

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/11
Reading Passages (Core)

Key messages

- In **1(e)** candidates should remember that they cannot simply repeat the same word in their answer to **(ii)** as they used in **(i)** but should elaborate on the definition given in **(i)** and focus their response on describing the effect of the whole quotation.
- Candidates must remember to deal with all 3 bullet points in **Question 2**, and attempt to develop ideas, both factual and inferential. The key message here is to go beyond the text for the third bullet point.
- Candidates need to ensure that they are writing in the correct format for **Question 2** and follow the bullet points to construct their response to the task. They also need to ensure that they pay attention to their spelling, punctuation and grammar to assist clarity.

General comments

Overall, the passages proved to be accessible to nearly all candidates and they responded positively to both passages and questions. The vocabulary appeared to be within the range of candidates at this level.

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the passage had been clearly understood and many responded well to the more straightforward questions.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a)** Give **one** detail that the writer enjoyed, despite the bad weather (paragraph 1, 'When I first visited...').

Many candidates successfully identified that the writer enjoyed the emperor's summer retreat although quite a number omitted the words 'retreat' or 'citadel', perhaps indicating there was some uncertainty about the meaning of 'retreat'. Candidates who omitted either or both of these words were given the benefit of the doubt and the mark was awarded. Some candidates opted for the stormy weather as an enjoyable factor, although it seemingly contradicted the information given in the question. Such responses, expressed in a variety of ways, were also awarded the mark, although 'bad weather' on its own was not credited because it was in the question. Some candidates answered with material from earlier in paragraph one, such as 'sleeping in an open-sided hut' or 'walking up the hill to the ruins', and even 'sleeping on his own' when closer reading would have revealed there was no comment from the writer that he had enjoyed these activities. Some candidates wrote about the writer's enjoyment at spending the night in the rain and getting soaked.

- (b)** Give **two** reasons why the writer chose the Salkantay trail rather than the Classic Inca Trail (paragraph 2, 'If you believe ...').

Most candidates gained at least one mark on this question with many identifying the reasons for the writer opting for the Salkantay Trail. Many candidates referred to the luxurious lodges or better accommodation found on the trail as being a reason for the writer's choice, while others thought correctly (in spite of the subsequent 'galloping downhill on rocky, dirt roads') that travelling by horse was an enticing factor. A few candidates did not gain a mark because of a lack of precision. For example, 'accommodation' or even answers such as 'beautiful accommodation' did not convey that the lodges on the Salkantay Trail were 'better' or 'more comfortable' than the tents found on the Classic Inca Trail. Obviously, a building could be both beautiful and uncomfortable, and answers which concentrated on the visual impact of the lodges lacked

focus on this particular question. Similarly, some candidates while commenting on the beauty of the Salkantay trail failed to identify that this visual impact related to the scenery, writing answers such as 'it is more attractive' or 'astounding', only.

- (c) *When the writer first sees his horse, he describes it as 'woefully unenthusiastic'. What does this suggest about the horse's suitability for the journey (line 14)?*

It was quite clear from many answers that candidates were unsure about the meaning of 'woefully' and its effect on the degree of the horse's lack of enthusiasm. Many candidates thought that the horse was not capable of making the journey often describing it as 'tired' or 'too old'. Such answers were not credited because the horse's indifference about the journey related to attitude not capacity. Answers which focused on attitude were rewarded unless they referred to the question in a circular manner such as 'The horse was not suitable for the journey because it was unenthusiastic'. Answers which stated that the horse 'was not enthusiastic' or 'had no enthusiasm' were awarded one mark only. Answers where candidates had attempted to explain the horse's attitude in their own words were awarded two marks. There were many candidates who understood that the horse 'did not want to make' or 'lacked interest in' the journey or was just too plain 'lazy'.

- (d) *Using your own words, explain what features of Pedro's behaviour show that he is 'relentlessly enthusiastic' (line 17).*

A few candidates misread the question and applied the 'relentlessly enthusiastic' to the horse and not Pedro. Often this misreading was then carried over into **Question 2** when describing the horse-back journey. The answer that he enjoyed 'riding very fast or downhill over uneven and rocky ground' needed to be expressed in own words as requested by the question. Some candidates ignored this and merely lifted 'He had a passion for galloping on rocky dirt roads'. Such lifts, or partial lifts, were awarded one mark only whereas full explanations in attempted own words were given two marks. Responses which merely focused on Pedro's passion for horses or love of his job were not awarded a mark.

- (e) (i) *Re-read lines 9–11 ('Up to 500 people ... below freezing') and lines 21–22 ('My first impression ... But it wasn't.'). Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words underlined in each of these phrases:*

When answering this question, it is important that candidates explain the meaning of the word which is underlined, only, and do not extend their answer to the whole quotation or another part of it. A number of candidates, for example, gave an explanation of the 'dramatic passes' as opposed to the word 'undulated' in (e)(i). One method employed by candidates was a kind of scattergun approach where they listed lots of possibilities in the hope that one would be correct and sometimes, they did hit on the right answer, probably by chance.

1. *'an undulating route with three dramatic passes'. (lines 9–10)*

As with previous papers, synonyms or explanations which conveyed the general meaning of 'undulated' were accepted and many candidates were able to gain a mark for this question. Such answers more often than not identified the route as being 'curvy' or 'not straight' but a few answers were more precise in identifying the route's 'dipping' and 'uneven' nature. Of the three words to be explained in (e)(i), this was the most understood by far.

2. *'My first impression of the lodge was of eerie grandeur...' (line 21)*

Very few candidates were able to explain the meaning of the word 'eerie' in this context, especially in relation to the contradictory lodge's 'grandeur'. The few who were able to explain its meaning, focused on its 'creepy' or 'mysterious' nature as well as its 'odd' and rather 'strange' grandeur.

3. *'such a tantalising, no-expense-spared structure in such a bleak spot could only be an illusion'. (lines 21–22)*

Very few candidates understood the meaning of 'bleak' in this context with many answers describing it as being 'beautiful' or 'amazing'. The few responses which did gain a mark for this question either identified the 'barren' or 'bare' nature of the landscape or described its 'desolate' or 'isolated' or 'remote' characteristic.

- (ii) Explain **how the language in each of these quotations in 1(e)(i)** helps to suggest the impressive nature of the surroundings through which the writer is travelling. In your answer you should refer to the whole quotation, not just the underlined words.

The second part of this question was often answered better than the first as candidates were able to look at the whole quotation. The main problem was the same answer was often used for each part of (e)(ii), such as 'it was amazing', or repeated phrases or words from (e)(i). The question wanted some clear focus on the phrase and general comments like 'amazing' or 'beautiful' were not very helpful. Candidates who looked for a more precise meaning did better, although some did so by using lifted words and did not, therefore, gain a mark.

As with previous papers, many candidates simply repeated their answer from (e)(i) and therefore gained no mark. Others couched their answers in the words of the quotation as opposed to attempted own words. Such explanations were not rewarded and often were circular in nature. Candidates should have been aware of the overall focus of the question which was 'the impressive nature of the surroundings', when attempting to explain the selected references. Generally, candidates who failed to understand the implication of the underlined word in (e)(i), were unable to gain marks in (e)(ii) when considering the same quotation. However, those candidates who considered the meaning of the reference from a wider perspective were often able to gain marks in (e)(ii) even if they had been unsuccessful with the corresponding reference in (e)(i).

- (f) Give **two** details that the writer found memorable about his ride on the z-bend trail. (lines 27–29)

Candidates often gained two marks for this question by identifying two of the memorable details such as the glittering, turquoise glacial lake, the flying condors, and the sun-filtered clouds. A number of candidates lost marks because of a lack of precision in their answers. It was important, for example, to identify the precise feature of the lake which made it so memorable to the writer. Answers which merely referred to the 'glacial lake' or 'the colour of the lake' did not gain a mark but those which identified the lake's glittering or shining or turquoise water did. Similarly, answers which simply mentioned 'it was sunny' or 'glittering' without the respective contexts of clouds and lake were not rewarded. Some candidates did not refer to the condors or birds flying and focused on their wing span alone and therefore did not gain a mark for this detail. No mark was given for 'the exotic meal they ate' which was outside the question's line parameters.

- (g) Re-read lines 33–35. **Using your own words**, explain the difference in the environment as the writer comes down the mountain.

Candidates were faced with a wide choice when explaining the environmental differences between the higher and low altitudes, owing to the wealth of detail given from lines 33 to 35. A summary of the features to be found at the higher levels would include plain, stone buildings or villages; crops such as vegetables and maize; and rivers and bridges. In contrast, at the lower levels, the writer describes flowers such as orchids; fruit such as bananas; and flocks of birds such as parrots and hummingbirds. As always when the question required the candidates to use their own words, complete lifting of the actual lines from the text was awarded one mark only but selective relevant lifting through omission or recasting was often awarded two marks. Candidates did not have to include all of the details of the different features listed above but they did have to identify some basic contrast of the actual respective features to be found there. The vast majority of candidates were able to do this and therefore gained two marks but there were a few responses which managed to reverse the features for each altitude or give some geographical explanation that did not come from the passage, and therefore gained no marks.

Question 2

Imagine that you and your family have been on holiday riding horses on the trail to Machu Picchu. When you return home, you are interviewed on local radio about your holiday.

Write the words of the interview in which the interviewer asks you three questions:

- *What was the scenery like on your journey to Machu Picchu?*
- *How did you feel about making the journey on horseback?*
- *What things would you suggest an older person, like me, would find interesting about the trip?*

Base your ideas on what you have read in Passage A, but do not copy from it. Be careful to use your own words. Answer each of the three questions.

Begin the interview:

'Interviewer: I have with me this morning (your name), who is going to tell us about a visit to Machu Picchu ...

Write about 200 to 300 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing.

(15)

Candidates in general responded well to the interview format of this question and there were many responses which successfully demonstrated an appropriate interview register, with convincing polite interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. Those responses which did not include some version of the three specified questions were unlikely to score higher for Reading than Band 3, but those responses which included additional questions were not penalised and, more often than not, gained additional credit. The relatively few responses which comprised narrative accounts based on the three questions but did not specifically include them in the account, were not penalised. As with previous papers, convincing and relevant development of the third bullet point was usually important to gaining higher band marks. Responses, however, which only touched upon the possible interesting features of the trip for older people yet contained detailed development of the first two bullet points which was firmly tethered to the passage, were also rewarded with higher band marks. As always, those candidates who attempted to write their interviews in their own words as far as possible, were suitably rewarded for both Reading and Writing. Those candidates who mainly lifted phrases from the passage were unlikely to score higher than Band 3 marks for Reading or Writing.

A number of candidates treated **Question 2** as purely an imaginative writing task as opposed to a piece of directed writing based mainly on the information given in passage A. Some candidates wrote convincing interview accounts but seemed to be more concerned with establishing an appropriate register, as noted above, rather than developing information based on their respective reading and understanding of the passage. Such responses, therefore, often involved polite interaction – sometimes embellished with humorous asides – between interviewer and interviewee. Comments about the scenery on the journey to Machu Picchu, for example, were often limited to 'beautiful' or 'amazing' with no mention of features such as the glacial lake or the respective features of different altitudes or the Salkantay Trail itself. A number of responses when answering the first bullet simply ignored it and wrote about the stormy weather or the horse, Cesar. This type of approach was particularly evident with the question about making the journey on horseback. The best responses included pertinent comments about Cesar's ostensible lack of interest in the journey and their reluctance to ride a horse on such rough terrain. Often their doubts were offset by the safety of the saddles used for the journey. Many candidates, however, simply stated either their love of, or inexperience of, horse riding with no reference to the passage whatsoever. Similarly, many responses to the interviewer's question about what would be interesting for an older person making the trip simply repeated ideas from the two previous answers rather than, say, developing points about the comfortable accommodation provided. Advice for older travellers also varied from a straightforward 'don't go', to detailed and thoughtful responses about the ancient sites, friendly people and luxurious lodges by the lodges, the fascinating birds such as the condors, or the good food and wonderful Peruvian hospitality.

Although the question did not state that the candidate and their family had been on holiday riding horses on the Salkantay trail to Machu Picchu it is implicit that they did because of the horse riding and the actual focus of the passage. Some candidates wrote about making the journey with their families using the Classic Inca trail, thereby either limiting the information available to them for development or wrongly attributing Salkantay

features in their accounts. As always, candidates should read the question carefully in order to determine the precise nature of what they are being asked to write.

The least successful of these accounts for both Reading and Writing marks were those which were either very close to the passage or contained much lifting. General accuracy was evident but many struggled with the past tense and a number had handwriting that was very difficult to read.

The majority of candidates gained Band 3 and above Writing marks by establishing an appropriate register with some degree of clarity.

*Read carefully Passage B, Rapa Nui National Park (Easter Island), in the Reading Booklet Insert and then answer **Question 3 (a) and (b)**.*

Question 3

Answer the questions in the order set.

(a) *Notes*

*What does the passage tell you about Easter Island **and** its statues, according to **Passage B**?*

*Write your answers using short **notes**. **Write one point per line**.*

*You do **not** need to use your own words.*

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer.

(10)

(b) *Summary*

*Now use your notes to write a summary of what **Passage B** tells you about Easter Island **and** its statues.*

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

*Your summary should include all 10 of your points in **Question 3 (a)** and must be 100 to 150 words.*

Up to 5 marks are available for the quality of your writing.

As always, the key to gaining higher marks on **Question 3a** was avoiding repetition and answering the question by selecting relevant points.

Many candidates scored well on this question with many gaining seven marks or more. Some candidates lost marks by failing to include contextual detail in their answers. For example, 'not clear' as an answer did not gain a mark for point 4 on the mark scheme because it did not indicate that it was the settlement date which was uncertain. Candidates must make sure that the context of their answer is clearly stated rather than implied. Similarly, candidates should always restrict their answers to one clear point per line, and never extend the 10 lines to add extra points.

Of the fourteen points identified in the mark scheme, seven related to information about Easter Island and seven referred to the stone statues. For the former, point 1 described the size of the island and the fact it once was Polynesian and point 2 identified its geographical location. Point 3 related to its artistic culture and architecture with point 4 addressing the uncertainty of its first settlement. Points 5 and 6 covered the state of its ecosystem and the possible reasons for this. Point 7 identified Easter Island's popularity for tourists and, more specifically, the popularity of the Rano Raraku quarry.

For the statues, point 8 described the placing of the statues by the Rapa Nui across the island, and points 10 and 11 described both their height and weight. Many candidates included points 10 and 11 as one point. Point 9 covered the 'mystery' as to why the statues had been crafted and the two features of honouring leaders or ancestors, or that we simply do not know why. Those candidates who answered 'mystery statues' did not gain a mark for point 9 because such answers did not focus on the reason they were created. Point 13 focused on the shape and appearance of the statues with Point 14 indicating their present-day deterioration. Many candidates lost marks for point 12 with answers such as 'There were 400 statues on the island'. The reference to 400 statues in the passage quite clearly locates them in the quarry as does the

reference to their various stages of completion. By implication, there are many more statues around the island, as noted in point 8.

Only a small number of candidates gained full marks, although many achieved six or above.

Most candidates tried to use own words when writing the summary although sometimes that meant that the meaning was blurred. Some answers were well written but very long as they had tried to include too much information. Many responses had own words but lacked organisation. The best answers comprised two clear paragraphs, one on the island and one on the statues.

Generally, however, many candidates wrote fairly concise summaries and attempted to answer in their own words as far as possible. The best responses were well focused on the passage and points were expressed clearly and concisely. The weakest responses were often verbose and unfocused comprising either frequent lifting of phrases and sentences or unnecessary personal commentary. Candidates should remember to organise their material so that it does not read like a list of unrelated features, and to ensure that their material is as concise as possible rather than just brief.



FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/21
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read both passages carefully, taking time to ensure that they had understood key details
- considered the evidence of skills and understanding they needed to show in each response
- planned the content and route through their answer ahead of writing
- identified and edited ideas within their response in need of clarification and/or further detail
- avoided repetition
- gave equal attention to all sections of each question
- adapted their writing style to suit the task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- used a range of appropriate vocabulary to communicate ideas clearly and precisely
- did not rely on the language and/or structure of the original text to communicate ideas
- used clear, legible handwriting.

General comments

Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible, and the majority of candidates finished the paper within the time allowed. Candidates' responses generally demonstrated an understanding of the need to select and adapt relevant material from the passages to answer the questions. On the whole, candidates attempted all parts of the three questions and most responses were an appropriate length.

Most responses to **Question 1** were focused on the question and generally all parts of the task were attempted. Good responses displayed a sound understanding of the ideas in Passage A including a range of relevant ideas that were typically developed effectively and supported by appropriate detail to describe Mikaela's thoughts and feelings about what she and Jane did during the morning, what happened after Jane returned later that evening, and Mikaela's relationship with Jane and Niki. Some mid-range answers missed opportunities to develop and interpret the material, and often produced uneven responses including irrelevant material related to, for example, breakfasts, visits to the park and watching favourite television programmes. Less successful responses demonstrated evidence of a misreading of parts of Passage A, particularly those concerning the events which took place and the relationship between the characters.

For **Question 2**, in order to achieve higher marks, candidates must make appropriate choices from the specified paragraphs and offer detailed comments about these choices in the context of the passage. Many responses contained some accurate explanations of meanings and had identified some linguistic devices but only partially explained effects. Weaker responses tried to explain the selected language in the same words as the language choice – for example, suggesting that 'imprisoned figure' means that the person is imprisoned, or that 'a sea of movement' means that it is like the sea moving. Some candidates missed opportunities to consider individual words within longer choices and demonstrate understanding at higher levels, repeating instead rather broad and vague comments such as 'this shows that the market was waking up' and/or simply labelling devices without exploration of how the example was working within this particular context.

In **Question 3**, many candidates identified a reasonable number of points. In **Question 3(a)** short notes that clearly identify the point are required, rather than whole sentences. Candidates do not need to use their own words, though some chose to do so which then benefitted their summary writing in **3(b)**. In **Question 3(b)** candidates' own words need to be used. Some responses included phrases directly lifted from the passage, and as such did not achieve higher band scores. Candidates should use their own words as far as possible in this summary task in order to demonstrate understanding of the original wording. Some candidates misinterpreted the stance, writing as the grandfather, often including redundant information and unnecessary

comment as a result, and ultimately impeding their ability to produce an effective summary of the key points of the passage.

Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading: 20% of the marks available across the paper are awarded for Writing, and this is split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. It is therefore important that candidates consider the quality of their writing. Planning can support this in helping candidates to avoid repetition between sections, as well as awkward expression, and in ensuring that each question is dealt with in sufficient detail. Undeveloped language and inconsistency of style will limit candidates' achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Candidates are advised to allow adequate time for checking and editing their responses.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

You are Mikaela from Passage A.

Write your diary entry for the day's events.

In your diary entry you should include your thoughts and feelings about:

- what you and Jane did during the morning**
- what happened after Jane returned and later that evening**
- your relationship with Jane and Niki.**

Base your diary entry on what you have read in Passage A, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullet points.

Begin your diary entry, 'Dear Diary, Today has been quite eventful ...'

Write about 250 to 350 words.

Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing.

The majority of candidates made some attempt to engage with the task of writing a diary entry that included Mikaela's thoughts and feelings for the day's events. A few candidates misread the beginning of the passage and described Mikaela either sitting in the car or waiting outside the market, drawing on the car or the shop window. Some candidates misread the term market as referring to a supermarket. Additionally, the character of Jane was incorrectly referred to as a friend, niece or daughter rather than Mikaela's granddaughter. Some candidates included a 'grandmother' as an additional character to Mikaela and Jane. In relation to the third bullet, some candidates conflated this with details of Mikaela's feelings towards Jane and Niki which often led to generalised comments on being grateful and appreciative.

In response to bullet one, most candidates included details such as 'drawing stick-people on the window', 'buying groceries' and 'enjoyed shopping', despite some misreading of Mikaela waiting for Jane in the car. Development of Mikaela's concerns about being left alone and her feelings of boredom were also in evidence in some candidates' responses. Stronger responses focused on Mikaela's sense of isolation, expanding on this with references to illness, worry about Jane and the distractions or danger of the market.

Some responses addressed bullet two thinly while others relied heavily on lifting details about making soup and playing cards. Some mid-range answers missed opportunities to develop and interpret the material, instead replaying the passage – albeit in their own words – and often producing uneven responses. This somewhat mechanical approach demonstrates at best a reasonable level of understanding. Responses featuring adaptations of material from the passages indicate a more competent or thorough reading and an ability to go further in interpreting meaning. Some candidates wrote a speculative response based on unrelated ideas such as Mikaela and Jane watching the finals of 'Bake-off' together or preparing smoked vegetables and rice for dinner, followed by playing dominos. All ideas need to be rooted in the text.

In relation to the third bullet, most candidates were able to identify details about the help offered to Mikaela, although some did not differentiate between the more specific ideas linked to companionship and practical

help, or concentrated on Mikaela's feelings of love towards Jane. There was also some misuse of pronouns, with a few candidates describing Niki as a woman. Some responses suggested a love triangle including Mikaela herself, while others included ideas not tethered to the text for example imagined past histories for the characters. Successful responses showed understanding of the explicit and implicit meaning of the text, developing ideas of Mikaela's feelings of dependence, guilt, and hopes for Jane and Niki's relationship.

Good responses addressed each of the three bullet points and included material relevant to each one. They contained a range of ideas that were developed and closely related to the passage. They also integrated a number of details. Less successful responses were more generalised incorporating few details from the passage or repeating ideas.

The Writing mark reflects the clarity, fluency and coherence of the response, how well it demonstrates an awareness of the genre, and how successfully it addresses audience and purpose. Overall, the quality of writing in candidates' responses was reasonable, though on occasion, awkward expression and/or structural inaccuracies detracted from the overall effect. Stronger answers addressed each of the bullets and interwove details from all aspects of the text, indicative of efficient planning. An inconsistency of style was observed in some responses, whilst copying directly from the text was the most frequent feature of the weakest writing.

Advice to candidates on Question 1

Read the whole passage carefully, including the introduction.

Plan your answer to ensure that your response is well sequenced and avoids repetition.

Write in a suitable voice, tone and style for the persona in the response.

Answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to make it appropriate to the task.

Answer all parts of the question, addressing each of the three bullet points in reasonable detail.

Do not copy from the passage.

Develop and extend your ideas in relation to the passage.

Allow sufficient time to edit your response.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a) the world outside Mikaela's window in paragraph 1, beginning 'Mikaela watched the world pass by ...'
- (b) the scene at the market in paragraph 4, beginning 'Ahead, the market was beginning to wake up ...'

Select four powerful words or phrases from each paragraph. Your choices should include imagery. Explain how each word or phrase selected is used effectively in the context.

Write about 200 to 300 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer.

In **Question 2**, responses are expected to take the form of continuous prose in order to allow candidates to explore their choices fully and consider how their selected examples of language are working in the context of the passage. Analysis in both (a) and (b) needs to be sufficiently precise and extended to allow candidates to explain how each word within a chosen phrase is contributing to and affecting the reader's understanding and reactions. Responses which took the form of brief notes under sub-headings signalling language choices lacked full consideration of the subtleties and complexity of the language being discussed. Some responses offered little relevant comment and a number featured repetition of the language of the passage or task with comments relating to the crowded nature of the streets and the busy market.

The most successful responses to **Question 2** featured high quality comments and tackled imagery with precision and imagination on carefully selected choices of language in both (a) and (b), thus showing a clear understanding of the writer's intended meaning. Empathic responses successfully explained for example the contrast between 'freedom' and 'imprisonment', as well as Mikaela's response to what she saw. A few candidates picked up on the dangers of the market, though were unable to satisfactorily explain 'elongated body undulating and rippling' or 'fluttering awnings', particularly where they had perceived the market as a supermarket. This resulted in a general lack of comment about the threat, chaos and colour of the market.

Many candidates' responses displayed evidence of confidence with meaning and an ability to explain words such as 'liberated pedestrians', 'drawn into a current' and 'a sea of movement'. Some effects were explained well; many candidates could comment on Mikaela's loneliness for example. The strongest responses considered meaning and effects throughout. The weakest responses featured very few language choices, or offered few explanations for their use beyond the very general. Some candidates appeared to have adopted a 'technique spotting' approach identifying literary techniques resulting in commentary about the effects of such techniques rather than about the effects of the words themselves. Other candidates repeated the same explanation after each choice, for example, that the market was busy in **(b)**.

Other less successful responses took the form of a commentary on the entire paragraph for each of **(a)** and **(b)**, combining choices such as 'bags bounced and bounded...in enthusiastic obedience' and 'like a large beast groaning in dismay' and thus resulting in a very generalised explanation related to the movement of the pedestrians or the opening of the market. Some candidates offered single word choices only, and not always selecting the most appropriate ones, for example, offering 'watched' instead of 'watched the world pass by the window'. This does not demonstrate evidence of close reading or an ability to relate to subtleties of language beyond explicit meaning. A few candidates discussed the choices outside the context of the passage, such as defining 'imprisoned' by linking it to criminal behaviour and not to Mikaela was watching from the window.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

Choose a range of words and phrases that seem powerful. Do not write out whole sentences or give only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase.

Treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list with one general comment to cover them all.

Avoid general comments such as 'it makes you feel like you are really there' or 'this is a powerful image'.

Consider the connotations and associations of the language used in order to explain its effects.

Use your own words to explain your choices rather than repeating the words from the chosen phrase.

If you are unsure about effects, begin with an explanation of meaning in context for each choice.

Do not simply label literary devices you notice, consider the context in which they are being used.

Try to explain images in each paragraph.

Question 3

(a) Notes

According to **Passage B**, what does this grandfather wish for his grandchildren in their future lives?

Write your answer using short notes. Write one point per line.

You do not need to use your own words.

Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer.

(b) Summary

Now use your notes from **Question 3(a)** to write a summary of what this grandfather wishes for his grandchildren in their future lives, according to **Passage B**.

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

Your summary should include all 15 of your points in **Question 3(a)** and must be 200 to 250 words.

Up to 5 marks are available for the quality of your writing.

To answer this question successfully, responses needed to identify 15 points that were relevant to the question and to present them succinctly and in their own words. This is an exercise in informative writing; a

style which differs from that of the passages. Most candidates understood that they should not go beyond line 15, or include more than one point per line. Better more focused answers typically scored 10 or more of the available content marks. The second part of the task required candidates to use their notes, adapting and organising them to produce a summary in their own words. A significant amount of direct copying was observed.

The question focused on what the grandfather wishes for his grandchildren in their future lives. Better responses were clear and unambiguous. Weaker less-focused responses did not fully address the task. A number relied on working through the passage – often with limited modification of the original. These typically offered long explanations or repeated ideas relating to ‘other cultures’, ‘show[ing] kindness’ or ‘education’, for example listing ‘education’, ‘studying’, and ‘taking exams’ as separate points. Others adopted a narrative tone and depended heavily on the language of the original rather than using synonyms for language such as ‘material wealth’, ‘fulfilment’ or ‘wealth of the mind’. Another source of weakness was the presentation of incomplete or inexact ideas – for example, meeting people, without the sense of them being from a different culture. Where three or more points were given on a single line in part **(a)** such as ‘stand still for a second, reflect, look at what you possess’ or ‘education enables you to be broad-minded and to think critically’ these could not be fully credited.

Carefully checking responses for accuracy in spelling and grammar is essential in **3(a)**. Candidates should also ensure that they include sufficient detail in relation to the question; for example, some candidates wrote ‘relationships’, whereas it is ‘happiness in relationships’ that the grandfather wishes for his grandchildren in their future lives.

Successful **Question 3(b)** responses demonstrated careful organisation of points from **3(a)** which were delivered with concision and fluency and did not repeat points in the same order or language of the passage. These avoided introductory statements and commentary, and instead concentrated on giving a factual objective summary in the candidate’s own words.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

Read the question carefully to identify the specific focus of the task, underlining key words.

Re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to find the precise information needed to answer it.

Reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to establish and select 15 distinct points.

List your points – one complete idea per numbered line – using as few words as possible.

Avoid repetition of points.

Remember that you can choose to use your own words in **3(a)** and that you must use your own words in **3(b)**, although you do not need to change key words.

Plan your response in **3(b)** to ensure that your ideas are well organised and logically sequenced.

Do not write in narrative form, or in the first person, or in any other inappropriate form.

Write informatively and do not comment on the content of the passage.

If using a word-processor, number your points in **3(a)**.

Pay attention to the guidance on the length of your answer for **3(b)**.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

**Paper 0524/04
Coursework Portfolio**

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

wrote original and interesting assignments which reflected their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them in a mature and sensible way
structured the content of their writing in order to clearly guide the reader from one section of writing to the next
sequenced sentences within paragraphs in a way which maintained clarity of arguments or events
wrote with confidence using a wide range of vocabulary with precision and for specific effect
adapted their writing style to demonstrate an understanding of the needs of different audiences and contexts for each of the three assignments
revised, edited, proof-read and corrected the first drafts of each assignment
wrote accurately and made few errors with spelling, punctuation and grammar.

General Comments

Content of folders:

Assignment setting is the key to producing good coursework. The very best coursework (not necessarily that produced by the most able candidates) showed young people thinking about and engaging with ideas, issues and concerns which shape the world around them and, in creative writing, reflecting their own observations and experiences thoughtfully and perceptively. Carefully planned assignment setting allowed candidates to write in a range of different styles for different contexts and allowed their strengths to shine through, demonstrating humour, playfulness, seriousness, and sophisticated understanding of complex subjects.

When assignments were generic or candidates were limited in their choice this was less likely to happen; a lower level of challenge and too much classroom input tended to produce more pedestrian responses, particularly with candidates of lower ability. Centres which offered a range of titles for the assignments allowed candidates to choose subject matter that engaged their interest and stretched their abilities. Some very serious issues were addressed, ranging from global issues to local concerns, which gave an interesting insight into the world that the candidates inhabit. Challenging topics stretched vocabulary and understanding, and allowed candidates to demonstrate their ability to construct coherent and sometimes complex arguments. Some of the best creative writing was written from personal experience. There was also some well-crafted fiction, in contrast to the less successful descriptions of haunted houses and dystopian-style zombie attacks that have been seen in the past.

The majority of centres included a first draft of one of the assignments. Moderators saw some very good practice and it was possible to see how final pieces had evolved significantly from first drafts, however for some centres drafting is still a missed opportunity. In a significant number of portfolios, annotations or comments by the teacher for improvement were rare or absent, and the first drafts were almost identical to the final pieces of work.

Assessment:

The assessment of writing by the majority of teachers was generally accurate, and most centres seemed to have engaged in a process of internal moderation. Some centres tended to be slightly lenient with their marking of writing because errors, such as comma splicing, typing errors or the incorrect selection of words from spellcheck did not seem to have been taken into account when marks were awarded. Teachers are reminded that they should indicate all errors in the candidates' final pieces of work. This process helps to ensure that teachers and moderators can easily identify the strengths and the weaknesses of each completed assignment and award the mark that best fits the finished piece of writing.

As with previous examination series there was a tendency with quite a number of centres to over-reward marks for reading. This was most evident in folders receiving reading marks from Band 5. To gain marks from this band a candidate needs to provide an extended overview of the text or write a structured response that assimilates the ideas and opinions they have identified in the text.

The vast majority of centres used the correct mark scheme (the one provided on pages 26 to 29 of the 2017–18 syllabus). Moderators noticed that a small number of centres seem to have used earlier versions of the mark scheme because they made references to Band 1 and Band 2 for high scoring pieces of work. Bands 7 and 8 are now the top two bands. The correct mark scheme to use for assessment of the coursework portfolio is the found in the Course syllabus for the year in which the candidate is entered for final assessment.

Moderators commented that they noticed a general improvement in the number of centres providing useful and detailed summative comments in relation to the mark scheme at the end of each completed assignment. This is most helpful to the moderation process because it helps moderators to understand how and why marks have been awarded.

Administration:

Moderators reported that the general standard of administration continues to improve; centres are thanked for their hard work with this matter. Most centres provided a completed Candidate Assessment Summary Form (CASF) for the whole cohort and clearly indicated on the CASF which candidates had been included in the sample submitted for moderation. With some candidates there was confusion because changes made to marks during internal moderation did not match those on the MS1. External moderation is based on the marks provided on the CASF. If marks are changed as a result of internal moderation they should be clearly indicated on the Individual Candidate Record Card (ICRC) and correctly transcribed to the MS1.

The majority of folders were presented as directed by the syllabus. A small but significant number of centres presented their candidates' work in plastic wallets without securely attaching all the individual sheets of paper to the candidate's ICRC. Other centres used paper clips as a method of securing the completed portfolios of work. Neither of these methods of presenting candidates' work is secure.

Good practice was where:

centres set a range of appropriately challenging tasks, which allowed candidates to respond individually and originally to topics and subjects that they were interested in, or of which they had personal knowledge or experience

a wide range of appropriate texts were used for Assignment 3, which contained ideas and opinions to which they could respond and were relevant to the candidates' interests

centres set tasks which allowed candidates to respond in three different genres of writing

candidates' responses were within the recommended 500 to 800 word limit

candidates revised, edited and carefully proof read their first drafts in order to improve their writing, checking for errors with:

- basic punctuation such as missing full stops, the incorrect use of commas and semi colons, and the correct use of capital letters
- typing errors
- spelling, especially any words selected from spellcheck.

teachers provided informative summative comments relating to the mark scheme at the end of each completed assignment

coursework portfolios were securely attached and presented as indicated in the Course syllabus

the CASF included all the candidates in the cohort and candidates were listed on the form in numerical order, with the candidates in the sample being clearly indicated by an asterisk

there was clear evidence that a thorough process of internal moderation had taken place and changes to marks had been correctly transferred to the CASF.

Comments on specific assignments

Assignment 1

The most successful responses to **Assignment 1** tasks were those which allowed candidates to write about issues that were relevant and interesting to them. Many centres set broad tasks which invited candidates to write a persuasive speech or article about an issue that was important to them. These tasks offered flexibility for the candidates to adapt their writing to their own ideas and experiences and often resulted in original and interesting responses. Less successful tasks for **Assignment 1** were those in which candidates were offered little flexibility or choice with the subject or topic of their writing; the resulting assignments were often similar in content and structure, and lacked originality and interest for the reader. Common topics for this approach to task setting were the death penalty and euthanasia. Moderators reported that although some centres still set 'Don't get me started...' and 'Room 101' tasks for **Assignment 1** there was a noticeable reduction in this type of task. Responses to these tasks generally result in aggressive or rant-like writing about subjects (e.g. chewing gum, eating on buses) which limit the candidates' opportunities to develop their thoughts and ideas in a mature, persuasive and sensible way.

There was some blurring in terms of audience and purpose with some **Assignment 1** responses. Moderators found that where candidates were asked to respond with a speech, the intended audience was not always clear to the reader. The use of rhetorical devices for speeches often disappeared as the writing progressed, and the style of writing became more like that of an article. With informative writing some candidate's writing became narrative or descriptive as the piece developed. This was most evident when the candidates were writing about one of their own hobbies or interests.

In some responses to **Assignment 1** candidates were too reliant on the sources they had found when researching their topic. Many candidates, but weaker candidates in particular, had a tendency to rely on the language of the source material, and simply presented work that was a series of (sometimes) informative paragraphs which created a lack of cohesion in the writing as a whole. With this type of response moderators could not be confident that the resulting pieces of work were written in the candidate's own language. When candidates quote from source materials it must be acknowledged and a bibliography or reference list should be included at the end of the work.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 1:

write about a subject that is of importance and/or of interest to you
be aware of the audience and purpose of your response and adapt your style accordingly
try to develop your points to create a detailed and clear line of argument or discussion
try to use your own words instead of quoting chunks of text from your sources
acknowledge your use of quotes.

Assignment 2

There were many well written and interesting responses to a range of tasks which included narratives, descriptions and autobiographical accounts of memorable or important events in the candidates' lives. The writing of action/adventure stories quite often lacked appeal and credibility because of the unlikely and unrealistic content of the narratives. Moderators were pleased to notice that there seemed to have been a move away from the setting of narrative titles in the gothic, dystopian, ghost and horror genres.

Many candidates demonstrated that they understood the need to include a wide range of vocabulary in their writing. Some candidates were very successful with their vocabulary choices. A significant number of candidates were less successful with their vocabulary choices because they used clichéd phrases, had a tendency to overwork their language or used imagery that was not wholly successful. Moderators noted that some centres had a tendency to reward the use of high level vocabulary, even when the effect and images created by the language used did not always fit the context of the writing in which it appeared. This was most evident with the responses to descriptive tasks.

Some centres had set tasks which required candidates to describe a scene from a film (e.g. The Hunger Games) or to imagine they were a character from a play that had been studied in English Literature (e.g. A

View from the Bridge). Whilst the resulting writing showed some originality with vocabulary choice and sentence and paragraph construction, the structure and content of such pieces were often very similar because the candidates followed the content and sequence of events of the film or play they had used as a stimulus. Tasks such as these do not help candidates to demonstrate that they understand the need to structure their writing to develop description or events and to provide overall cohesion, because the structure, and much of the content, has been provided for them. This should be taken into account by markers when balancing the strengths and weaknesses of the writing and awarding marks. With some centres this had not happened, which led to a slight over-rewarding of writing for some candidates.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 2:

when writing to describe try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of ideas and images
when writing to describe try to avoid writing in list-like paragraphs which are unconnected
write about something that you are familiar with or something that you know well
when writing narratives remember to structure your writing carefully
choose vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects
make sure that the images you create match the context and content of your writing.

Assignment 3

There were some very well written responses to **Assignment 3** tasks, and some centres used a wide range of interesting and topical texts to which candidates responded with enthusiasm and interest. Some centres tended to over-reward marks for reading, for a number of reasons:

The texts used for the assignments didn't contain enough ideas and opinions with which the candidates could engage.

Candidates responded with a literary critique, or an analysis and evaluation of a writer's use of presentational devices, rather than analysing, evaluating and commenting in detail on the ideas and opinions contained within the text.

Candidates used the text as a stimulus for a general comment on the topic rather than analysing, evaluating and commenting in detail on the ideas and opinions contained within the text.

Candidates attacked the author and their journalistic background rather than analysing, evaluating and commenting in detail on the ideas and opinions contained within the text.

Candidates produced unoriginal, formulaic and/or pedestrian responses because they were provided with a limited number of texts to which they could respond.

Some texts were quite old and the ideas and opinions held by the writer have been superseded by world events or technological advancements, which made it difficult for candidates to respond with relevant, clear and persuasive discussion.

As mentioned earlier in this report, to gain marks from Band 5 candidates need to provide an extended overview of the text or write an overall, structured response that assimilates most of the ideas and opinions presented within the text. Some of the reasons listed above prevented a significant number of candidates from fully engaging with this process, which meant marks from the lower bands of the mark scheme were more appropriate.

The marking of writing for **Assignment 3** was generally accurate. Less successful writing tended to be produced by candidates from centres that had set one, or very few texts, for a whole cohort. Responses to this sort of task setting tended to lack originality of thought or evidence of the candidates' own thinking, and often had similar structure and content to the other candidates' in the cohort.

Examples of good texts included an article about the Finnish education system, an article about why zoos are a good idea and an article on a 'pay as you throw' recycling scheme in America. Articles which were mainly fact or reportage, or ones that candidates linked to other media sources such as television shows or interviews (e.g. Jeremy Clarkson, Katie Hopkins), were less successful, because candidates tended to attack the writers and comment on their journalistic background and personal lives instead of focusing on the ideas and opinions presented in the texts. Advice and guidance as to how to select texts for **Assignment 3** is given in the syllabus.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 3:

give an overview of the main points or arguments contained within the text

aim to cover most of the ideas and opinions presented in the text
make sure that your ideas and responses are tightly linked to the ideas and opinions you have identified in the text
be aware of your audience and adapt your style accordingly.

Conclusion

There were many examples of good practice and excellent writing and it is clear that the best work stems from candidates who respond to individual tasks and write from personal experience or the heart. It is also clear that many centres are working hard to help their learners to develop and improve skills required to meet the assessment criteria. Whilst there is room for further improvement with some task setting and the marking of **Assignment 3**, it is good to see that the need to write in three different genres seems to be generally understood across most centres and that there is some reduction in the setting of 'one size fits all' style of task. There has also been a general improvement in the quality of administration, for which all the centres are thanked.



FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/06
Speaking and Listening

The standard of administration and accuracy of assessment continue to be of a high standard.

Key messages

Administration

- When completing an Individual Candidate Record Card for each candidate entered please provide specific information about the choices made for each task as this is important information for the Moderator. For **Task 1**, a comment reading 'a talk about a hobby of your choice' is not helpful but 'my interest in (specific hobby)' is useful for the Moderator.
- Cambridge requires a centre to provide four different items in the package sent to the Moderator. These are: a recorded sample on CD, DVD or USB drive; the Summary Forms for the whole cohort entered; a copy of the marks that have already been sent to Cambridge and the Individual Candidate Record Cards for the candidates included in the sample. Each one of these items is very important in the process of assessing a centre's performance. Centres are urged to ensure all four of these items are included in the package sent to Cambridge as the omission of any of them may cause a delay in the moderation process.
- All the recordings for **Task 1** and **Task 2** for the whole cohort should be sent in the sample packet.
- Whenever possible, it would be most helpful if the recordings sent by the centre were transferred to a single CD, DVD or USB drive, in a recognised common audio file format that can be played by standard computer software. Please check the quality of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge.
- For **Task 1** it is helpful if, for each candidate, the file name is the candidate's name and examination number. For **Task 2** it is helpful if the file name contains at least the candidate numbers of both candidates involved.
- The Teacher/examiner should introduce the recordings using the rubric in the syllabus. For paired activities, it would be helpful if **candidates introduce themselves and the roles they are playing** before beginning the task so the Moderator can clearly distinguish who is speaking and when.

Key messages

Approach to coursework

- Although there is no formal requirement that activities should be of a minimum length, please consider whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met if the activity is very short.
- For **Task 1** a good comparison is the Part 1 presentation within the 05 speaking and listening test. For this, a candidate is required to speak for 3–4 minutes on a chosen topic. A similar length would be appropriate for **Task 1**.
- In **Task 2**, the Paired Task, it is important to offer both candidates an equal and sufficient amount of time to contribute for both speaking and listening. Short tasks of less than four minutes do not give both candidates enough time to convincingly fulfil the criteria in the mark scheme for the middle and higher bands.

General comments

Centres are reminded that there are specific forms provided by Cambridge for use with Component 6, namely the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form.

For Component 6, centres are encouraged to be creative in the choice of tasks but the assessment criteria should always be used as a guide to the skills being assessed. The integration of literature into the activities is encouraged and continues to yield some excellent results in both **Task 1** and **Task 2**.

Comments on specific tasks

The most successful tasks attempted were those where the candidates took ownership of a topic and were genuinely interested in what they were saying. Well planned and prepared responses to tasks are generally more successful, but responses do not benefit from over-scripted and seemingly ‘artificial’ performances where spontaneity is missing.

Task 1

A wide range of topics were undertaken. The task generally took the form of an individual presentation. Centres allowing candidates to choose their own topics as opposed to dictating a generic theme is viewed positively. It is important to consider that this component allows differentiation by task setting, so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when these choices are made. More able candidates should be encouraged to choose more exacting and mature topics that extend their abilities to construct a compelling argument within a period of approximately 3–4 minutes that includes an element of introspection and reflection. Dramatic monologues in the voice of a chosen character have resulted in some very successful talks which stand out for their creativity and ingenuity.

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

- A significant event in my life.
- My love of a personal interest/hobby (that moves beyond the purely descriptive, is reflective and thought-provoking).
- A critique of a favourite book, work of art or movie.
- My passion for (e.g.) horses.
- The place I would like to live.
- Are we ready for (specific technological advance)?
- The Marvel comic universe.
- Why we should all follow a healthy diet.

*Some examples of less successful **Task 1** activities include:*

- Should cannabis be legalised? (this has potential safeguarding issues).
- Football (too generic and unfocused).
- A single topic imposed by the centre for the whole of its cohort in which no individual choice is allowed (ownership of and commitment to the topic is not always evident).
- Social media (unless a specific viewpoint is being argued).

Task 2

The Pair-Based Activity works best between two candidates of similar ability discussing a topic they have prepared and that they feel strongly about, or engaging in a lively role play that allows them to demonstrate their discursive strengths. A clearly defined focus is better than a general exchange of views. ‘Football’, ‘Body Image’ and ‘Social Media’ remain popular topics but where there is no sense of audience or specific focus there will be little evidence to support a mark in the higher bands. Where candidates have clear viewpoints that lead to persuasive argument, the resulting task will be more successful than when candidates are unsure of their opinions. To this end, sufficient research and development should be built in to the preparation time leading up to performance of the task.

In general, entirely scripted responses, either discussions or self-generated role plays, do not allow candidates to access the higher attainment bands.

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

- Arguing for and against a current affairs topic such as the benefits of artificial intelligence or responses to climate change.
- Discussing a text or author both candidates know well but may have differing views about.

- Comparing the merits of two famous people where each candidate acts as a champion for one of the celebrities.
- Acting as employers discussing who should be given a job from a list of prospective candidates (and variations on the theme).

Some examples of less successful Task 2 activities include:

- Should cannabis be legalised? (this has potential safeguarding issues).
- Interviews where one of the candidates acts solely as the interviewer (this is limiting for the candidate).
- A single topic imposed by the centre for the whole of its cohort such as 'Room 101' in which no individual choice is allowed (ownership of and commitment to the topic is not always evident).
- Role plays such as two neighbours arguing or a customer complaining to a sales assistant. The evidence of the present and previous series suggests these often rely too heavily on scripts, generally become simple arguments and limit the candidates' ability to demonstrate the required range of speaking and listening skills.

Task 3

Task 3 may take the form of a group discussion debating an issue which is topical or a role-play where each candidate plays the part of a character. Both can be successful as long as the assessment criteria for the group work are met. It is most important that each candidate in the group is allowed sufficient scope within the activity to demonstrate their strengths without being dominated by others. It is, therefore, advisable to create groups of similar ability levels so that weaker candidates are not disadvantaged and to consider the group dynamic so that each member has the opportunity to contribute to the best of their ability. A group should consist of no fewer than three members and it is advised that it does not exceed five candidates. A group consisting of three or four candidates is preferable for the logistical purpose of being able to assess each candidate's performance more accurately.

Some examples of productive Task 3 activities include:

- A trial scene, possibly based on a literary text – e.g. 'Of Mice and Men', 'An Inspector Calls', 'A View From The Bridge', 'All My Sons'.
- A radio discussion of a significant event from a work of literature involving the key characters.
- A discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint.
- Balloon debate – who to include/discard from a list of famous people where each candidate champions the cause of their chosen celebrity.
- A meeting in which the candidates discuss their roles in and possible contributions to a named community event.
- A review of a named event from the perspective of those involved in its planning.

General Conclusions

The general standard of assessment by centres is at the correct level. It is to their credit that centres have become very efficient in the administration of the component and in the choice of topics. Candidates undertaking speaking and listening activities continue to be enthusiastic about the experience and clearly benefit from careful planning.