
- Candidates must understand the importance of writing in clear, properly punctuated English, with accurate sentence demarcation, to perform well in this exam, including those scripts that have good content. One error that occurred regularly was that of separating sentences with commas rather than full stops. Clear expression in simple and compound sentences without much variety is preferable to expression in long, rambling sentences that do not flow easily. Candidates must be aware of the need for appropriate paragraphing in their responses, including paragraphing for direct speech.
- Candidates should be encouraged to proofread carefully, particularly for accurate sentence demarcation and for tense confusion/inconsistency. Such errors impede, sometimes seriously, the overall sense of fluency and cohesion.
- In preparing for **Section A**: Imaginative writing, candidates should develop skills in differentiating between 'showing' versus 'telling', to improve both descriptive and narrative skills. When preparing for **Section B**: Writing for an audience, candidates should be encouraged to read a wide variety of newspaper and magazine articles, both print and online, as background preparation. Candidates should be exposed to the tone, register and format of magazine articles, newspaper correspondence, speeches and voiceover scripts.

General comments

Technical accuracy tended to be more secure in **Section B** than in **Section A**, where tense errors and confusions often caused problems. **Section B** responses were also often structured more effectively than **Section A**. It was pleasing to note that more responses were paragraphed effectively than in previous sessions.

Quite a number of submissions self-penalised on the grounds of rubric infringement: some essays were appreciably short of the minimum word limit. Candidates should practise writing time-limited tasks to a specific word count.

There was sometimes a tendency to write stories in **Question 3**, when descriptive writing was required, although this was not as evident as in previous years. For **Section A**, strong responses were those with an original flavour and a convincing sense of place, character or atmosphere. For example, the reader was able to feel a sense of suspense and drama in the story in **Question 1**; appreciate the contrasting atmosphere of the two descriptive pieces in **Question 2**; or visualise the colour and sound in **Question 3**.

Imaginative writing could often have been improved with a higher degree of structural control (for example, ensuring the use of paragraphs) and employing suitable language devices to create effects. Some weaker responses included tense confusions, especially in attempts to create drama or a sense of time passing in **Question 1**. Candidates should be encouraged to utilise one main tense in their stories.

The more successful **Section B** answers kept the target audience in mind throughout and adopted language and structural techniques to match that audience. Weaker responses revealed difficulties with using the conventions of different forms, establishing a mature, credible voice, or developing a well thought-out, logically organised line of argument.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Imaginative writing

Question 1 – Story

Write a story which begins with the following sentence: *Suddenly everything was silent; he stood still, not knowing what to do next.* In your writing, create a sense of suspense and drama.

Stronger candidates clearly focused on creating suspense almost immediately, as suggested by the given opening sentence. Effective opening paragraphs included the following examples: 'As far as the eye could see, only a few lights were visible. He was alone. Yet at the same time, an uneasy feeling of being watched crept over him' and, 'The sound of the car engines and laughter was replaced by the wind, only the wind.' Stories about domestic violence and dramatic assaults created a sense of drama and suspense, through expressions such as, 'His heart beat fast, as his hands clenched around the door handle,' and, 'her green eyes filled with fear.'

Another writer depicted a Game of Thrones type hero who was forced to choose between blowing up an entire building full of innocent people or suffering instant death at the hands of a ruthless Emperor. This was handled with some ability. Another effective idea was ingenious, framing a typical action moment within another perspective. The hero, Josh, was being cornered by villains, masked and armed, about to kill him. They did so and, after dying in agony, Josh's chest had stopped rising, showing his death. At this point a hard voice broadcasts 'CUT!'....The four men walk back to their starting positions, ready to perform the scene again. 'And.....ACTION!' Most effective answers used a 'showing' and not 'telling' technique to create a sense of drama: for example, 'He could hear a faint ringing that caused his head to throb and his heart to hammer out of his chest.'

Weaker responses lacked paragraphing and needed to focus more on creating the sense of suspense and drama. Some of the responses also needed more developing and were under the specified word count. Some candidates tended to rush into an action-packed narrative and lost control, either of the narrative or linguistically. An example of a weaker response was a story about a paintball competition where the main character, 'blindly shoot at the enemies' and was saved when, 'Ron bombed most of the fleet attacking me.'

Question 2 – Contrasting descriptive pieces

Write two contrasting descriptive pieces (300 – 450 words each): the first about an old and unused building in a town centre; and the second about the same building, being used as a community centre a year later. In your writing, create a sense of atmosphere and place.

Responses to this question often took quite a mechanical approach of listing what the building looked like before and after, with little interest for the reader. However, the revival of the building was usually dealt with in a far more dynamic and interesting way.

Stronger candidates had a clear image in their minds of the building's location and what it looked like. One, for example, was situated in an abandoned shopping centre, where, 'The area was not only devoid of life; it seemed to actively fight life.' The writer went on to clarify the sense of decay with detailed descriptions of crumbling walls and decaying plants. Then, after the restoration and conversion into a community centre, 'Drivers have found themselves slowing down to admire the life expanding from the building. The walls are decorated with hand-drawn murals of jungle animals' and the piece ended: 'Life and death are in a constant struggle with each other. The new centre gives life an edge over death.'

Weaker candidates tended to give rather flat descriptions of the building, making it hard for the reader to picture the building, or simply wrote in the second piece the opposite of everything from the first: a fault in the first half was transformed into a positive in the second. Candidates who produced such responses needed to give more thought to creating an atmospheric piece. For example, 'the building was old and abandoned with no-one in it' in the first piece became, 'the building was lively with lots of people in it' in the second piece.

Question 3 – Descriptive writing

Write a descriptive piece called *The Harbour*. In your writing, create a sense of atmosphere, and focus on colour and sound to help your reader imagine the scene.

Responses to this question were generally focused. Some that were purely narrative needed to offer more in the way of description.

Stronger candidates focused on creating distinctive moods/atmosphere by carefully considering vocabulary choices, such as in this evocative description of a harbour that 'lies in silence, only punctuated by the fishermen and a small church. I could see gray ships on a rough gray sea outlined by a gray sky that was obstructed by gray fog'. Another strong response placed the description in the context of the animated atmosphere of an annual festival.

Weaker candidates sometimes used unconvincing expressions, such as, 'I felt my prancing heart combust' and tended to lose control of vocabulary. Some struggled a little with what one would see at a harbour and responded with a sea-based narrative rather than a description. Weaker candidates also tended to use all their descriptive ideas at the beginning, resorting to narrative in the remaining part of the response.

Section B: Writing for an audience

Question 4 – Report

You recently attended an open day at a university, to look around and decide if you would like to study there in the future. Write a report for your school magazine, describing the facilities and giving your impression of what it would be like to study there.

Many candidates wrote positively and logically about their visit, focusing on facilities (gym, food court, the library, etc.) and discussing their quality. There were some candidates who didn't address the latter half of the question concerning what it would be like to study at the university; candidates needed to cover the whole question in order to be successful.

Stronger candidates were able to engage their intended audience by creating a suitable tone. They wrote about college facilities and used this as a springboard to develop their ideas and opinions about studying at the university. Some of them seemed to draw on recent experience of college visits and wrote convincingly. They discussed fraternities and sororities, the 'nature of campus' and buildings that were 'clean and sustainable'. Some opted to use sections with headings for this question, which improved the flow and structuring of ideas.

Weaker candidates limited their responses to writing about the facilities and were rather list-like in structure. They needed more development and used general words such as 'amazing' and 'beautiful'. The weakest candidates gave a room-by-room description, focusing on unimportant details, such as the colour of the chairs, in a haphazard way. There was a lot of repetition of vocabulary, such as 'nice' and 'modern' and over-use of superlatives, for example, 'the best laboratories' and 'the largest library'. They often found it hard to achieve and maintain a suitable register.

Question 5 – Contrasting articles

A newspaper recently invited readers to write articles responding to the opinion that children have too many rules in their lives. Write two contrasting articles (300 – 450 words each): one supporting the opinion; and the other challenging it

Some candidates chose to write the two contrasting pieces from a parent and child, thus enabling them to create different voices. The adult's voice was often more effective than the child's or teenager's, with more convincing arguments. Some candidates confused rules with responsibilities.

Stronger candidates produced well-balanced responses to this question. Many argued that over-strict rules can have a damaging effect on the growing child, and can make him/her socially isolated, and resentful. 'The institution of a dictatorship over the children has an adverse effect', wrote one candidate, while another wrote, 'I have two beautiful children and believe that allowing a child to grow and thrive unrestricted makes them more well-rounded, overall better, more human people.' On the other side of the argument, 'Rules are the building blocks of life', one candidate wrote, and others urged the need for guidance, boundaries, and respect. One writer admitted to having had extremely strict parents to whom he felt grateful, having graduated from a prime university. 'If we want future generations to succeed', he claimed, 'we must hold children to the highest standards.'

Weaker candidates struggled to give an equal commitment to both the positive and negative responses and often the challenge of adding depth to the discussion was not entirely met. Others that used a mirroring approach for positive and negative perspectives tended to fall into repetition.

Question 6 – Voiceover

Write the voiceover script for a TV news report about the discovery of some ancient treasure in your area. In your writing, create a sense of excitement and focus on the importance of the occasion.

Not all candidates demonstrated a full grasp of the format of a 'voiceover', which sometimes led to responses not being fully appropriate to the task.

Stronger candidates skilfully combined the description of each of the TV shots with the voiceover that accompanied it. They presented a detailed visual illustration of the footage, which was then well supported by the verbal component of the voiceover text. Some successful responses created a sense of excitement by asking questions and providing hints about a lost civilisation, the material used for building the structure not being indigenous to the area and a sense of mystery arising from the discovery of engraved symbols.

Weaker candidates often wrote their responses in the form of an article or a conversation between two reporters commenting on the event; such responses needed to provide more representation of what was happening on screen.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 9093/31
Text Analysis

Key messages

Candidates should prepare for this component by gaining a solid knowledge of linguistics which they can apply when producing a piece of directed writing. They need to be able to use this knowledge to comment on the style and language of that piece of writing in relation to and in comparison with an accompanying text.

For **Question 1 Part (a)**, as candidates produce their directed writing text they should pay close attention to the accompanying instructions and text, which provide the context and background information to guide them. Candidates ought to concentrate on making carefully considered choices of appropriate lexis, register and tone to suit the task set, and ensure they achieve the highest possible standards of accuracy and expression in their writing.

For **Question 1 Part (b)** candidates need to ensure they compare both the style and the language of the original text and their own, with a clear emphasis on selecting the aspects of language from both texts that may be analysed to demonstrate the specific effects that are created.

For **Question 2** candidates need to identify specific features of each text's language and style, relate these to supporting textual details to examine the specific effects produced, and compare how the texts' differences in purpose, context, and audience affect the creation of different meanings.

General comments

Many candidates were evidently well prepared for a component designed to test their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of linguistics and to analyse texts in a comparative fashion. A very small proportion of the responses to **1(b)** and **2** appear to have resulted from candidates chiefly 'gleaning hints' from the information provided in the questions' instructions rather than carefully analysing the texts themselves. It is good to note that very few candidates produced short passages of superficial commentary.

Question 1(a) is a directed writing task. Candidates need to follow the instructions carefully to produce a written response informed by the style and language of the accompanying text, in this session a passage from a website advertising a holiday resort which offers accommodation in an underwater room. Reworking (or recasting) of the original text should incorporate recognisable conventions of the text type identified in the instructions; in this session it was a formal report outlining the conclusions of an inspector for an international hotel standards authority who has assessed the underwater room. Careful consideration of the target audience (the inspector's 'supervisor') was required. Candidates are instructed to produce responses of 120–150 words in length and were expected to write clearly, accurately, creatively and effectively for the prescribed purpose and audience.

A good working knowledge of linguistics is indispensable in responding to **Question 1(b)**, where candidates are required to compare the style and language of the formal report produced for **1(a)** with the style and language of an advertisement for the underwater room on the holiday resort's website. Here, candidates are assessed for their ability to select and analyse specific textual details, for example, those concerning purpose and register, format and choices of lexis and the ability to support their evaluation of the language found in both texts with close textual reference. Recognition of the style and the range of lexical choices exhibited in the website's description of the underwater room, and comparing the effects produced with those in the candidate's own reworking were key discriminators in the most informed and substantive responses.

In **Question 2**, a sound knowledge of linguistics is again required as candidates are assessed for: comparative appreciation of the texts' forms and conventions and awareness of their effects; an understanding of how purpose, context and audience shape meaning; and an appreciation of linguistic

techniques. It is very important that candidates employ some form of comparative approach. A topical approach guarantees continuous comparison in which a concluding section can be used to emphasise the essential similarities and differences between the two texts and the relative strengths of each. It is good to see that a significant proportion of candidates adopted a topical approach – these also tended to be the candidates who demonstrated the most comprehensive linguistic knowledge.

It is again worth reminding both centres and candidates that **Question 1(a)** accounts for only one fifth of the total marks available and that the analytical and comparative nature of the tasks for **Questions 1(b)** and **2** require adequate time for thorough assessment of the texts and the writing of detailed comparative responses. Candidates are therefore strongly advised to complete **Questions 1** and **2** within equal one-hour time allocations, having begun to carefully assess all the Texts (three in total) in the initial fifteen minutes of the examination (the total length of the examination being two hours and fifteen minutes).

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Candidates chiefly responded enthusiastically to this directed writing task, usually demonstrating sound familiarity with the purpose and conventions of a formal report, though some of the work produced more resembled formal letters. Others produced a review rather than a report, or created responses that were akin to compendiums of plausible comments made by former guests rather than by an inspector. Occasionally candidates incorporated the graphology of a report pro forma in recognition of the objectives and frequency of an inspector's professional activities. Most candidates ensured their reports contained conventional features for organising prefatory information: a brief title to identify the subject of the report, a date and the supervisor's contact details. Salutations were mainly perfunctory ('Dear Mrs Smith', 'Dear Supervisor') yet successfully identified the intended recipient.

Most candidates remained objective and focused on plausible reworking of details selected from the website's descriptions of the underwater room, and drew reasonable conclusions based on an inspection of the hotel's features. Positive reports contained observations based on clear rephrasing such as: 'a stable structure', 'an amazing lounge area from which to soak up the bright sunshine', and, 'the clear glass windows offered a stunning view of the seabed and surrounding waters'. Critical reports were chiefly based on valid inferences from the original text: 'the boat ride to the room is mercifully short, made very uncomfortable by choppy water', 'one feels trapped in a bubble, terribly cramped', and 'bright spotlights prevent peaceful slumber'. Reports mainly consisted of a few short to medium length paragraphs or a series of bullet points addressing features in turn with the inspector's findings clearly conveyed.

Weak responses tended to include lengthy introductory remarks, often focused on preparations for the inspection, including travel to the resort's location and the listing of specific features of the facility that would be subject to scrutiny. A number of candidates quoted or paraphrased many of the webpage's most attractive descriptions; such responses would be more successful if they shaped the material more, to produce credible evidence in support of conclusions drawn. A higher degree of clarity in expression was often needed in candidates' attempts to clearly present the inspector's findings and recommendations.

In strong responses candidates consistently presented supporting arguments clearly corresponding to details carefully selected from the website's description of the underwater room. Most candidates provided appropriate salutations (most frequently 'Dear Supervisor', occasionally an honorific 'To the Lead Supervisor of the IHSA') and polite closings (often simply signed with initials and a surname and accompanied by the appropriate title 'Inspector', occasionally with a geographic designation, e.g. 'South-East Asia'). Many of these reports were organised by the use of purposeful topic sentences or, in imitation of the original text, sub-headings, and recorded both positive and negative findings. Such responses retained a high degree of objectivity that was also achieved by use of the third person. Reference was made to industry standards or codes and whether they were met or not, e.g. 'limited accessibility for disabled, elderly and very young persons in direct violation of code 15, section 2'. There was a high degree of consensus that some aspects of the underwater room were deserving of special consideration, often leading to the expression of plausible concerns; for example, the 'local hardwood' cladding would be 'subject to severe salt weathering', or the captain 'did not possess the requisite passenger license' and had 'neglected to ensure there were a sufficient number of floatation devices on board'. Conclusions consisted of

ratings ('2/5', '59%', '4 stars out of 5') and concise recommendations ('Close the underwater room until the following areas of concern have been rectified', 'a follow up inspection in six months' time would be appropriate').

Most of the candidates abided by the guidelines concerning the length of their responses (120–150 words); a number of candidates wrote considerably longer pieces that did not best suit the form and purpose specified.

- (b)** This question challenged candidates who did not attempt to analyse style and language or to directly compare different approaches and features in the two texts available to them. Candidates should also remember that where textual references are made, they should draw conclusions concerning their functions and lexical properties; absence of such conclusions often leads to approaches that yield thin and perfunctory responses.

Some candidates sought to deal with each text separately, rather than adopting an integrated approach that would have been more effective for the purposes of comparison. Integrated approaches were almost invariably used to good effect when candidates clearly identified the impact of lexis appearing on the holiday resort's website and then examined the carefully chosen vocabulary used in their reports in a comparative fashion. By so doing, such responses achieved an equal – or very nearly so – comparative emphasis on the website description and the report.

Weak responses were often brief, focussed unequally on the website advertisement compared to their report, and likely to primarily summarise the content of both texts rather than endeavouring to comparatively analyse their style and language. Some candidates mainly listed the conventions they could identify in the website description and their report, especially the use of sub-headings, a variety of sentence types and punctuation marks (especially for exclamations: 'a truly unique experience!'), with brief and infrequent comparison of the texts' levels of formality. Sometimes tone was effectively contrasted, as the website advertisement is wholly positive whereas the reports produced by candidates generally registered dissatisfaction.

The majority of candidates demonstrated adequate knowledge and understanding of a range of some of the conventions of the website advertisement and the formal report. Candidates often began their comparisons by succinctly outlining the purpose and audience of each text (potentially broad for the advertisement, very limited for the report). Candidates usually focused on how the advertisement's sentence and paragraph structure facilitated its dual informative and persuasive purpose. Some also commented on the sequencing of the website advertisement as akin to a journey the reader is taken on and how they deliberately emulated that organisation technique in their reports, 'to walk the supervisor' through a 'virtual' inspection of the underwater room. Candidates could also examine and compare the level of formality exhibited by both texts (many candidates employed a modified formal register in their reports, suggesting a close working relationship between the inspector and the supervisor). In terms of the advertisement's language, candidates chiefly made reference to the use of imperative verbs 'Imagine' and 'Sleep' and the use of the second person pronoun 'you' to directly address the reader. They also commented on the extensive use of adjectives and positive imagery – 'heart-stopping experience' (often identified as hyperbole), 'crystal clear waters' – that endorsed the 'soft sell' tactics of the website advertisement, as opposed to the concrete (often negative) language required for the formal report. Candidates often commented on the use of high frequency lexis (to reach a broad website audience) and low frequency lexis (to meet the requirements of an official body).

In the strongest responses candidates made use of their linguistic knowledge to structure their response, for example by proceeding from word- to sentence-/utterance- to whole text-level in their analysis. They correctly identified pertinent elements of style, quoted briefly and analysed in detail. They clearly appreciated how the informative and advisory nature of their reports (especially those written in a bullet-point format) compared to the exuberance of the website advertisement. There were insightful comments on how the manipulative use of language ('Imagine yourself encapsulated') places the potential consumer within an idyllic location, coupled with the use of modality to make it appear that the experience described is inevitable: 'will start', 'you will get shown'. Some were also able to point out distinctions in the advertisement between the language that creates a blissful experience with the much more functional tone of the final paragraph and its practicalities: 'A mobile phone will be provided'. Consideration was also occasionally given to how the active voice in the advertisement embodied the excitement of briefly residing on a 'private floating island', whilst the passive voice some candidates utilised in their reports embodied a seemingly indifferent mood and focus on the functional aspects of the underwater room.

Question 2

As was the case for **1(b)**, candidates who attempted to analyse Text A and Text B's language and style using a comparative approach demonstrated a higher appreciation of the techniques employed and awareness of the effects created. Some candidates dealt mostly with the content of the Texts and listed techniques they could identify; these needed to come to conclusions about the effects created. In these responses, some recognition was exhibited of the use of form and language to inform the readers of each Text and to convey subject-specific concepts.

Most candidates demonstrated a secure grasp of the conventions of spoken language in Text A, and of written language in Text B. While candidates could usually establish how the audience for both Texts is potentially large, most argued that the audience for Text A would be greater in size than that for Text B: regular, casual listeners of the radio interview would swell its audience, whereas the magazine containing the article featuring Martyn would need to be sought out by readers or received through subscription. Candidates who fully appreciated the Presenter's role as the interviewer in Text A tended to give a more comprehensive examination of spoken features and demonstrated a higher awareness of the context of the interview. There was usually some consideration of the question-and-answer structure of Text A in comparison to the use of rhetorical questions in the opening of Text B. Some candidates noted how a prior interview was edited and crafted to create an article that was impressively exciting in tone (Text B), while the radio interview remained more matter-of-fact (Text A).

Many candidates could also focus on the conventions of spoken language they identified in Text A, especially the non-fluency features associated with spontaneous speech exhibited by Keith, for example: the voiced pause ('um'), hedges ('I think', 'a bit', 'you know') and repairing ('make instantaneous decisions (.) instant decisions'). Some candidates noted the generalised use of the second person by Keith ('you don't') compared with the different way in which 'you' is used by the Presenter to specifically refer to Keith ('is there real fear for you'). Many candidates examined Keith's use of simple adverbs ('really', 'just', 'pretty') and metaphor (how 'the equipment [...] becomes [...] an extension of yourself'). Most noted a relative overall fluency given the subject matter (Keith's professional work), the Presenter's prepared questions and prompts, and the mutual respect exhibited by both speakers for turn-taking that is typical of radio interviews (occasionally with reference to politeness strategy).

In relation to Text B's written mode, candidates usually made an initial reference to the article's enticing title in the imperative, followed by the sub-title's sequence of rhetorical questions and associated, perfunctory affirmations and a pun, crafted to concisely present the subject matter and to gain the reader's attention. It was usually noted that the writer used the third person narrative voice to provide context and additional details, and the first person voice to present a dangerous scenario for the reader's careful consideration ('Now imagine this. You're alone in a vast rainforest'). Some noted the use of direct and indirect speech to present Martyn's views, along with simple present verbs ('he says', 'he thinks'), to establish him as the authority on the topic. Candidates appreciated the range of information-laden compound and complex sentences, use of dynamic verbs ('thrust', 'jerry-rigging' and 'plunging'), technical language ('heli-gimbals', 'high-definition cameras') and regular reference to wild animal species as evidence of a deliberate attempt to create a vibrant piece that amply accommodates readers' prior interest in photography and wildlife.

The strongest responses tended to focus confidently on the effects produced that relate directly to the Texts' shared context of filming in challenging situations. They discussed how the rhetorical questions and inclusion of the colloquial filler 'Erm...' in Text B's subtitle mimic spoken language, creating a light-hearted tone in relation to the earnest repetitions in Text A: 'minimise the risks and manage those risks', 'instantaneous decisions (.) instant decisions'. It was noted that in Text A both the Presenter and Keith make the topic accessible for the casual listener by stressing nouns ('put it on the floor or hang it off your belt or your harness'), in contrast to Text B's use of inclusive pronouns in Martyn's direct speech that seek to involve more knowledgeable readers by inviting them to empathise with his situation: 'You're totally out of your element' and 'You feel pretty lonely'. Text A's high frequency technical lexis ('knob to twiddle', 'hit the button and go') was found to be more informal and so accessible to the radio audience, as opposed to the technical lexis of Text B ('heli-gimbal and jerry-rigging'). The adoration of Martyn as 'the unseen star of the wildlife documentary' through the lexis of heroic film star was also noted. References to exotic locations served to add a sense of adventure in both Texts, and in Text B support the idea that Martyn's endeavours to capture footage for *Planet Earth Diaries* make the reader's professional life seem mundane in comparison: 'It was ten Sunday evening minutes guaranteed to make your Monday morning commute seem all the more humdrum.' In contrast, Keith in Text A employs understatement in explaining the essence of his professional role: 'setting up the cameras in such a way that you don't have to do anything with them'. A few candidates summarised by noting how the magazine article's writer elevated Martyn's status in relation to the reader while the co-operative participants of the radio interview endeavoured to be inclusive of their listeners.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 9093/32
Text Analysis

Key messages

Candidates should prepare for this component by gaining a solid knowledge of linguistics which they can apply when producing a piece of directed writing. They need to be able to use this knowledge to comment on the style and language of that piece of writing in relation to and in comparison with an accompanying text.

For **Question 1 Part (a)**, as candidates produce their directed writing text they should pay close attention to the accompanying instructions and text, which provide the context and background information to guide them. Candidates ought to concentrate on making carefully considered choices of appropriate lexis, register and tone to suit the task set, and ensure they achieve the highest possible standards of accuracy and expression in their writing.

For **Question 1 Part (b)** candidates need to ensure they compare both the style and the language of the original text and their own, with a clear emphasis on selecting the aspects of language from both texts that may be analysed to demonstrate the specific effects that are created.

For **Question 2** candidates need to identify specific features of each text's language and style, relate these to supporting textual details to examine the specific effects produced, and compare how the texts' differences in purpose, context, and audience affect the creation of different meanings.

General comments

Many candidates were evidently well prepared for a component designed to test their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of linguistics and to analyse texts in a comparative fashion. A very small proportion of the responses to **1(b)** and **2** appear to have resulted from candidates chiefly 'gleaning hints' from the information provided in the Questions' instructions rather than carefully analysing the texts themselves. It is good to note that very few candidates produced short passages of superficial commentary.

Question 1(a) is a directed writing task. Candidates need to follow its instructions carefully to produce a written response informed by the style and language of the accompanying text, in this session a transcription of two extracts from a talk entitled 'Why I read a book a day (and why you should too)' given by Tai Lopez. Reworking (or recasting) of the original text should incorporate recognisable conventions of the text type identified in the question's instructions; in this session it was an editorial for a school or college magazine providing views on Tai Lopez's ideas. Candidates are instructed to produce responses of 120–150 words in length and were expected to write clearly, accurately, creatively and effectively for the prescribed purpose and audience.

A good working knowledge of linguistics is indispensable in responding to **Question 1(b)** where candidates are required to compare the style and language of the editorial produced for **1(a)** with the style and language of a transcription of Tai Lopez's talk. Here candidates are assessed for the ability to select and analyse specific textual details, for example, those concerning purpose and register, format and choices of lexis and the ability to support with close textual reference their evaluation of the language found in both texts. Recognition of the style and the range of lexical choices exhibited in the transcription, and comparing the effects produced with those in the candidate's own reworking were key discriminators in the most informed and substantive responses.

In **Question 2**, a sound knowledge of linguistics is again required as candidates are assessed for: comparative appreciation of the texts' forms and conventions and awareness of their effects; an understanding of how purpose, context and audience shape meaning; and, an appreciation of linguistic techniques. It is very important that candidates employ some form of comparative approach. A topical

approach guarantees continuous comparison in which a concluding section can be used to emphasise the essential similarities and differences between the two texts and the relative strengths of each. It is good to see that a significant proportion of candidates adopted a topical approach this session, including those who demonstrated the most comprehensive linguistic knowledge.

It is again worth reminding both centres and candidates that **Question 1(a)** accounts for only one-fifth of the total marks available and that the analytical and comparative nature of the tasks for **Questions 1(b)** and **2** require adequate time for thorough assessment of the texts and the writing of detailed responses. Candidates are therefore strongly advised to complete **Questions 1** and **2** within one-hour time allocations, having begun to carefully assess all the texts (three in total) in the initial fifteen minutes of the examination (the total length of the examination being two hours and fifteen minutes).

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) The directed writing candidates produced usually featured solid engagement with the form and style of an editorial for a school or college magazine. Many attempted to create a convincing persona as an editor of such a publication, who might be identified by name (occasionally in a by-line) and who offers an opinion in first-person singular ('I wholeheartedly agree', 'I don't agree with his method'), although a few candidates employed first-person plural 'we'. Editorial titles ranged from the simple 'Attitudes to Reading' (as in the question instructions) to those that sought to address the audience more assertively ('Why reading still feels like a burden to you') and occasionally inquisitorially ('When was the last time you read a book?'). Opening paragraphs usually established a context ('I recently had the privilege of listening to Tai Lopez's talk...'), frequently in a colloquial style deemed suitable for a peer audience. Tai's key metaphor of books as 'hidden treasure' and the simile advising audience members to regard themselves 'like a gold miner just looking for that one nugget' were aptly reimagined by describing books as 'gems' and readers as 'treasure-seekers'. Rhetorical questions were frequently employed ('Do you have a specific reading style?') and there was some reference to the adage 'You can't judge a book by its cover' to support the opinion that books require a high degree of attention in order to be appreciated.

In the strongest responses, candidates employed a consistent formal register and conceived that their audience could comprise teachers and parents as well as peers. Headers were often employed to identify the educational institution concerned by name alongside a date and issue number in order to add realism. Titles were discriminatory in reworking the original material from the outset ('*The Riches of Reading*') and suitably recast the talk's central metaphor ('We can be made rich by the knowledge found between the pages of a great book'). Mature perspectives were successfully maintained with candidates finding a balance between persuasion and criticism: 'I feel that in this particular issue, society has erred. I hardly come across students from my college who have a genuine interest in reading books'; 'Finding what's relevant is important, but to flip through an entire book three times just to locate a single idea is an inefficient use of one's time'.

Along with clearly articulated opinions of their own, candidates also made pertinent reference to the ideas presented by Tai, including: the value in treating books as 'mentors' is instructive ('which one of us hasn't looked up to a role model?'); 'the modern education system has turned people off books' is 'accurate insofar young people today consume the written word through use of more portable, electronic devices like smart phones and tablets'; and, to 'flip through the pages one time [...] just focus on one chapter' (lines 18–21), was deemed 'doing a disservice to the great writers Tai mentions by suggesting that their wisdom could be gleaned in such a haphazard way'.

Weak responses generally needed to adhere more to the form and style of an editorial. The requirement to explicitly engage with Tai's ideas and offer an opinion on them ('giving your views on his ideas') was not always understood; for a successful response, candidates needed to engage with the text (implying that candidates should make direct reference to Lopez and his talk) and re-contextualise it in their own words for the purposes of an editorial.

Most of the candidates abided by the guidelines concerning the length of their responses (120–150 words) although a considerable number of candidates wrote considerably longer pieces that did not consistently correspond with the form and purpose specified.

- (b) This question challenged candidates who did not attempt to analyse style and language or to directly compare different approaches and features in the two texts available to them. Most candidates applied a suitable methodology to analyse the transcription. Overall, it was apparent that most candidates had been adequately prepared to analyse a transcription of extracts from a public talk.

Some candidates sought to deal with each text separately, rather than adopting an integrated approach that would have been more effective for the purposes of comparison. Integrated approaches were almost invariably used to good effect when candidates clearly identified the impact of Tai's lexical choices and then examined their own carefully chosen vocabulary in the editorial in a comparative fashion. By so doing such responses achieved an equal – or very nearly so – comparative emphasis on the transcription and the editorial.

In weak responses, much attention was paid to listing examples of the spoken mode they found in the transcription, needing to balance this with discussion of their own editorials. Candidates should remember that where textual references are made, they should draw conclusions concerning their functions and lexical properties; absence of such conclusions often leads to approaches that yield thin and perfunctory responses. Some candidates reiterated at length what they know about Grice's maxims, with little bearing on the transcription. There was some focus on purpose (informative and persuasive), audience (broad) and register (semi-formal in most cases) of the talk and the editorial respectively, with some identification of high and low frequency lexis in each text. For higher marks, these responses needed to include more comparative analysis.

The majority of candidates demonstrated at least adequate knowledge and understanding of some of the conventions of a public talk, especially the repeated use of first person singular and second person 'you' to draw the audience into his own ideas. Candidates additionally observed that the high incidence of micropauses together with the prevalence of stressing (including an entire phrase, turned people off) suggested Tai was an experienced public speaker who had rehearsed, as he appreciated that his audience would require regular opportunities to register the segments of the opinions he expressed. Some candidates noted his use of modal verbs to persuade ('you should', 'you must') and how 'you' was used with the imperatives 'read', 'pick' and 'find' to create a triadic structure (lines 11–13) that contained his main reading 'tricks'. There was usually consideration of how Tai deliberately used repetitions for emphasis, books (.) books', great in person [...] great mentors', with stressed syllables for further impact. Candidates correspondingly recognised that the editorial was a planned and polished piece of writing and that the comments expressed might prompt replies in the form of letters to the editor. Candidates usually compared the effectiveness of Tai's metaphors and similes with the ones they produced in their editorials. A few identified 'would you show up at my house' as a rhetorical question and assessed it in relation to the ones they employed. Some attention was paid to the uses of high and low frequency lexis in both texts and their pertinence for different conceptions of the texts' audiences.

In the strongest responses candidates made use of their linguistic knowledge to structure their response, for example by proceeding from word- to sentence-/utterance- to whole text-level in their analysis. They correctly identified pertinent elements of style, quoted concisely and evaluated the effects produced. There was usually some consideration of how Tai uses stress on books to clearly identify the topic of his talk, and that he regards his audience in a familiar manner, using 'you' in the general sense, meaning 'anyone' ('you read it over and over', 'You pick a handful of them'). Candidates usually found that 'you' was unnecessary in a school magazine editorial where the bulk of the readership is a defined peer group and so 'we' was used instead. One candidate adopted a more discriminating approach by suggesting that Tai's repetition of second person represented a supercilious perception of his audience, coupled with his proposal that adolescents 'rewire' their brains and his use of the hortatory subjunctive 'let me show you a few quick tricks' concerning how to read, a skill audience members would consider they have already mastered. Other candidates noted that Tai used imperative verbs ('think about it', 'stop seeing') and ordinal numbers to demarcate points and aspects of procedures he felt were particularly instructive to his audience. A few candidates observed that, as there are no false starts, fillers or repairs, Tai had deliberately manufactured 'a laid-back vibe' to 'get alongside' his audience. Some candidates found Tai used impressive statistics to give credibility to his advice ('theres a hundred and thirty million [books]', 'the average American buys seventeen books a year'), the use of similar information deemed inappropriate in the opening of an editorial chiefly intended for classmates.

Question 2

Most candidates demonstrated a sure grasp of the purpose, audience and context of Text A, an introductory passage from the website of the Bata Shoe Museum (BSM) and of Text B, an extract from an article written by Rohit Brijnath that was published in the lifestyle section of a newspaper.

As was the case for **1(b)**, candidates who attempted to analyse Text A and Text B's language and style using a comparative approach demonstrated a higher appreciation of the techniques employed and awareness of the effects created. Candidates who eschewed a comparative approach also struggled to identify and clearly explain the differences in purpose and audience between the two Texts and the significance of the differences in their forms and the ways conventions were employed. Such candidates attempted to compare the Texts for purpose (to draw people into the museum and entertaining readers with an anecdote), tone (both are 'upbeat', though B is also 'nostalgic'), and sentence structure at a basic level. Some candidates dealt mostly with the content of the Texts and listed techniques they could identify; these needed to come to conclusions about effects created. In these responses, some recognition was exhibited of the use of form and language to inform the readers of each Text and to convey subject-specific concepts.

The audience for the website passage was generally identified as being shoe fanatics interested in history and visiting Toronto, whilst for the article the audience was identified as newspaper readers, most likely older persons. Text A's audience was usually felt to be larger, chiefly due to its electronic medium. Candidates appeared to find Text A more straightforward to engage with in terms of its organisation, given its title and subheading and regular changes of focus; for Text B candidates tended to focus on the size of paragraphs and range of sentence types. Candidates identified features of written language in the website passage and wrote to some effect about third person address, frequent use of complex sentences to convey information, the use of numbers to impress ('over a thousand shoes', 'Over 4 500 years') and positive adjectives including superlatives. They compared these to the article writer's use of the first-person pronoun 'I', adjectives, metaphor ('treasures', 'prize') and further figurative language related to stealing ('I turned burglar'; 'like a bandit'). The superlative 'grandest treasures' in Text B led several candidates to consider the writer's development of tension since the 'the real prize' the child seeks is not revealed until the single-word fourth paragraph 'Shoes', whereas the subject of Text A is clear from the first sentence.

The strongest responses explored the Texts' structures and analysed language efficiently and accurately, selecting an aspect to compare and contrast in each paragraph and demonstrating a consistent appreciation for language features. They ascertained that Text A's purpose is immediately apparent: to present the museum's shoe displays as marvels to be wondered at and to learn history from, later evident in the alliterative phrase 'shoes are surely signs of the times'. In contrast, Rohit's intentions are only hinted at in the middle section of the article when the reader encounters the allusion to the cliché of filling someone's shoes – 'Of course they were too big, in ways I didn't yet understand' – and made clear with the associated moral contained in the piece's final sentence: 'There are things fathers leave you with which never fade'. Candidates identified a friendly voice in the opening salutation in Text A together with its celebratory or 'boastful' tone in the adjectives employed: 'four impressive galleries', 'internationally acclaimed collection'. In contrast, they appreciated the curiosity and mischievousness of the writer's 'childish universe' in encroaching upon the 'forbidden' cupboard in Text B, noting his respect for his father who had 'built his life with sweat and intelligence' (in a few instances compared to the use of hyperbole 'scoured the world' in Text A to describe Sonja Bata's endeavours to build her shoe collection).

Generally, candidates engaged with a wide range of language features: in Text A the frequent use of fronted adverbials ('Since the 1940s;', 'On the surface;', 'Viewed chronologically,') and carefully chosen verbs ('celebrates', 'reflected', 'trace'), and in Text B the use of triplets ('It is affection [...], it is respect [...], it is meditation'), conjunctions to start some sentences ('And so', 'But if') and use of the noun 'craft' to introduce a detailed description of the steps involved in polishing shoes, reinforced with the simile 'like a dutiful painter' (lines 27-29). A few candidates found oxymoronic contrasts: 'objects of beauty or instruments of torture' in Text A; 'a man big yet gentle' in Text B. Candidates determined that figures were incorporated to add credibility in Text A and to suggest plenitude, in contrast with those in Text B that suggest a meagreness: 'One pair of sandals. An office pair or two.' Overall, the contrast in the opulence of the museum and the geographic comprehensiveness of its research into footwear ('chestnut-crushing clogs and glamorous platforms', 'studies have included North American indigenous cultures and circumpolar groups from Siberia, Alaska, Greenland and Lapland') is striking compared to the ordinariness of the closet's contents in Text B, which, though modest, seem to the boy like 'grandest treasures'. Some candidates compared the global reach of the museum to the small and uniquely personal space of the cupboard, a few comparing the final paragraphs of the website page where shoes are a vehicle for culture and commercialism with those of the article containing a poignantly emotional memorial to a beloved father, necessarily drawing from the reader memories of their own parents and childhood.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/53 Shakespeare and other pre-Twentieth Century Texts</p>
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Key messages

- (1) At the start of the examination, candidates should carefully plan how much time is to be spent on each essay.
- (2) Candidates should ensure their essays include discussion of varying opinions of the set texts.

General comments

The general standard was once again satisfactory, with nearly all candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were very few rubric errors and there were very few candidates who were limited by expression. Some weaker candidates adopt an informal style and register, which can limit precision and the development of arguments.

There were responses to all of the questions set and answers on each question were seen at all levels of attainment. Some texts remain very popular – Richard II in section A and Wuthering Heights in section B – with others remaining minority choices, such as Marvell and Shelley. The responses seen on these less popular texts suggest that they are still very accessible to learners at all ability levels.

There are two specific issues to be addressed in this session:

- (a) Candidates should apportion their time carefully across the two essays to be written, with sufficient time allocated for planning and writing each essay. In this session there were a number of candidates whose second essay was incomplete and often appeared unplanned. Careful note of timings and adhering to them would improve the overall mark and result for such candidates.
- (b) Candidates should be able to appreciate and discuss varying opinions of the set texts, as set out in Assessment Objective 5 for this syllabus. This can be evidenced in the candidate's essays in many different ways, of which some of the most common ones are:
 - (i) by appropriate use of critical or academic opinions
 - (ii) by discussing how a specific type of reader or audience might respond, such as a Marxist reader
 - (iii) by comparing possible responses from the writer's actual audience to those of, say, a modern audience
 - (iv) by critical analysis of different possible meanings to specific words or phrases.

There are other ways of meeting this assessment objective; in any case it is important that the candidates build into their essay plans some evidence of the ability to discuss varying opinions in order to meet the requirements of the syllabus in full.

Comments on specific questions

Richard II

This was a popular choice with the majority of candidates choosing the passage question.

- (a) Most responses were able to select relevant material to address the task, with nearly every answer exploring the topic through characters. Weaker answers often summarised different characters and the ways in which they were loyal or not, sometimes in great detail. More successful answers

explored how Shakespeare's characterisation of, for example, Bolingbroke and Aumerle served to show contrasting aspects of loyalty. Some good answers developed this approach into exploring the dramatic and poetic effects created, thus tackling the 'Shakespeare presents' part of the question, whilst others considered how the political and social context might impact on a character's loyalty. Where this was developed into considering how different audiences might respond differently to various displays of loyalty or betrayal, the answers did very well.

- (b) This was the most popular question on the paper. Nearly every answer gave an appropriate context to this passage. Weaker responses lapsed into paraphrase or moved away from the detail of the passage into summarising the events which followed. More successful approaches often discussed the importance of this passage to the plot of the play and the contrasting positions of Richard and Bolingbroke. Good answers saw the passage as significantly 'revealing the tortured and divided soul of Richard,' as one answer put it. Others explored the dramatic nature of the situation, for some, even 'melodramatic, especially Richard's posturing,' as one essay suggested. Very good answers considered the detail of Richard's language and imagery, identifying the effects created and the significance to the concerns, with appropriate support from both passage and wider text.

The Winter's Tale

This was a reasonably popular text on the paper this session with the majority opting for the (b) passage question.

- (a) Nearly all responses had a sound knowledge of the text and were able to select relevant material to address the task. Weaker answers often summarised what happened in each of the two main locations, Sicilia and Bohemia, some offering at least an implicit comparison or contrast, as a way of suggesting an argument. Better answers developed this approach into an argument, showing how the play's meaning was influenced by 'the shift from cold to warmth, winter to spring and the old to the young,' as one put it. More successful answers also saw how courts and countryside were also contrasted, comparing for example the sheep shearing festival to Hermione's trial. Some very good answers saw the topic in more abstract terms, exploring how Shakespeare presents his concerns, such as loyalty, parenting, relationships and love, through exposing how 'places change the way people behave and show us the different ways that people love and live together,' as one essay suggested. These approaches did very well when the arguments were supported by appropriate reference to text, with understanding of the dramatic and poetic methods used by Shakespeare.
- (b) Most candidates were able to give an appropriate context, though some weaker answers were unsure whether Florizel and Perdita were married already. Basic answers tended to discuss the characters, often with some paraphrasing and summary, with at times some understanding of the situation and its significance. Better answers noted, for example, the range of 'knowledge and ignorance of the characters on stage of the true situation in both courts', as one put it. Good answers explored how there might be different audience responses according to their view of Leontes or other characters. Very good answers explored the language and tone in detail, for example, considering the effects of Florizel's changing tone and his words to Leontes at the start and Perdita at the end and their impact on an audience. Those answers which saw the significance of this passage to the development of plot and characterisation, and were able to find support from the wider text, often did very well.

Northanger Abbey

This was the least popular Section B text, with very few takers for either question.

- (a) Weaker answers tended to summarise relevant characters and what happened to them in the novel. Better responses developed this into considering the various contrasts between the different sisters and brothers, with some able to explore Austen's concerns about love and loyalty for example. Good answers which supported the arguments with apposite quotation and some consideration of the style, especially the language and tone, often did very well.
- (b) Nearly every answer recognised the context to this passage and was to some extent able to consider what is revealed about Eleanor and Catherine here. Weaker answers lapsed into summary of the preceding events or a more general essay on Catherine and what happens to her in the novel, rather than exploring the detail of the given passage. Better answers considered

Austen's concerns in detail, contrasting, for example, the 'presentation of genuine and painful emotion here, with the comic melodrama of the more Gothic scenes,' as one suggests. Very good answers focussed on the detail of the passage, analysing the narrative techniques, such as narrative voice and dialogue, as well as language and tone. Answers which developed such points into considering the effects on the reader's view of the two women often did very well.

Wuthering Heights

This was the most popular **Section B** text, with the vast majority choosing the **option (b)** passage.

- (a) There were few answers to this question. Nearly every essay revealed some relevant knowledge of the text, with which to address the task. Weaker answers tended to summarise the characters, most commonly Cathy and her attitudes to Linton and Heathcliff, often in great and accurate detail. More successful answers considered contrasting attitudes to individual men by different women, for example, Heathcliff 'who is adored by Cathy, hated by Isabella and supported by Nellie, much to the confusion of the reader,' as one essay put it. Better answers also addressed the prompt of 'Bronte's presentation', considering style, especially language and tone. Where these answers supported the points made by apposite quotation they did well.
- (b) Most answers were able to give a clear context, the death of Cathy and the birth of Catherine, though some weaker responses were confused as to the precise point this took place in the novel. Basic answers often paraphrased the passage or generalised about the characters, especially Cathy and Heathcliff, here and elsewhere in the text. More successful responses focussed on Bronte's development of the relationships here, such as Nellie and Lockwood, as well as the characterisation of Heathcliff. Good answers considered the effects of Bronte's writing in detail, considering, for example, the narrative techniques and the multiple narrators, as well as Bronte's use of language and dialogue. Answers developing such points with apposite, brief references to the wider text often did very well.

The Franklin's Prologue and Tale

This was a popular text on the paper, with a more or less even split between the options.

- (a) Most answers were able to find relevant material to address the task. Weaker answers were mostly able to summarise the two characters and what happened to them. Better answers considered how Chaucer contrasted both characters and their actions, in order 'to develop his concerns about truth and loyalty and love,' as one put it. Good answers saw how Chaucer used these contrasts to develop the characterisation and raise contrasting emotions in the reader around the poem's concerns, with some exploring his use of symbolism and imagery very well. Very good answers developed these ideas with appropriate reference to the detail of the text and some analysis of the poetic effects created.
- (b) Most responses gave an appropriate context and were able to discuss the concerns relevantly. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage or to write too generally about the text as a whole. Better answers focussed on the detail of the passage. Many responses saw this as a change in tone brought about by the garden setting, contrasting the rocks and the absent husband, and leading to Dorigen's crucial encounter with Aurelius. Good answers saw how Chaucer's careful presentation of the garden, with its sense of beauty, youth and fresh vitality, with Dorigen set apart from the gaiety, linked into the wider text, its structure and its development of key concerns.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles

This was the first session for this novel and it proved to be reasonably popular, with an even split between the two questions.

- (a) Nearly every answer had sufficient knowledge of the text to discuss this topic relevantly. Weaker answers tended to approach it through what characters did, especially Angel and Alec, though others also discussed Tess and her baptism and burial of Sorrow. More successful answers saw the contrasts Hardy creates between characters, for example, Angel's father and his sons. Better answers saw how Hardy develops the characterisation through the different attitudes to religion, with good answers seeing how this might lead to contrasting, even contradictory, responses in the audience. Very good answers saw this in the context of Hardy's wider concerns, including Tess's development and the reader's response to her. Where this was supported by an exploration of the

narrative techniques and methods with appropriate reference to the text, the answers often did very well.

- (b) Almost every answer recognised this as a climactic point in the novel. Some weaker answers were confused as to the precise point this occurs and even the location – the way home from the town. All but a very few answers had a secure knowledge of the Alec and Tess relationship, though weaker responses spent too long discussing the previous and subsequent events, with a consequent loss of focus on the passage. Better answers explored the structural and narrative effects of this rescue by Alec; often seen as ‘unfortunate for Tess, but perhaps inevitable’, as one put it. Good answers explored the ways Hardy interweaves dialogue and narrative, especially in ‘the closing remarks of Tess’s work mates and the tone of inevitable catastrophe they create,’ as one said. Very good answers explored the language and narrative techniques in detail, showing how the various effects are created. Such answers did very well when the points were developed with apposite, precise references to the wider text.

Marvell

This was a minority choice in this session with almost no responses for **option (a)** and only a very few for **option (b)**.

- (a) The very few responses seen to this question usually had sufficient knowledge of the text to address the task, with reference made to the Damon poems, ‘To his Coy Mistress’, and ‘The Picture of little TC’. Weaker answers offered a summary of the poems or a more detailed paraphrase. Better answers considered the different kinds of relationships presented, with some able to explore the contrasting attitudes. Those responses which were able to consider how Marvell presents his ideas through his poetic choices, with appropriate support from the text, often did well.
- (b) This was also a minority choice. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the poem, with some unable to link it to the wider selection. Better answers explored how Marvell presents the Mower’s attitudes to his meadows and Juliana, using contrasting language and imagery. Others explored the use of natural imagery in detail, with some linking ideas to other Damon poems or ‘The Garden’ for example. Very good responses explored the detail of the poem, noting for example, the symbolism and the development of the ideas and moods. Others explored the rigidity of the poetic structure and rhyme scheme, linking them to the Mower’s mood of constrained passion. Answers which developed such ideas with apt reference to the rest of the selection often did very well.

Shelley

This was not a popular text, with almost no responses to **option (a)** and very few for **option (b)**.

- (a) The few answers seen had sufficient knowledge of the text to discuss Shelley’s presentation of poets and poetry relevantly. Popular choices were ‘Adonais’, ‘Hymn to Intellectual Beauty’, ‘Stanzas written in Dejection, near Naples’ and ‘To a Skylark’. Weaker answers tended to summarise the poems, with little reference to Shelley’s presentation. Better answers addressed this with appropriate support. Good answers explored Shelley’s different attitudes and tone in his presentation of poetry across the selection. Other answers discussed how, for Shelley, nature represented what poets should aspire to and how poetry should effect readers in ways similar to nature’s effects on humans. Very good answers supported such arguments with precise references to the poems and did very well.
- (b) This was not a popular choice, with only a few answers seen. Some weaker answers appeared to be responding as to an unseen poem, with a consequent lack of understanding or context. Better answers were able to discuss the extract in its context, though some answers did give too much attention to biographical details with a consequent lack of attention to the detail of the poem. Good answers considered what this extract reveals about Shelley’s emotional concerns, as well as his self image in detail, relating them to the wider selection. Where this was developed with detailed analysis of the poetic methods, such as language and verse form, and their effects, the answers often did well.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

<p>Paper 9093/41 Language Topics</p>
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Key messages

- Paper 41 presents candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of two out of three language topics. Candidates should respond to two of the questions only, selecting those questions to which they can provide a full, detailed and technical response.
- Responses should be sustained, with ideas structured in a logical sequence, whether these concern analysis of the ways in which language is used (in **Questions 1 and 3**) or discursive comments on the ideas presented in the stimulus material (in **Question 2**).
- Candidates are required to apply the points they raise in their responses to knowledge and understanding gained from their wider reading. To move towards the higher bands, responses should use technical terminology with ease and accuracy.
- Responses should provide evidence either from the transcriptions (in **Questions 1 and 3**) or the context (in **Question 2**) as brief quotes, to demonstrate their engagement and understanding of the stimulus material.

General comments

Control of expression was generally clear and was mainly well-paragraphed. Confident candidates maintained fluency in standard English with no lapses in their own register. Weaker responses showed some loss of control, with some lacking the structural organisation which would have enabled their work to move through the higher bands.

Strong candidates were able to provide developed reference to a wide range of theories and theorists; weaker candidates gave brief mention of the names of theorists, and needed to include considered discussion of how and why their theories were relevant to the language or idea presented by the contexts.

During this series, it was clear that many candidates had undertaken wider reading, with more contemporary theories being referenced in their work. In many responses there was evidence of strong and confident engagement with each of the language topics.

Candidates need to ensure that they provide sufficient evidence from the stimulus material to enhance their ideas in order to avoid falling into simple or generalised commentary. In some weaker responses, there was a limited range of technical terminology used. Moreover, some candidates chose to reproduce large portions of the text provided, where they would have made better use of their words (and examination time) focussing on their ideas in answer to the question. More confident candidates made a careful selection of quotes from the text, which became clear and succinct evidence for their ideas.

In some cases, candidates had attempted all three of the questions. This is not required, and results in loss of examination time, shorter, weaker and less developed response to each of the three questions.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The three interlocutors were closely connected by occupation, providing a reasonably strong field of subject specific lexis. Many candidates described this as jargon, although it should be noted that lexical items such as *festivals*, *orchestra* and *album* are insufficiently technical to be classed as jargon.

The gender of the NME interviewer was not provided; this enabled candidates to provide argument and counter-argument on the ways in which they could identify that the interviewer was either male or female. Discussions made reference to Lakoff, Coates, Tannen and/or Cameron with generally appropriate selections from the transcript to evidence ideas. Where such discussions were thorough, using technical terminology and appropriate evidence, the responses moved through the higher bands. Some weaker responses focussed on features such as interruption, ascribing these to stereotypical male linguistic behaviour, which resulted in a tendency to assertion.

Most candidates appreciated the cooperative nature of the response, and confident candidates provided detailed discussion on the relative status of the interlocutors, with some reference to Fairclough or Trudgill. It was generally perceived that Matty's conversational status was higher than George's, after assessing the higher mean length of utterance. Confident candidates provided a counter-argument, contrasting Matty's dysfluency with George's relative articulacy between lines 2 to 5.

Strong candidates made reference to Fishman, detailing the effort the interviewer was making to show Matty and George in their best light in order to gain audience engagement. Some perceptive discussions described and evidenced the way in which the interviewer could be perceived to be teasing the boys, targeting the audience with dramatic irony at lines 28, 40 and 44.

Question 2

The opening paragraph of the context provided included two ideas which candidates could use as a springboard for their ideas. The first was the global population increase; confident candidates made reference to Widdowson and the notion of spread and distribution of English across the globe. Candidates also referred to Crystal and/or Kachru to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of how the population increase could alter the rate at which speakers of other languages could adopt English as a second or official language.

The second point made in the opening paragraph of the context provided was that of the ways in which the development of modern technology continues to affect the use of English as a global language. This was particularly pertinent as the text was taken from a blog, and was appreciated by most candidates. Weaker candidates based their response solely on the effect of modern technology, which resulted in a simple or generalised essay.

Stronger candidates used the idea of English being spoken in a 'distinctively Norwegian way' to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of linguistic hybridisation, often using brief local or personal examples as evidence for points raised. Many candidates provided discussion on the levels of register resulting from hybridisation, using Singlish, Hinglish or Spanglish as examples.

Developed responses explored the loss of cultures in countries where English has been seen as Diamond's 'steamroller' or Crystal's 'snowball', describing the stages a local language may pass through towards language death. Strong candidates were able to refer to Sapir and Wharf in discussions on language and culture.

The final paragraph provided an opportunity for candidates to take issue with either prescriptivism or descriptivism. Weaker candidates described these ways of thinking in a generalised or assertive manner, whereas stronger candidates were able to discuss and evidence bidialectal developments and the ways in which *creative* or *expressive* meanings could be constructed, in opposition to Nerriere's 'Globish' and its limitations.

Question 3

Most candidates were able to identify the telegraphic stage of speech in the child; there was some confusion over this in weaker responses. Confident candidates made reference to Crystal or Aitchison in their assessment of Kamal's linguistic competence.

Generally, the term 'child directed speech' was used with accuracy to describe the ways in which Kamal was scaffolded in the transcription. Confident candidates explored the different ways in which each of the parents used language in a more 'fatherese' or 'motherese' manner, resulting in a more deeply developed response. Responses included exploration and evidence of reinforcement (Skinner) and varying questioning technique (Bruner and Vygotsky).

Hallidayan functions were discussed by more confident candidates who identified, using a strong referencing technique, the ways in which Kamal was able to use emphatic stress for issues that were important to him (not wanting to go to bed), although he was not yet in the habit – despite opportunities to imitate his parents – of using upward intonation at the end of his questions.

Kamal's utterances demonstrated virtuous errors in his use of negation, omission of the copular verb and phoneme /s/ for possession. These features evidenced the child's inconsistency due to his developing linguistic competence and were not, as weaker candidate's asserted, evidence of him being 'behind for his age' in his development. Most candidates attempted application of Chomsky's language acquisition device, although some tended to use a deficit approach: responses which detailed linguistic features which were present were more appropriate to the task than those which detailed features which may be anticipated but were not present.

At line 43, Kamal's imperative utterance *turn it round*, albeit monosyllabic, demonstrates an impressive and possibly unexpected phonological competence in its /aʊ/ diphthong and its /nd/ consonant cluster. Strong responses discussed this with accuracy. Care should be taken by candidates when using a phonological framework for discussion not to describe phonemes as alphabetical letters.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

<p>Paper 9093/42 Language Topics</p>
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Key messages

- Paper 42 presents candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of two out of three language topics. Candidates should respond to two of the questions only, selecting those questions to which they can provide a full, detailed and response from a linguistic viewpoint.
- Responses should be sustained, with ideas structured in a logical sequence. For responses to **Questions 1 and 3**, responses should comprise analyses of the ways in which language is used. For responses to **Question 2**, responses should comprise a discursive essay on the ideas presented in the stimulus material, linked cohesively with ideas from the candidate's wider study.
- Candidates are required to apply the points they raise in their responses to knowledge and understanding gained from wider reading of theoretical examples. To move towards the higher bands, responses should use technical terminology with ease and accuracy.
- Responses should provide evidence either from the transcriptions (in **Questions 1 and 3**) or the context (in **Question 2**) as brief quotes, to demonstrate their engagement and understanding of the stimulus material.

General comments

Control of expression was generally clear and was mainly well-paragraphed. Confident candidates maintained fluency in standard English with no lapses in their own register. Weaker responses showed some loss of control, with some lacking the structural organisation which would have enabled their work to move through the higher bands.

Strong candidates were able to provide appropriate, developed reference to a wide range of theories and theorists; weaker candidates gave brief mention of the names of theorists, and needed to include considered discussion of how and why their theories were relevant to the language or idea presented by the contexts.

During this series, it was clear that many candidates had undertaken wider reading, with more contemporary theories being referenced in their work. In responses which moved through the higher bands, there was evidence of strong and confident engagement with each of the language topics, depending on the selected question.

Candidates need to ensure that they provide sufficient evidence from the stimulus material to enhance their ideas in order to avoid falling into simple or generalised commentary. In some weaker responses, there was a limited range of technical terminology used. Moreover, some candidates chose to reproduce large portions of the text provided, where they would have made better use of their words (and examination time) focussing on their ideas in answer to the question. More confident candidates made a careful selection of quotes from the text, which became clear and succinct evidence for their ideas.

In some cases, candidates had attempted all three of the questions. This is not required, and results in loss of examination time, shorter, weaker and less developed response to each of the three questions.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Although the gender of the interlocutors was identified in the preamble to the question, some candidates were confused on this issue and attempted to provide evidence that either Elle or Stacey was male, using competitive overlap as a clue to stereotypical male speech patterns. Nonetheless, there were some detailed and informed discussions on the ways genderlect was presented in the transcription, with candidates making reference to Lakoff's deficit model, Cameron's verbal hygiene and Coates' house talk. Tannen's difference theory was not so relevant as there was no gender comparison to be drawn.

Strong candidates made a careful selection of features which illustrated the age difference between the two women, using Elle's wisdom in *you're meant to work to live not live to work* and Stacey's backchannel to demonstrate the constant linguistic support of her role model. Weaker candidates chose not to comment on the age difference described in the preamble, possibly as evidence was more covert than overt.

Where there was an attempt by confident candidates to determine status, the ratio of low:high frequency lexis was analysed and seen to be fairly equal. Exploration of relative mean lengths of utterance developed such discussion.

Many candidates made reference to Giles' Communication Accommodation Theory, with confident candidates exploring in detail how and why Stacey and Elle diverged from and converged with each other. Examples from responses included Elle using *like* frequently, including as a quotative in line 25, possibly in an attempt to make herself sound younger or to converge as a development of the stereotypically American-sounding *you know* and *yeah right* used by Stacey from the beginning of the transcription.

Weaker candidates spotted linguistic features with a need for more developed discussion, including attempts to identify musical jargon; although a lexical field of musical terms was present, this was generalised and not could not be said to be jargonistic.

Question 2

Candidates who responded to this question appeared to have found the stimulus material very engaging, demonstrating that they had first-hand knowledge of the way that language is used across the Internet. In some cases, weaker candidates chose to focus their discussion on the type of language which is used electronically, and would have done better to make more reference to the ideas presented in the article from *The Daily Dot*. Confident candidates presented responses which synthesised ideas from the stimulus material, the Syllabus topic and discussion arising from their wider study. In particular, strong responses identified ways in which the Internet had enabled speakers from Kachru's expanding circle to participate in global communication using English, which was continuing to develop over time due to electronic means.

When considering McCulloch's view at lines 18 to 22 of the extract, confident candidates observed that the nature of slang is a fleeting fashion and that it is soon likely to fall out of favour, no matter what its geographical region of origin. Most responses which discussed this idea provided brief, appropriate examples; weaker responses provided many of these, which led to some loss of focus on the requirements of the question.

Cross-cultural encounters in Internet use, leading to the phenomena of border crossing or dialect levelling and the subsequent development of English as a global language, were explored in confident responses. One springboard from the extract which was used infrequently and only in strong responses was the link between the emoticon ^-^, the well-known character in *Hello Kitty* and the British English simile 'as shy as a kitten'.

Many candidates demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of how English is used to suit very different purposes, using, for example, Singapore, where Standard English is used in formal situations and Singlish is used informally. Parallels were drawn between the ways in which Standard English is required in education establishments and *netspeak* is acceptable between friends.

Question 3

At 3 years and 6 months, Jenny's stage of linguistic development was identified by most candidates as post-telegraphic; weaker responses demonstrated some confusion over this. Evidence in the transcription of Jenny's linguistic competence was defined by her production of some complex structures. Stronger candidates referred to Aitchison, detailing how Jenny had moved beyond the packaging stage and was entering the networking stage.

Most candidates described Jenny as being in her Piagetian pre-operational stage, with confident candidates providing discussing features which demonstrated how she would soon emerge in the concrete operational stage.

In order to present discussion on the relevance of Chomsky's language acquisition device in features identified in the transcription, strong candidates used a wide range of linguistic terminology to describe Jenny's virtuous errors, including subject-verb agreement at line 17 and confusion of tense at line 42. Weaker candidates made brief mention of Chomsky; they often ascribed virtuous errors to evidence that Jenny's linguistic competence was behind that expected of her age. Responses such as these identified features and added generalised or assertive comments which needed more development and detailed evidence from the text.

Jenny's knowledge of how she should wear a coat and hat when the weather is cold, and that the bow on her hat should be worn in a particular way, enabled confident candidates to demonstrate their understanding of Aitchison's damp spoon theory. As such, Jenny used her language skills to teach her father using the method by which she acquired knowledge herself. Strong and confident responses were developed more deeply with reference to Vygotsky, describing a role reversal in the way in which Jenny scaffolded her father, becoming the More Knowledgeable Other between lines 17 and 22.

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