

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/11
Reading 11

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- followed instructions carefully, responding appropriately to the command words in the question
- used their own words where specified in the question
- considered the marks allocated to each question and developed their response accordingly
- read the introductions to the texts carefully
- understood the different requirements of the extended response questions
- paid attention to the guidance offered to help them focus their answers – for example, writing no more than 120 words in the summary, using just one example from the given text extract in **2(c)**, and selecting six language choices in **Question 2(d)**
- avoided unselective copying and/or lifting from the text where appropriate
- focused on the texts in their responses
- planned the ideas to be used and the route through extended responses before writing
- selected only the material that was most appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition
- checked and edited their responses to correct any careless errors, incomplete ideas or unclear points.

General comments

Candidates' responses indicated familiarity with the format of the Reading paper and the demands of each question type. Time-management was generally good, with very few candidates not finishing the paper, and there were relatively few examples of misunderstanding in terms of task requirements.

Candidates seemed to find all three texts accessible and the majority demonstrated engagement through their responses. Occasionally a failure to follow the rubric or complete a task fully limited opportunities to demonstrate understanding. This was most common in **Question 1(e)** where some candidates did not attempt to find three points, in **Question 1(f)** where some candidates included a limited range of ideas in their responses, in **Question 2(c)** where a number of candidates did not select a clear example from the text provided, or in **Question 2(d)** where some candidates offered three choices of language in total rather than three choices from each paragraph as specified in the task.

In **Question 1**, the most successful approach taken by candidates was to work through the questions in the order presented, noting the number of marks allocated and the space provided for their responses as helpful indicators of how detailed their answers needed to be. They also referred carefully to the lines or paragraph specified in each question moving through the text as directed. Less successful responses to **Question 1** tended to lack focus on the question, and therefore lack relevance, or fail to focus on the text. At times candidates used the language of the text too much where they had been asked to use own words – for example, in **Question 1(b)(i)** by explaining 'signal' but then using the word 'arrival' instead of showing clear understanding of the whole phrase. Some candidates also copied from the text in **Question 1(e)** which limited the evidence of their understanding. This was also sometimes an issue in **Question 1(f)** where some candidates copied phrases (or whole chunks of text) rather than remodelling the language of the text in their response. At times, this resulted in the inclusion of irrelevant material.

In **Question 2**, candidates were required first to select **(2(a))** or explain **(2(b))** specified words or phrases from the text. **Question 2(c)** then supplied a short section of the text from which to select and explain one example, ahead of the longer response required in **Question 2(d)**. Stronger answers to the language question were able to consider meanings in context, as well as the effects of the powerful language identified, demonstrating understanding of the writer's purpose in a clear overview. Middle-range answers tended to focus on the meanings of the language choices showing mostly clear understanding, although at times they tended to be literal rather than considered within the context of the whole text. Weaker responses struggled to develop viable explanations, sometimes repeating the language of the text. These answers did not always choose appropriate language to discuss or only selected three examples in total. Some weaker candidates chose very long language choices instead of focusing on shorter phrases. This often resulted in very general comments.

In **Question 3**, most responses addressed all three bullets, although some candidates found it challenging to develop ideas for the third one. Most candidates wrote as the eating-place owner, with the best responses developing a convincing voice and tone for her answers to the interview questions. Stronger responses worked through the bullets logically. They were able to select appropriate ideas from the text about the region, supporting them with details and developments, as well as outlining what should be done to help those suffering from extreme thirst by adapting the information in the text. Responses in the middle range tended to use the text rather mechanically, often paraphrasing closely rather than selecting ideas and details to use in their own writing to demonstrate understanding. Weaker responses tended to lack focus on the text, covering only the main ideas and sometimes inventing material. Some responses copied unselectively thus providing little evidence of understanding.

Paper 1 is primarily an assessment of Reading, however 15 of the 80 marks available are for Writing – 5 marks in **1(f)** and 10 marks in **Question 3**. In these questions, candidates need to pay attention to the quality and accuracy of their writing to maximise their achievement. Candidates are advised to plan and review their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style and to correct errors that may impede communication.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 – (a)–(e)

In response to Text A candidates were asked to answer a series of short answer questions. Stronger responses paid careful attention to the command words in the questions as well as the number of marks allocated to each one. These responses demonstrated sound understanding by selecting appropriate details and evidence from the text in concise, focused answers. Weaker responses tended to write too much or failed to follow the instructions that candidates use their own words. Some candidates offered several possible answers thus using time inefficiently and diluting evidence of understanding.

(a) Give two things that the writer is doing before the rain begins, according to the text.

The majority of candidates identified two of the three possible details that were acceptable responses to this question with most candidates identifying that he was walking down the street and observing the wilting trees. Where candidates did not get the mark for this question, they only identified one correct detail or offered single words such as 'walking' and 'observing' which were not specific enough.

(b) Using your own words, explain what the text means by:

- (i) 'signals the arrival' (line 3)**
- (ii) 'flees in panic' (lines 4 and 5):**

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were instructed to use their own words to evidence understanding of the phrases in the question. Where answers failed to achieve both of the marks available for each phrase it was usually due to the candidate's partial use of the words from the text. For example, in **Question 1(b)(i)** a small number of candidates found an appropriate synonym for 'signals' but used the word 'arrival' in their explanation of the whole phrase thus partially addressing the task. In some responses candidates offered 'sign' for 'signals' which was not acceptable as it is too closely related to the word being explained. More successful responses were able to explain the full phrase as used in the context of the text by offering explanations such as 'announces the coming of' or 'warns the rain is beginning'. In **Question 1(b)(ii)** a number of candidates explained 'flees' but struggled to

explain 'panic'. However, many responses were able to explain the whole phrase as people running away or escaping through fear'.

(c) Re-read paragraph 2 ('As the rain ... begin again.').

Give two reasons why conversation might be 'limited if not impossible'.

To achieve both marks for this question candidates were required to offer two distinct reasons inferring why the people in the shop were disinclined to converse with one another while sheltering from the rain. Many candidates were able to score both marks by clearly offering two separate points, often by citing the loud noise of the rain on the roof making conversation impossible, or the fact that they were all strangers making conversation unlikely. Some also offered the idea that they were so focused on or worried about the effects of the rain that they weren't inclined to make conversation. Where candidates failed to gain both marks, it was usually because they only offered one relevant explanation mostly by being too general with the second one.

(d) Re-read paragraph 3 ('The region ... the country.').

(i) Identify two problems with the road in the rainy season.

(ii) Explain why life is difficult for the people of the region during the rainy season.

To answer **Question 1(d)(i)** candidates needed to identify and select two problems with the roads from paragraph 3. Most candidates were able to identify the fact that the roads were impassable or blocked by flooding to gain one mark. Fewer candidates were able to explain that there were only a few miles of paved road in the region to get the second mark.

In **Question 1(d)(ii)** many candidates were successful at gaining all three marks available by referring to lack of food, impassable roads, and ceasing of all building projects. Fewer mentioned the fact that the rainy season went on for months. Some candidates missed points by copying phrases from the passage which did not make the required points clearly enough such as 'supplies dwindled' or 'hold out for the first harvest'. Some candidates appeared to have missed the fact that this was a 3-mark question and therefore required three distinct points to be made.

(e) Re-read paragraph 4 ('The country's second ... released prisoners.').

Using your own words, explain why the hot period is a happier time for the people of the region.

This question required candidates to show both explicit and implicit understanding from their reading of paragraph 4. Most candidates were able to achieve at least one mark, a reasonable number gained two marks, but fewer gained all three. The most common correct inferences were that people could socialise again and that children could leave their houses to play outside. Fewer candidates were able to explain the fact that food was more plentiful or that they could travel out of the region to visit relatives (and vice versa). Some candidates struggled to use their own words in this question. Lifting 'loaded bowls of rice' did not make explicit the point that food was now more plentiful. Some candidates did not look at the number of marks available for this question and therefore offered a less developed response than required.

(f) According to Text B, what did the residents of this community feel and do during the most recent severe winter?

You must use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible.

Your summary should not be more than 120 words.

This question was based on Text B and required candidates to select relevant ideas from the text and organise them into a focused summary which addressed the task. The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of the text and offer some relevant ideas about the actions and feelings of the residents during the severe winter. The most successful responses were carefully planned and coherent, focusing sharply on the task by referring to a wide range of the actions and feelings of the residents, re-ordering the material where necessary to aid fluency and achieve logical progression. These responses avoided repetition and re-modelled the

wording of the text to use own words successfully. These responses were often preceded by a bullet-pointed plan in which ideas from the text were noted briefly before being included in a fluent own-words response. Responses in the middle range tended to include a more limited range of ideas in response to the task, the most common being the need to buy supplies, get up early and wear layers of clothes and clear the snow from the fronts of their houses. They also tended to stress the worry and concern of the residents, sometimes leading to repetition and inclusion of excess material even where a good range of ideas had been considered. Candidates at this level of performance often missed the more subtle reading points: for example, noticing the tension with the neighbours over boundaries, the frustration of having no one to blame and the fact that everyone was just trying to cope as well as they could. Occasionally candidates misread the text and suggested that the winter was a peaceful one where the fishermen were getting their boats ready and the residents were reading, baking and curling up by the fire.

Length was often an indicator of the level of the response with some responses being too short and others very long and wordy due to unnecessary information. The strongest responses tended to adhere to the advised length through adopting a concise and focused approach to the task. Occasionally weaker responses adhered to the advised word count but took far too long to consider a few ideas by including unnecessary details and/or comments. Some candidates did rely on lifting phrases from the text. For many candidates the reliance on the wording of the text affected the quality of their response despite selecting appropriate ideas. In weaker responses there was some misreading of the text, most commonly through confusing the past snowstorms and the calmer emergence of spring. A bigger issue in the weakest responses was also a tendency to include too much introductory and irrelevant detail based on the first and last paragraphs of the text. Candidates should be aware that not every paragraph in Text B will contain relevant summary points.

Advice to candidates on Question 1(f)

- re-read Text B after reading the question to identify potentially relevant ideas
- plan the response using brief notes to ensure a wide range of ideas from the text is selected
- avoid including unnecessary details which do not address the question – do not expect every paragraph to have relevant points
- organise the ideas, grouping them where relevant, to ensure that your response is coherent
- avoid repeating ideas
- avoid including a general introduction or summative conclusion
- use your plan, rather than the text, as you write your answer to avoid lifting phrases
- write clearly and make sure you express yourself fluently in your own words
- do not add comments or your own views – use a neutral writing style
- try to keep close to the guidance to use no more than 120 words.

Question 2

(a) **Identify a word or phrase from the text which suggests the same idea as the words underlined:**

- (i) **The farm workers were standing still and didn't speak.**
(ii) **The farm workers watched the speaker closely.**
(iii) **The speaker hoped that his movements were a method of creating a little breeze.**
(iv) **Surrounding the speaker were huge unoccupied areas of land.**

The most successful answers to **Question 2(a)** focused on the underlined word or phrase, located the correct version in the text and gave it as the answer. Other responses copied the whole sentence from the question inserting the appropriate phrase. This was acceptable but wasted examination time. Most candidates were familiar with the demands of this question, but a small number of candidates seemed confused about how to respond, offering own words equivalents of the underlined words instead of locating them in the text. Where marks were lost, it was usually due to partially explaining the underlined phrase, for example 'unmoving' or 'empty spaces'. A number of candidates also failed to explain 'method' in **Question 2(a)(iii)** only offering 'agitate the air around me'. Other candidates lost marks due to selecting too much of the text and therefore moving beyond explaining just the underlined phrase. This was most common in **Question 2(a)(i)** where many candidates offered 'stared at me with disbelief and pity in their eyes'. Candidates should be reminded that they are required to select very precisely in **Question 2(a)**.

(b) **Using your own words, explain what the writer means by each of the words underlined:**

- (i) **Parched**
- (ii) **fantasies**
- (iii) **reclining**

In **Question 2(b)** the most successful answers considered the meaning of each word as it is used in the text. For example, the word ‘parched’ refers to extreme thirst or need for hydration rather than being ‘very dry’. Many candidates did not understand the meaning of the word ‘parched’ thinking it meant ‘exhausted’. Others showed partial understanding by offering ‘thirsty’ but did not signify the excessive nature of the thirst implied in the word ‘parched’. Most candidates were able to explain ‘fantasies’ as ‘illusions’ or ‘dreams’. Some lost the mark by being too vague offering ‘thoughts’ which does not precisely represent the idea of dwelling on fanciful or unrealistic things clearly implied in the text. ‘Reclining’ was often successfully explained, however, a number of candidates offered explanations which were rather vague, such as ‘sitting’, ‘relaxing’ or ‘resting’, instead of focusing on the precise meaning of ‘reclining’ as used in the text as lying back or being horizontal. Candidates should be reminded that they must offer precise meanings for the words as they are used in the context of the text. They should use clues in the surrounding text to deduce the meanings of any unfamiliar words.

(c) **Use one example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests the eating-place owner’s feelings on hearing that the speaker wants a cold drink.**

Use your own words in your explanation.

‘No! You mustn’t drink much. You may pass out.’ The café owner threw up her hands at the sight of me, then turned, alarmed, to shout at a couple of well-dressed gentlemen eating at a table in the corner.

In **Question 2(c)** candidates were required to select one example of language from the specified section of the text and explain how it suggested the feelings of the eating-place owner when the speaker requests a cold drink. A significant number of candidates did not follow these instructions but instead offered a very general description of the specified text extract with no selection and no focus on the writer’s language. Where a paraphrased version lacking a selected language choice was offered, it was occasionally possible to reward some of the comments if they lifted a word such as ‘alarmed’, but these responses often lacked focus on the eating-place owner’s feelings. The most successful responses offered a concise quotation then considered how the writer was able to convey her feelings through the language used. The most popular example was ‘threw up her hands at the sight of me’ with many responses exploring her shock and panic due to her awareness of the dangers of drinking quickly when suffering from dehydration. Others suggested that she was frustrated due to the regular occurrence of tourists coming to the café requiring assistance. Other responses considered the idea of ‘No! You mustn’t drink too much. You may pass out’ citing the exclamatory one-word sentence as indicating her urgency, as well as the declarative sentences showing her authority and control in this potentially dangerous situation. Many candidates were able to offer convincing explanations of ‘turned, alarmed, to shout’ and suggested that the eating-place owner has genuine fear and panics, sparking the desire to alert others and convey the seriousness of the situation. Some weaker responses tried to do too much, selecting several examples where only one example could be rewarded.

(d) **Re-read paragraphs 2 and 11.**

- **Paragraph 2 begins ‘By mid-morning ...’ and is about the effect of the heat on the landscape and the speaker.**
- **Paragraph 13 begins ‘The first mouthful ...’ and is about how the eating-place owner and her husband look after the speaker and drive him to the city.**

Explain how the writer uses language to convey meaning and to create effect in these paragraphs. Choose three examples of words or phrases from each paragraph to support your answer. Your choices should include the use of imagery.

The most successful responses to **Question 2(d)** offered clear analysis of three appropriate language choices from each of the two paragraphs indicated in the question. The most successful approach was to consider the meanings of carefully chosen phrases in the context of the text and then consider the effect in terms of connotations and the atmosphere created by the writer's language choices. Less successful responses were sometimes written in note form and offered less developed analysis or repeated the same ideas about effects, often making generalised assertions rather than considering specific words more closely. Middle range responses were usually more successful when explaining meanings but struggled to explore the effects, and the weakest responses tended to offer quotations (sometimes rather unselectively) but struggled to find anything relevant to say about them. A significant number of candidates chose three language choices in total rather than three from each paragraph as clearly stated in the question; this led to some under-developed responses.

The strongest responses selected phrases but also considered the individual words within them suggesting how they worked within the context of the whole language choice. Rather than identifying literary devices they engaged fully with the language, considering its impact and connotations fully and linking each choice to a coherent and developed consideration of the paragraph. In paragraph 2 many were able to explore their individual choices within the context of the effect of the powerful and annihilating heat on the landscape and the speaker. They considered phrases such as 'violence of the heat', 'seemed to bruise the whole earth', and 'turn its crust into one huge scar' as evidence of the extraordinarily destructive power of the heat and the permanent damage inflicted on the landscape. They could successfully develop these ideas through exploring the power and inescapability of the sun in other phrases such as 'the sun struck upwards, sideways and down' and also the 'buckling' wheat, looking 'like a solid sheet of copper' due to the effects of the sun's rays as showing the impact on the landscape of such a hostile environment. There were also opportunities to explore the discomfort of the speaker through 'no shade to hide in' and 'the red-hot dust grinding like pepper'. In paragraph 11 many responses were able to appreciate the relief, rejuvenation and satisfaction of the speaker when he is finally given water and food by the eating-place owner and her husband. Many candidates successfully explored the sense of joy and exuberance in 'burst in my throat' and 'cascaded' as indicating his immediate relief and pleasure as he drank, evoking the healing power of the mineral water. This could be developed into a magical or heavenly sensation through the comparison to 'frosted stars' with many candidates likening the idea of water that is cold and refreshing to magical or celestial powers. The effects of food on the speaker could be explored through the 'deep languor' felt by the narrator as well as the 'drowsy glories of eating and drinking to my full' and many candidates offered some insightful analysis of these phrases, exploring ideas of fulfilment and the soporific yet healing properties of the nourishment given to him. Again, candidates associated 'glories' with blissful and pleasurable sensations. Some candidates explored the speaker's passivity and desire to be taken care of through 'I was lifted...led...stretched out', citing that he completely gives himself up to his 'benefactors', allowing them to take care of him like a child, and many candidates were able to support some strong analysis of effects through such an approach.

Where effects were less successfully explained, candidates repeated the same explanation for different choices in the paragraph without exploring individual word connotations. In paragraph 2, this tended to be through repeating the idea of a violent heat for every choice, and in paragraph 11 through repetition of the idea of the speaker being relieved and/or satisfied. Weaker responses offered limited evidence of understanding by replaying these general ideas for every language choice selected, sometimes using the wording of the text in their explanations.

There was very little evidence of misreading in the two paragraphs specified in the question, but some candidates found it challenging to move beyond literal interpretations: associating bruising with being punched or injured, for example. Some candidates identified similes, metaphors and personification but did not move beyond generic explanations of these devices. Some weaker responses also included very long quotations with general explanations rather than engaging closely with specific words. Very rarely no quotations were included at all with a brief description of the paragraphs offered instead. Only the choices from the specified paragraphs could be credited in these responses.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- select three precise and accurate language choices from *both* of the specified paragraphs – six in total

- make sure explanations of meanings make sense within the context of the text
- avoid very general explanations such as ‘this helps the reader imagine it’, ‘this creates a strong visual image for the reader’ or ‘this makes the reader feel as though they are there’ unless they are developed with clear links to the words of the text
- try to engage with the language at word level by considering connotations/associations of words and why the writer has selected them
- always start with the contextualised meaning then move on to the effect created by the language in terms of how it helps our understanding of the events, characters, atmosphere etc.
- avoid repeating the same explanations of effects for each language choice: try to be more specific about analysing at word-level.

Question 3

You are the eating-place owner. You are interviewed for an article about tourist safety in the region. The interviewer asks you the following three questions only:

- **What do tourists need to know about your region?**
- **What effects can extreme thirst have on people and how should this be managed?**
- **What could be done locally to make the region safer?**

This question required candidates to answer three interview questions as the eating-place owner explaining what tourists need to know about the region they are staying in, as well as outlining the symptoms and management of dehydration, and suggesting ways in which the region could be made safer in future. The three bullet points in the question offered guidance to candidates to help them identify relevant ideas for their interview responses. The first and second bullets required candidates to retrieve relevant information from the text and adapt it to fit the eating-owner’s perspective as someone who runs a local business and witnesses tourists suffering from dehydration regularly and feels compelled to assist them. The third bullet required candidates to infer what could be done to make the region safer using ideas and clues in the text to support their inferences.

Most candidates were able to show general understanding of the text addressing the task by using some of the main ideas in the text to support the response. Many of the responses were also able to develop the ideas by creating a convincing voice for the eating-place owner and interpreting the information in the text from her perspective, evaluating the ideas and adapting them accordingly. Where candidates had followed the bullets carefully, they were often able to develop explicit and implicit ideas effectively to include convincing articulation of the eating-place owner’s knowledge, views and advice about the dangers posed by the heat and isolation of the region, as well as how to help those who have fallen victim to those dangers. Most candidates addressed the bullet points in chronological order using them to structure the interview coherently. Less successful responses tended to be unselective or closely paraphrase the text without adapting the perspective, therefore lacking the experienced voice and local knowledge needed for the eating-place owner. The least successful responses used the ideas in the text thinly, often copying phrases in response to the first bullet without offering any further details or trying to develop the ideas in any way.

The first bullet of the question invited candidates to explain what tourists need to know about the region described in the text. This offered opportunities to look at a wide range of ideas: the extremity of the heat, as well as the trickery of the chilly mornings; the effect of the heat on the landscape; the remoteness of the area with the city requiring a very long walk; the barren and dry nature of the landscape around and the lack of opportunity to get help or supplies of provisions such as clean water. The best responses looked for details to support each idea, for example, the timings in the morning when the heat begins to overpower the speaker, or the farm with its offering of dirty water from a well. These responses were also able to develop ideas about the risks posed by the tourists’ lack of local knowledge and tendency to underestimate the severity of the heat. They were also able to trace the growing danger as the heat rises and walking in it becomes more and more difficult and painful.

The second bullet required candidates to outline the effects of extreme thirst on an individual as well as suggest how it should be managed to ensure recovery. This required candidates to select appropriate material from the text and adapt it to suit the advisory and authoritative tone necessitated by the interview question. The most successful responses selected carefully and were able to re-model the material, developing the ideas and creating an appropriate voice. These focused sharply on the symptoms of dehydration exhibited by the speaker, such as difficulty breathing, hallucinations, demands for water, then moved on to the process of cooling someone down, allowing them to suck ice and only drink and eat when cooler. Many responses developed a convincing voice in response to this bullet by referring to the tourists

helped in the café and expressing alarm at the numbers affected. Some weaker responses simply lifted the ideas from the text, sometimes copying without modifying the material to suit the demands of the question or to create a convincing voice. Some candidates included their own knowledge on treating dehydration, sometimes moving too far from the text in the response.

When responding to bullet 3 the most successful responses used the clues in the text to suggest sensible measures to make the region safer for tourists. They cited the lack of water provision in isolated areas and suggested water fountains at the roadsides. They also suggested that tourists needed to be better informed about the dangers of the weather so they didn't set out on long walks without adequate provisions. Many good responses also used the idea in the text about hiring a car, developing it to suggest public transport should be available, as well as road signs to indicate long distances. Some cited the need for more intervention from the authorities to ensure that locals weren't left to deal with emergencies that affected their ability to run their businesses. Many less successful responses struggled to infer from their reading of the text what safety measures were lacking and found it hard to develop this bullet point.,

Most candidates seemed comfortable and familiar with the format of an interview, with most adopting an appropriate tone and focusing on the questions asked. Some candidates added extra questions for the interviewer or attempted to develop the interviewer as a character. This tended to distract from the bullet points and occasionally led to irrelevant material and ideas being explored. The less successful responses tended to be too narrative as they relied too heavily on the sequencing of the original text and did not offer reflections to adapt the material to the perspective of the eating-place owner, instead sounding as though they were the speaker in the text describing their experiences. The language used was mostly appropriate and some more successful responses created a wholly convincing voice as the eating-place owner, utilising the ideas in the text to give her an authoritative and decisive tone as well as a lively personality. In less successful responses the language and voice were rather plain but rarely inappropriate for the character. There were some candidates who thought the eating-place owner was male and referred to his wife. This demonstrated careless reading of the text but did not render the response irrelevant if the interview questions had been answered appropriately. Occasionally candidates introduced material and ideas which had no clear links to the reading text, but this was rare. Generally, accuracy was good with some skilfully written responses. Others struggled to maintain fluency resulting in some awkward expression caused by errors in grammar and punctuation. Candidates are advised to check through their work carefully to correct errors where possible. Some weaker responses were over-reliant on lifted phrases and sentences throughout the response.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- read Text C carefully, more than once, to ensure sound understanding
- pay careful attention to the perspective required for the task – for example, the voice being created as well as the purpose and audience of the task
- do not invent information and material that is not clearly linked to the details and events in the text
- give equal attention to all three bullet points
- briefly plan your response to ensure that you are selecting ideas relevant to all three bullets
- avoid copying from the text: use your own words as far as possible
- remember to use ideas and details from the text but to adapt and develop them appropriately to create a convincing voice and new perspective
- leave some time to check through your response
- do not waste time counting the words: the suggested word length is a guide, not a limit.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/03
Coursework Portfolio 03

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- adapted their writing style to demonstrate an understanding of the needs of the different audiences and contexts for each of the three assignments
- read critically and thoroughly evaluated the implicit and explicit ideas, opinions, and attitudes they identified in a text
- assimilated ideas from a text to provide developed, thoughtful and sophisticated responses
- supported their analysis, evaluation and comments with a detailed and specific selection of relevant ideas from a text
- wrote original and interesting assignments which reflected their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of events and situations
- wrote with confidence using a wide range of vocabulary with precision and for specific effect
- sequenced sentences within paragraphs in a way which maintained clarity of argument, description, or narrative
- demonstrated a high level of accuracy in their writing
- engaged in a process of careful editing and proofreading to identify and correct errors in their writing.

The best practice for the production and presentation of coursework portfolios was when:

- centres followed the guidelines and instructions set out in the Course syllabus and the Coursework Handbook
- a wide range of appropriate texts was used for Assignment 1, which contained ideas and opinions to which candidates could respond, and were relevant to their interests
- centres set a range of appropriately challenging tasks which allowed candidates to respond individually and originally to topics and subjects they were interested in, or of which they had personal knowledge or experience
- teachers gave general advice for improvement at the end of the first drafts
- following feedback, candidates revised and edited their first drafts to improve their writing
- candidates checked, revised, and edited their final drafts to identify and correct errors
- teachers provided marks and summative comments at the end of the final draft of each assignment which clearly related to the appropriate mark level descriptors
- teachers indicated all errors in the final drafts of each completed assignment
- centres engaged in a process of internal moderation and clearly indicated any mark adjustments in the coursework portfolios, on the Individual Record Cards, and on the Candidate Assessment Summary Forms.

General comments

A significant number of candidates produced interesting coursework portfolios which contained varied work across a range of contexts. There was evidence to show that many centres set tasks which allowed candidates flexibility to respond to subjects related to their personal interests or experiences. Most coursework portfolios contained writing of three different genres. There were very few incomplete folders.

The majority of centres provided the correct paperwork and completed all relevant forms accurately. The Moderation Team reported that many centres provided summative comments closely related to the mark schemes at the end of each completed assignment. These were extremely helpful in helping moderators to

understand how and why marks had been awarded and centres are thanked for following the process as instructed in the Coursework Handbook.

The major concern for all moderators was that some markers of the coursework portfolios did not indicate errors in the final draft of each assignment and/or provide a summative comment which referred to the marking level descriptors to justify the marks awarded. Failure to follow this process often resulted in inaccurate or inconsistent marking and was one of the main reasons for the adjustment of marks.

Administration

Successful administration was when centres:

- indicated all errors in the final draft of each assignment
- carried out a thorough process of internal moderation which was clearly signposted on the assignments themselves
- supplied marks and specific comments relating to the mark schemes at the end of the final draft of each assignment
- accurately completed the Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF) and ICRC, including any amendments made during internal moderation
- ensured that each coursework folder was stapled or tagged and securely attached to the Individual Candidate Record Card (ICRC)
- submitted their sample of coursework folders without using plastic or cardboard wallets.

Internal Moderation

Centres who followed the instructions for carrying out internal moderation as directed in the Coursework Handbook are thanked for engaging in this important process. There was a general trend of greater accuracy of marking by centres where there was clear evidence of internal moderation than there was in centres where no internal moderation process was evident on the coursework folders and documentation.

Some centres did not record changes made at internal moderation on the candidates' Individual Candidate Record Cards (ICRCs) which caused some confusion about the final mark awarded to candidates. Centres are requested to ensure that any changes made at internal moderation are signposted clearly on the work itself then also recorded on the ICRC as well as on the Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF).

Using the coursework handbook

A cause of concern for all moderators was that some issues persist even though there are clear instructions in the Coursework Handbook, and the same concerns have been raised in previous Principal Moderator Reports. To ensure effective and accurate marking is achieved, and that all paperwork arrives safely for moderation, it is essential that all the instructions given in the Coursework Handbook, and on the relevant forms, are carefully followed.

Below highlights the three most significant issues related to the administration and annotation of candidates' work which led to mark adjustments by moderators:

1 Indicating all errors in the final version of each assignment

- Some of the assignments showed little or no evidence of complying with the instruction in the Coursework Handbook that markers should indicate all errors in the final draft of each assignment. This process helps markers to effectively and accurately evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of work and to apply the most appropriate 'best fit' mark from the mark scheme. If this process does not take place, it is difficult for markers to make a balanced judgement. In several centres there was evidence across all three assignments that markers had awarded marks from the higher levels of the assessment criteria, yet the assignments contained frequent and often serious errors that had not been annotated by the marker. This inevitably led to a downward adjustment of marks by the moderator. It is important for all who mark the coursework portfolios to fully understand the importance of indicating and considering all errors in the final draft of each assignment.

2 Individual Candidate Record Cards (ICRC)

- A significant number of centres did not attach the portfolios of work to the ICRC in accordance with the instructions in the Coursework Handbook and point 4 on the electronic version of the ICRC.
- Some confusion was caused when centres included ICRCs for the whole cohort as well as the ICRCs for the sample sent; centres only need to send the ICRCs (securely attached to the coursework portfolio) for the candidates in the sample submitted for moderation.
- A small number of centres provided their own version of an ICRC instead of using the one provided by Cambridge; these had to be requested by the moderator, which slowed down the moderation process.
- On some folders there were errors in the transcription of internally moderated mark changes, or it was unclear which mark was the final one. Where internal moderation has taken place, any mark changes should be transferred from the assignment to the ICRC to ensure that the moderator has a clear understanding of all mark changes.

3 Coursework portfolios

- A significant number of centres did not collate the individual assignments into complete coursework portfolios but instead placed loose pages of work into the grey plastic envelopes and despatched them to Cambridge; this caused moderators some difficulties when assembling the coursework folders and increased the risk of work becoming lost or mislaid. Centres should secure each individual coursework folder using tags or staples with the ICRC securely fastened as a cover sheet.
- Moderators reported that several centres used plastic wallets to present candidates' work as an alternative to securely attaching the individual assignments to the ICRC; this caused extra work for moderators and increased the risk of work being mislaid. Centres are requested not to place coursework folders into plastic or cardboard wallets.
- Some centres included more than one rough draft; this is unnecessary and can lead to confusion. Please ensure that the rough draft included is clearly labelled as a draft.
- Occasionally rough drafts contained annotations and specific feedback; centres are reminded that when markers offer feedback on a rough draft, it should be general advice. No errors should be indicated, and the marker should not offer corrections or improvements.
- Some centres included documentation not required for the moderation process; the only paperwork that should be included in the sample is clearly indicated in the Coursework Handbook.

Comments on specific assignments:

Assignment 1

Candidates were successful when:

- they responded to interesting texts which contained engaging content
- they demonstrated analysis and evaluation of the individual ideas and opinions identified within a text
- the form, purpose and intended audience of their writing was clear to the reader
- they wrote in a fluent, accurate and appropriate style.

Moderators commented that many candidates responded to texts which were of an appropriate length and challenge and which appealed to the interests of the candidates. Successful texts included articles exploring issues relevant to young people, for example, the growth of online learning during the Covid pandemic, feminism, social media, the pros and cons of having tattoos, national issues in the candidates' own countries, and environmental issues. Less successful texts were those which were old and outdated or were of limited personal interest to the candidates. Texts selected for **Assignment 1** should be an appropriate length, explore ideas and offer opinions, and use rhetorical or literary devices designed to provoke or sustain the reader's interest to ensure that the text offers scope for candidates to fully engage and respond to it in a sustained piece of writing. Centres are encouraged to use a good range of relevant and up-to-date texts for **Assignment 1**. Other less successful texts were ones where the candidate fully endorsed the writer's views and opinions because they offered few opportunities for evaluating ideas and opinions, as required by the mark scheme. It is also crucial to select texts for their quality of written communication: moderators reported seeing a number of poorly written texts taken from a variety of websites. Many of these were too long and tended to be informative, offering very little scope for rigorous evaluation or analysis. Moderators also reported seeing texts which contained potentially offensive or disturbing material. This may indicate that candidates were allowed to make their own text choices, but centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that all texts used for **Assignment 1** are fit for purpose, and this includes avoiding offensive or unsuitable material.

Some centres set one text for a class or sometimes whole cohort. When this approach was adopted by a centre there was usually a tendency for candidates to produce responses which were very similar in content and structure due to heavy scaffolding. This made it difficult for candidates to create the original and sophisticated responses expected of the higher-level assessment criteria and was a reason for adjustments of marks. Centres are advised that teaching a text to a whole class and offering a scaffolded plan for the response may be a useful teaching strategy for developing the necessary skills and knowledge for **Assignment 1**, but this approach should not be used for the final coursework submission.

If centres are unsure about how to approach and set tasks for **Assignment 1**, they can refer to the Course Syllabus and the Coursework Handbook. Both documents provide advice and guidance about task setting and text selection and can be found on the School Support Hub via the main Cambridge website.

Reading

Although some centres were accurate with their marking of reading, as in the previous moderation sessions, there was a significant trend for many centres to award marks from the highest-level assessment criteria to work which more appropriately met the lower-level assessment criteria. Candidates who successfully met the higher-level assessment criteria were those who demonstrated a consistently evaluative approach to most of the ideas and opinions in a text, and provided a developed, sophisticated response which made direct reference or included quotes from the text. Candidates who engaged in a general discussion about the topic or subject of a text, or those who did not thoroughly evaluate a text, tended to produce work which more appropriately met the Level 4 assessment criteria in Table B (reading). The most common reasons for adjustments to a centre's marks for reading were when moderators identified a trend of candidates engaging in a general discussion about the topic of a text/s, or when the number of points covered were 'appropriate' rather than 'thorough'.

Writing

Many candidates responded to texts in an appropriate form and style. Letters were the most popular choice of form, and many candidates demonstrated some understanding of audience and purpose. When candidates were less successful with writing, it was often because the form, intended audience and purpose of the writing were not clear. This made it difficult for the candidates to meet the highest-level assessment criteria and was a reason for adjustments to writing marks for **Assignment 1**. Successful responses to **Assignment 1** tasks were those in which the writing was highly effective, almost always accurate, and consistent throughout in the application of form and style. Work which showed insecurity with form and style, such as the omission of an appropriate ending to a letter, a limited or inconsistent use of rhetorical devices for speeches, or lack of clarity of the intended audience, tended to meet the assessment criteria for Level 5 or below, Table A (writing). The moderators noted that there was a general tendency for many centres to award marks from the highest-level assessment criteria to work which more appropriately met the lower-level assessment criteria.

Another common reason for the adjustment of marks for writing was because of the accuracy of the candidates' writing. When errors impaired meaning, such as the incorrect construction of sentences or use of grammar, typing errors, or the incorrect selection of words from spellcheck, the overall quality and efficacy of the discussion was affected. Errors such as these are classed as serious and make it difficult for candidates to meet the higher-level assessment criteria; this type of writing is more characteristic of writing achieving marks from the middle to the lower levels of the assessment criteria. Moderators also noted a tendency for centres to over-reward vocabulary that had some merit in its selection but was not always used precisely or effectively in the response.

Advice to candidates for **Assignment 1**:

- thoroughly explore, challenge, and discuss the ideas in the text
- avoid making general comments about the topic or subject of the text, instead, ensure that comments are specifically related to the ideas, opinions or attitudes identified in the text
- look for, and use inferences made implicitly in the text
- look for contradictions or misleading assumptions in the text and comment on them
- develop points to create a thorough, detailed, and clear line of argument or discussion
- make sure that the audience and purpose is clear and adapt the written style accordingly
- proof-read assignments to ensure punctuation, vocabulary choices and grammar are correct.

Assignment 2 (description):

The majority of tasks set for **Assignment 2** were appropriate and encouraged candidates to write in a descriptive style. Many students wrote engaging and vivid descriptions from experience or their imaginations, which were a pleasure to read. Moderators also noticed that there were fewer descriptions which slipped into narrative than in previous sessions, but this is still a relatively common flaw in descriptive writing assignments, sometimes due to the nature of the tasks set. Moderators reported seeing some tasks which invited candidates to describe a specific scene from a play, or chapter from a novel, which tended to lead to unoriginal responses, or tasks more suited to narrative writing.

The most engaging and successful descriptions were those where the candidates had carefully selected vocabulary to create a realistic and credible sense of atmosphere, place or person, and which were well sequenced and carefully managed for deliberate effect. Successful responses included descriptions of towns or cities in which candidates lived, important events in candidates' lives, or significant settings or places. Less successful tasks were those which asked candidates to describe events or scenarios of which they had no personal experience, or settings and situations in which the candidate clearly had no interest or engagement. Many of these responses relied on unconvincing descriptive writing which did not engage the reader. This type of writing is characteristic of work achieving marks from the middle to lower levels of the assessment criteria, although it was noticed that many centres awarded marks from the higher-level assessment criteria. This was quite often a reason for adjustment of marks from Table C (content and structure).

Whilst many candidates showed a secure and confident understanding of language, there was still a general tendency by a number of centres to award marks from the higher-level assessment criteria to work which contained ineffective overuse of literary techniques. Some moderators commented that this seemed to be actively encouraged by some centres. To achieve marks from the higher-level assessment criteria, candidates need to demonstrate a confident and secure understanding and use of language for specific effect. This is difficult for candidates to achieve if they over-use adjectives, include inappropriate images or idioms and/or use obscure or archaic language. The overworking of language was a common reason for moderators adjusting marks.

Another common reason for adjustments to marks was when moderators identified a trend of awarding marks from the higher-level assessment criteria to writing that contained a limited range of sentence structures, incorrectly constructed sentences, or contained frequent errors with punctuation and grammar. Writing that achieves marks from Levels 5 and 6 of Table D (style and accuracy) is expected to be consistently accurate, consistent with the chosen register, and demonstrate an ability to use a range of sentences for specific effect. The moderators saw some writing which displayed these characteristics, but a significant number of the assignments receiving marks from centres from Levels 5 and 6 in Table D more frequently displayed the characteristics of writing expected from Level 4 or below. Many candidates 'told' the reader about the scene being described, rather than engaging the reader with a careful and precise use of vocabulary and images. The moderators also noticed a general trend for candidates to use repeated sentence structures and create almost list-like descriptions.

In addition, the work of a significantly large number of candidates contained frequent and serious errors which impaired the meaning and overall effect of the candidates' work. The most frequent errors were missing prepositions and articles, tense inconsistencies, typing errors, commas used instead of full stops and grammar errors. Quite often, the meaning of sentences was blurred, or meaning was lost altogether. Errors which affect the meaning and clarity of writing cannot be considered as 'minor'. The absence of the indication of all errors made it difficult for the moderators to determine whether errors had been considered when marks had been awarded; moderators noted that on some weaker assignments no errors had been annotated and the summative comment declared a high level of accuracy. Accurate and effective application of the assessment criteria is achieved through the careful weighing up of the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing and the application of a mark which 'best fits' the assessment criteria. To achieve this, it is essential that errors are identified and indicated by the markers.

Information and guidance on how to apply the mark schemes are given in Coursework Handbook. Examples of good tasks and exemplification of the standard of work expected at the different levels of the mark scheme are also provided in the Coursework Handbook.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 2:

- use a range of vocabulary suited to the context and content of the description

- create images appropriate for the context and content of the description
- create an engaging imagined scenario using language designed to have an impact on the reader
- avoid slipping into a narrative style
- proof-read responses to identify and correct common errors such as missing articles and prepositions, switches in tenses and typing errors
- avoid repetitive sentence structures; instead use a range of sentences for specific effect.

Assignment 3 (narrative):

Much of the task setting for **Assignment 3** was generally appropriate and moderators saw some engaging and effective narratives which were well controlled and convincing. Moderators reported seeing some tasks which did not invite narrative responses as they were too informative. These included accounts of Jack the Ripper or sometimes descriptions of film or book plots. Successful narratives were those in which candidates created stories characterised by well-defined plots and strongly developed features of narrative writing such as description, strong characterisation, and a clear sense of progression. The narration of personal experiences and events, or responses where candidates were able to create convincing details and events within their chosen genre, tended to be more successful. Candidates were generally less successful when their understanding of audience and genre was insecure, and the resulting narratives lacked credibility and conviction. Moderators commented that this sort of writing was often seen when candidates were writing in the genre of horror or murder mystery stories. Stories such as these, although containing a definite beginning, middle and ending, were often unrealistic and incredible, or lacked development of character or plot. Some responses failed to conclude properly, ending with an unconvincing or unsatisfactory cliff hanger. This sort of writing is classed as 'relevant' or 'straightforward' and should expect to be awarded marks from Level 4 or below from Table C (content and structure). Moderators noticed that there was a trend with a significant majority of the work sampled for centres to award marks from Levels 5 and 6 to writing which more appropriately fitted the Level 4, or below, assessment criteria. This was quite frequently a reason for marks being adjusted.

When moderators saw very accurate work containing precise well-chosen vocabulary, and which maintained a consistent register throughout, they could agree when centres awarded marks from Levels 5 and 6 in Table D (style and accuracy). As with **Assignments 1** and **2**, moderators noticed a significant trend for centres to award marks from the highest levels of the mark scheme to work which contained frequent and persistent errors and which more accurately met the assessment criteria from Level 4 or below in Table D. This was a common reason for the adjustment of marks. The comments made for **Assignment 2** with regards to accuracy and the annotation of errors are also relevant to **Assignment 3** and should be noted by all who mark coursework.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 3:

- create stories that are realistic, credible, and convincing
- remember that characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage the reader
- avoid clichéd scenarios and consider an individual and original selection of content
- carefully proof-read and check assignments for errors in punctuation, use of prepositions and articles, sentence structure and use of tenses.