

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1120/01 Writing

Section 2

Key messages

- Candidates should give attention to the **full** requirements of each bullet point in **Section 1**; the word **and**, in bold type, indicates two parts to the bullet point, both of which should be addressed.
- In **Section 1**, candidates should pay close attention to the required format and ensure that they show awareness of this throughout their response.
- Where introductory paragraphs are included in the Directed Writing, they should be as brief as possible, and should not rely on a large amount of lifting from the question wording.
- The use of correct tenses and agreement would improve the work of the majority of candidates.
- Correct punctuation (full stops, commas) and a more varied use of punctuation (colons, semi-colons, and exclamation marks) would raise the level of most responses.
- Candidates should ensure that their handwriting is legible, ensuring that words are spaced adequately, as poor handwriting can cause difficulty in assessing the work.
- Candidates should be encouraged to plan their responses.
- Descriptions of (often gratuitous) violence are not appropriate for this exam. Of particular concern this year were the number of scripts referencing violence against women. While writing such as 'Her friends could only watch, helpless, petrified, as her inert body was dragged through the mud' might impress linguistically, material of this nature is not appropriate for this exam and candidates should be instructed to carefully consider whether the content of their narrative is suitable before beginning to write.

General comments

There were very few short or incomplete scripts this series suggesting that candidates felt confident in responding to the paper. Presentation continued to be an issue for some candidates, particularly with regards to spacing between words, handwriting so small that it was difficult to read, and multiple crossings out. There is still a tendency for some candidates to produce responses which far exceed the indicative word count, and this should be discouraged as it often leads to less focused (and therefore less successful) pieces.

The vast majority of candidates responded well to the requirement of Task Fulfilment in **Section 1**, completing the task in a satisfactory way. A significant number of candidates moved beyond this, producing a well-organised response which showed very good understanding of purpose, clear awareness of the situation, and which developed all the required points in detail.

The majority of candidates showed good awareness of text type in the opening of their response, using the given 'Good morning, everyone,' and adding an introductory paragraph which referenced the audience, however fewer sustained this awareness throughout their response. In an attempt to signal that they were writing a speech, some candidates offered bracketed directions such as '(adjusts microphone)' or included questions and answers from 'the floor' and while this was a clear attempt to show awareness of text type, candidates should be encouraged instead to make use of speech features such as rhetorical questions inviting the audience to empathise with their experiences, for example 'Would you like to know what else helped me?', 'Seems so heavenly, right?' etc. Some candidates used humour effectively to engage the audience and, in more successful responses, there was a balance of appropriate formality with embedded informality.

In **Section 2**, the Narrative titles (**Questions 5 and 6**) proved the most popular. **Questions 3**, the first of the Argument titles, was the least frequently attempted by candidates this session, while **Question 4** was the more popular of these two titles.

Candidates produced responses which were close to, or surpassed, the indicative word count. However, as with **Section 1**, candidates should ensure they focus on the quality of their response, rather than producing over-long pieces which lack the necessary cohesion and focus.

As far as the use of language is concerned, candidates are advised to check their work thoroughly as marks are lost through carelessness, particularly in the use of verbs, tenses, direct and indirect articles, and agreement. Having said this, the range of vocabulary seen from some candidates this year was ambitious, with examples such as ‘panoply’, ‘artisanal’, ‘pusillanimous’, ‘endemic’ and ‘paradisiacal’ impressing. However, there were also examples of good vocabulary used in the wrong context such as ‘it is conspicuous that these were the best days of my life’ or ‘the euphonious smell of the wildlife’. It should be remembered that while ambitious vocabulary does impress, it is important that it is used sensitively and appropriately, otherwise it can sound unnatural and detract from the flow of the response. It is also important that candidates are aware that ambitious vocabulary is not a substitute for grammatical accuracy. There was widespread use of idiom this year – ‘in a nutshell’, ‘whale of a time’, ‘not my cup of tea’, ‘the cherry on top’ and ‘raining cats and dogs’ – and while mostly used in the correct grammatical form, over-reliance on these can lead to responses sounding less natural.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1: Directed Writing

Question 1

In **Section 1**, the majority of candidates performed well on Task Fulfilment. The task required them to imagine that they had spent part of their recent long vacation at an adventure camp, doing a wide range of activities with other young people and to write a speech to be delivered to their class outlining details of how this camp was beneficial and which aspect they disliked. There were many developed discussions which outlined a range of benefits and specified several dislikes with clear justification as to the reasons for these, however less effective responses spent a lot of time outlining the preparations for, journey to, and activities at the camp before addressing the second and third bullet points in a less detailed way. Some candidates also listed benefits and dislikes with little elaboration and where this was the case, the response was less successful. Those candidates who were the most successful here outlined two or three ideas for each of bullet points two and three, developing these in detail. Taking time to plan their response before beginning to write, considering carefully the purpose and situation would help candidates to produce more successful responses. Some candidates mistook the idea of an adventure camp for that of a camping trip with family or friends, but this did not preclude them from being able to address all three bullet points. In some cases, where candidates had written about a family trip, disagreements with parents became too much of a focus and these responses also tended to be those which provided extensive background before they arrived at the camp, leaving little time to address bullet points 2 and 3 in detail.

Many candidates used a first paragraph (often utilising the words of the situation provided in the paper) to introduce the purpose of the speech and finished by thanking the audience for their attention. More successful responses used this concluding paragraph to suggest that those in the audience might like to consider attending a similar adventure camp in their next holiday and showed good awareness of situation by thanking their English teacher for providing them with the opportunity to deliver their speech. Another feature of more successful responses was the embedding of nods to the audience within the body of the speech, perhaps through the use of rhetorical questions or reference to shared experience.

The majority of candidates used the bullet points to effectively structure the middle of their speech, producing a paragraph per bullet point. The bullet points required candidates to include:

- where the camp was and how long they were there for
- how staying at the camp benefitted them
- what they disliked about the camp **and** why.

For **bullet point 1**, the vast majority of candidates indicated where the camp was, with some being specific in not only naming the camp but concisely giving geographical position (‘Located in the heartlands of our island, the Border Mountain Camp . . .’), while some candidates provided more vague locations such as ‘in America’, ‘in a mountainous area’ or ‘beside the beach’. Weaker responses were limited by a lack of specificity (‘in the country’, ‘not far from here’).

The majority of candidates specified how long they stayed at the camp, with responses ranging from the very precise ('11–18 September 2023', 'five days and four nights') to those which used the preposition 'about' or the adverb 'almost' to indicate a vaguer addressing of the point ('about two weeks', 'almost 15 days'). More linguistically impressive responses, rather than simply repeating 'the camp lasted for . . .', provided examples such as 'I decided to opt for a one month stay.'

A small number of candidates omitted this bullet point altogether and thus, despite often sustained responses to the other bullet points, limited the mark they were able to achieve for Task Fulfilment. In these cases, candidates often spent time detailing the preparations for and the journey to the camp instead.

For **bullet point 2**, a vast array of benefits were offered, both practical and character building. These included teamwork, increased confidence, developing from an introvert to an extrovert ('breaking that shield of timidity'), disconnecting from the world, and friendship. Candidates also discussed knowledge gained about nature for a science project or other school subject. Developing life skills, such as decision making, problem solving and communication also featured in a significant number of responses, while appreciation of the beauty of the environment as in 'Those resplendent panoramic views were really photogenic' was also often mentioned. Getting fit, cooking, singing and dancing, and making memories were practical benefits, whilst meditation and yoga provided those of a more spiritual nature. Becoming more self-assured, making friends, and having fun were also popular suggestions. Many candidates discussed mental health benefits from being close to nature and free from social media. Weaker responses included long lists of activities, from which the implied benefits needed to be extracted, or lengthy but unfocused accounts of what happened on each day of the camp, omitting to draw any clear benefits.

For **bullet point 3**, although the response to this was often less well-developed than that for bullet point 2, the vast majority of candidates specified at least one dislike. The most popular dislikes were mosquitoes, the quality or lack of food and sanitary arrangements. The lack of privacy, particularly regarding sleeping conditions was disliked by a significant number of candidates, who bemoaned that they 'had to sleep close to each other' which was an issue because 'some people had bad breaths' or were 'noisy nappers'. Others considered the limited size of the camp at large to be an issue as they were 'stuffed like animals in a box' or 'like too many pickles in one jar'. Lack of resources and poor management of the camp, as well as issues with badly behaved participants who stole, bullied, and smoked without consequence were also sources of irritation. The weather featured in a large number of responses, with the camp being situated somewhere that was too hot, or activities being curtailed due to the rain which frequently also leaked into the inadequate tents. While the majority of suggested dislikes were sensible and pertinent to the situation, a number of candidates attempted to insert seemingly pre-prepared responses on topics such as littering and these suggestions seemed less convincing. Perhaps unsurprisingly, disconnection from social media and being deprived of electronic devices also featured in this bullet point, being seen here as a negative which resulted in homesickness due to being unable to contact parents and fear of missing out on what was happening in the world beyond the camp. Better responses to this bullet point were clear and precise in joining the 'why' to the 'dislike', for example, 'The only complaint I had was regarding the food; it was bland and repetitive.' but a small number of candidates either did not offer a reason which was clear, or omitted entirely the second half of the bullet point.

Most candidates' speeches showed very good awareness of purpose and situation, with many using an introductory paragraph to establish their reason for 'standing before you today' and to thank their English teacher for 'giving me the opportunity to share my experience at an adventure camp', and providing a concluding paragraph thanking the audience for 'lending your ears' and often suggesting that attending a similar camp in future would be something worth considering. For the majority of candidates, audience was also secure, with the use of direct address, however many candidates would benefit from demonstrating a clearer awareness of audience in the main body of their response as this was not always present. Those who did address the audience throughout did this in a variety of ways, from the informal 'you guys', to 'my dear fellows', 'beloved classmates' and 'My dearest audience'. There were also some examples of alternatives to the standard 'Thank you for listening', such as 'Long lives teacher, long lives candidate' and, in the case of one candidate who invited questions from the floor, a warning that 'I am here to give answers, not hope'. While these alternative concluding statements somewhat strayed from the traditional expectations of a speech, they were an attempt by the candidates to show awareness of the required format. Tone and register were well-maintained with most candidates producing writing which included a suitable level of formality. Both bullet points 2 and 3 provided plenty of scope for candidates to offer opinion and justification.

Generally, ideas were well-structured, with the use of discourse markers such as 'firstly', 'in addition', 'moreover' and 'furthermore' being used appropriately and, in some cases, the pertinent employment of rhetorical questions used to signal movement from one bullet point to another. The majority of candidates began with a suitable introduction and provided a paragraph for each bullet point before rounding off their

response with an appropriate conclusion. Most candidates were able to mark sentence separation, with capital letters used accurately to begin each new sentence. Comma splicing continues to be an issue for some candidates, as does the incorrect use of commas preceding subordinate clauses, however accurate use of commas following conjunctive adverbs, such as 'Firstly', 'Moreover', 'Additionally', etc. was in evidence in a large number of responses. Where rhetorical questions were used, these were almost always accurately punctuated, and a number of candidates effectively used exclamation marks to indicate strong feelings, particularly regarding their dislikes – 'The toilets were disgusting!' – or to inject an element of humour. Apostrophes for omission were generally used accurately, while the use of apostrophes to indicate possession was less secure. Errors in irregular verb forms (particularly extending the regular past tense ending of -ed to the irregular verb 'teach') as well as omissions of the direct and indirect articles, at times, hindered communication. The use of plural for singular continues to be an area of difficulty for many candidates, often also leading to issues with agreement. There continues to be an issue with homophonic error for a number of candidates, with confusion of 'there'/'their', 'here'/'hear', 'past'/'passed' and 'your'/'you're' the most common slips, and examples such as 'the camp was in the middle of the jungle and made us pray for the mosquitoes' affecting meaning.

Section 2: Composition

Question 2

Describe a typical lunch break at your school. Remember you are describing what people are doing (such as chatting to friends, playing sport or eating), where these activities are taking place, and the atmosphere.

Some candidates produced descriptions of a typical lunch break at their school which really transported the reader to the school and brought to life the sights, sounds and smells vividly. Successful responses to this task featured a range of well-crafted images throughout with different focal points for each paragraph, moving through different phases of the lunch break or describing various groups of students and teachers in turn. The writing produced was, at times, enthusiastic, passionate, and even amusing. Many opened with the in-class restlessness as the clock ticked toward the bell, likening the classroom to a prison from which escape was eagerly anticipated, and followed this with the mad dash to make it to the canteen in time to beat the queue. There was focus on the way the playground 'completely transformed during the lunch break' as various groups filled the space chatting, studying, 'relishing their meal' or playing sport. There was often a focus on gossiping which teachers were involved in too. There were isolated references to teachers or rectors patrolling to ensure there were no fights, with one candidate noting that the temper of one of these characters was 'as short as the hairs on Popeye's head'. The best candidates here brought their response to a close with the sound of the bell recalling candidates to lessons, with the mention of stragglers reluctant to return to class a well-observed and realistic touch. Weaker responses were more narrative in nature and struggled to move beyond offering lists of the activities taking place with little, if any, exploration of the atmosphere. Candidates chose to answer this through either the third or first person, either of which was acceptable, however the use of the first-person approach did more frequently lead candidates towards producing a more narrative, rather than descriptive, response.

Question 3

'The benefits of healthy eating are now so well understood that no one has any excuse to eat an unhealthy diet.' Do you agree? Give reasons and examples to support your view.

Candidates who attempted this question focused on temptation and choice. The vast majority agreed with the statement and had little sympathy with people who did not understand the consequences of unhealthy eating, largely because of how prevalent education on this topic is on social media. The mantra 'Health is Wealth' was frequently cited and candidates touched on ideas both from recent government campaigns and from their own education. Some responses made excellent use of technical vocabulary and real-world examples to support their views, as well as persuasive devices such as statistics and expert opinions. The benefits of healthy eating were clearly understood and discussed with reference to lifestyle, obesity, and diseases such as 'cardiovascular problems' and 'diabetes'. There was frequent discussion of the temptation of fast food, with recognition of its addictive power, but also consideration of financial aspects, conceding that unhealthy food is often a cheaper, not to mention more convenient alternative for time-poor individuals. This question garnered the most notable use of invented words such as 'reboost', 'perspirated' and 'sugaries' and sentence structures, as well as ideas, were often repeated. Many candidates who chose this question seemingly ran out of ideas and planning in advance of attempting this question would have helped these candidates to ensure that they had enough material to produce a suitably sustained and developed response. In general, responses to this question were well structured, with effective use of discourse

markers and, in some cases, neat transitions to the second half of the essay where the alternate view was considered, for example, 'One argument to counter this...'

Question 4

'It is better to have one or two really close friends than lots of different friends.' What is your opinion? Give reasons and details to support your view.

Of the two discursive tasks, this question was attempted by more candidates than **Question 3**. This was perhaps because this question allowed candidates to easily engage with their own experience of either having a small number of close friends or lots of different friends and use personal anecdotes in support of their ideas. Those who suggested that having one or two close friends was preferable suggested that this would help avoid betrayal and lead to greater trust, while having a wider friendship group was seen as more likely to result in 'backstabbing'. Some candidates focused on the idea of quality over quantity, with one memorable example suggesting that 'having one true friend is better than a larger group of snakes'. Other reasons in favour of a small friendship group included it costing less money because you do not need to buy as many presents and greater ease in making travel arrangements, as when you carpool, everyone can easily fit in one car. Being able to rely on the support of a small group of friends, as well as the happiness inherent in sharing interests or hobbies were also cited as reasons in support of this point of view. Those who argued in favour of a larger group of friends, often suggested that this would help avoid social isolation in the event of a falling out, as well as providing a wider support system in terms of range of expertise. Some candidates even discussed the illusionary nature of online friendships through social media and how this could be linked to cyber criminality.

Question 5

Write a story which includes the sentence: 'Even though the weather was bad and their clothes were unsuitable, they knew they had to go.'

This question was the most popular in **Section 2**, with the best responses featuring fast action and dramatic narratives. Situations chosen were wide-ranging and candidates produced narratives across a range of genres including mystery, romance, and thrillers. There was often a sudden event which caused a change of plans and so clothes were inappropriate, with example triggers such as illness, death, rejection in a relationship, the birth of a baby, a serious accident, an unexpected downpour and a car chase. While the best narratives seamlessly embedded the given sentence, there were a significant number of candidates who clearly had a story in mind that they wanted to tell and inserted the given sentence in a way that was not cohesive. Some candidates adapted the sentence to change the person from 'they' to 'I'/'we' which was acceptable, however some wrote in first person and inserted the sentence still in third person which jarred slightly. There was some interesting use of comparison, for example, 'I got scared that if it was rainy, my clothes would get wet and my hair would deform like a monster' and 'orchestra of the birdsong'. As in **Section 1**, the main linguistic issues were subject/verb agreement, verb forms and tense inconsistencies. Many candidates included direct speech in their writing, however this was often not accurately punctuated, with the punctuation inside the closing speech mark frequently omitted and capital letters erroneously used for reporting clauses. Additionally, many candidates wrote their direct speech continuously, rather than beginning a new line for each new speaker, which sometimes led to difficulties in comprehending who was speaking and to whom, thus causing confusion and disrupting the narrative. Some weaker responses were significantly above the indicative word count but lacked any real control. In these cases, focusing on quality of writing over number words would have resulted in a better outcome.

Question 6

Write a story in which a lost phone plays an important part.

This question was the second most popular question in **Section 2**. The importance of mobile phones in candidates' lives was obvious from the responses seen here, with statements such as 'If you lose your mobile phone, you feel like you've lost your mind.' indicating the anxiety and heartfelt despair surrounding their loss. Many candidates produced narratives which frequently focused on the expense, fear of punishment, losing schoolwork and lack of communication with others, while other candidates were more ambitious in terms of content, writing thrillers about gangsters who had lost their phones which were subsequently used to prosecute them, tales of kidnapping and even zombies. Narratives in both first and third person were seen in response to this question with equal success. In some narratives, the main character lost their phone, while in others they found a phone which was lost and both angles worked effectively. The best responses included some impressive writing, with examples such as the description of

‘a grey-haired man who looked as if the sun had cooked most of his juices’ and the intriguing opening,
‘Drawn by the allure of supernatural mysteries...I embarked on a perilous journey.’

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1120/02 Reading

Key messages

- Candidates should try to gain a clear, overall picture of both the given texts *and* all questions through close reading before they begin to answer each section. In both sections of the Paper, close reading and careful attention to detail were the attributes which brought the best results.
- Candidates might find it helpful to underline or highlight key words in the question, e.g. **Question 4(b)** 'Give two reasons...'. This will ensure the answers are focused and creditworthy.
- To achieve high marks for **Question 1(a)**, selecting the content points, and **Question 1(b)**, writing a summary, candidates are advised to focus on identifying, specifically, the main overarching points from the text without the unnecessary inclusion of examples, repetition and extensions of those points.
- While candidates need to be encouraged to write succinctly and to avoid copying lengthy extracts from the text when answering **Question 1(a)**, they must also be aware that brevity can exclude key information. For example, 'used in rituals' omits the reference to war which can distort the meaning.
- Candidates are encouraged to write to the recommended length of between 150–180 words in **Question 1(b)** summary; overlong or short responses are self-penalising since they cannot satisfactorily fulfil the criteria for Relevance or Coherence.
- For **Question 1(b)** summary, it is essential that linking devices are appropriate and used selectively. Words and phrases which are not standard English, such as 'moreso' and 'to add on', are to be avoided. Similarly, expressions such as 'moving on', 'in a nutshell', 'by the way' or 'alongside' are neither skilful nor stylish and are not appropriate for a formal summary. A high degree of fluency and clarity is achieved with the accurate use of relative pronouns.
- In **Question 1(b)**, candidates are advised to use their own words and structures, and they should be discouraged from copying complete sentences from the text. 'Own word' vocabulary choices should be precise and appropriate. For example, the word 'revenue' is a sensible alternative for 'income', but 'celebration' is too far from the meaning of 'ritual'. Own word alternatives which are longer than the original should be discouraged, such as 'items for import and export' for 'trade'.
- Accurate punctuation in **Question 1(b)**, particularly the accurate use of commas and full stops, can assist in the fluent and coherent presentation of content points.
- To assist candidates in understanding Passage 2, regular reading of narrative texts and consideration of both explicit and inferential questions about characters and situations will help a great deal with all types of question in **Section 2**.
- There was some misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the questions in Section 2. Candidates need to consider exactly what is being asked. Simply lifting from the passage rarely works; candidates need to rephrase the text in such a way that the question is clearly being answered.
- If a question asks for 'own words', such as **Question 5** and **Question 7(a)**, candidates should avoid repeating the key words in their response or relying on words in the passage, and instead provide suitable synonyms which work within the given context.
- In responding to the final question on the writer's craft, understanding of both literal and inferential writing is required. It was not always evident that candidates could distinguish between *meaning* and *effect*. If a question asks for the *meaning* of a word or a phrase, candidates are advised to provide a straightforward literal meaning. For the *effect* of a word or a phrase, candidates should go beyond the literal and comment on the impact or connotations of particular words or an image. Candidates might ask themselves what feeling or atmosphere is created by the words or what do the words tell us about the character's emotions.

General comments

Candidates were asked to answer questions on two passages, each of approximately 700 words: the first entitled 'Salt' and the second entitled 'A Summer Job'.

Responses were, for the most part, clearly written. A few candidates who wrote to excess – in **Question 1(a)** particularly – found themselves writing at the side or at the bottom of the page which can cause illegibility. If the candidate's response does not fit in the space provided, the response must continue on an 'additional page' rather than being written in a random space in the question paper booklet.

The first non-fiction passage explored the candidates' ability to read for ideas and the second fiction passage tested their reading for meaning. 22 marks were available for the summary **Question 1**, with 12 of these marks being awarded for the assessment of the candidates' ability to select content points from the passage, 'Salt'. 10 marks were awarded for the assessment of their ability to express these points in a piece of writing which was relevant, well organised and easy to follow. Part of the skill of summary writing is writing concisely; many responses exceeded the maximum word limit of 180 words.

In **Question 1(a)**, the majority of candidates wisely adhered to the suggestion in the rubric that they might find it useful to use bullet points for their notes. Generally, candidates were selective in extracting the relevant information. Others found it difficult to separate the overarching points from the examples. In these cases, candidates often incorporated irrelevance or ran out of space – both resulting in a loss of potential marks.

In **Question 1(b)**, there was a maximum of 16 content points, including the given points, candidates could refer to. To achieve Bands 4 or 5 for Relevance, it is expected that candidates include a wide range of the available points. For Bands 4 and 5 Coherence, the summary must demonstrate significant stretches of fluent, concise and accurate writing, with minimal errors in Band 5 summaries.

A further question, **Question 2**, allotted three marks to the testing of the candidates' ability to read for ideas, in this case to identify three pieces of advice in two different paragraphs of the passage.

The second passage, 'A Summer Job', tested the candidates' literal and inferential comprehension, their understanding of vocabulary, their use of own words and their appreciation of the writer's craft. The remaining 25 marks for the Paper could be gained here.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1(a)

This was the first part of the summary question carrying 12 marks. Candidates were asked to identify and write down the ways in which salt was important in former times, and the ways in which salt is important in modern times, as outlined in the passage. Candidates were to write their answers in note form and were advised that own words were not necessary. One content point under each heading of the rubric was given by way of illustration, although these given points were not rewarded with a mark.

Excluding these given points, there were 14 content points. Only a few candidates achieved 10 or more marks. These successful responses were expressed concisely, used the suggested bullet points and avoided repetition, unnecessary examples and additional information, ensuring at the same time that key words essential to making the point were included. Less successful responses offered irrelevant material, particularly repetition. Examples of such are given in dealing with the individual points below.

Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 included eight ways in which salt was important in former times, excluding the given point. Paragraph 1 focused on salt's role in the ancient world beginning with the point that *salt producing areas became centres of civilisation*. This point was not always presented accurately with a number of responses blurring meaning by stating 'salt became centres of civilisation'. The next point that salt was an article of *trade* was often identified correctly. It was unnecessary to mention who was trading (the Greeks and Romans). The final point in the paragraph was more challenging since to demonstrate understanding, it required several details to be included to score – *salted fish, tomb, food and afterlife*.

Paragraph 2's focus was the use of salt in war. To simply state it was used in war was too general and did not show close reading skills. The first point that it was *a cause of war* was often missed. Several candidates successfully attempted the next point stating that salt was *used in rituals in war*. Having identified *rituals in war*, many responses carried on to lift the example of Scipio in Carthage or the irrelevant detail of it being 'a symbolic gesture', negating their answer. Similarly, any reference to the American War of Independence in the following point, salt was *a weapon of war*, could not be credited unless this was cited as an example with 'such as' or 'for example'.

Paragraph 3 had two further content points about salt's importance in the past and these focused on finance. The first of these points was that there was a *salt tax*. It was incorrect to refer to the French Revolution or 'civil unrest' because these are extraneous to the overarching point. For the second point about finance, the best answers succinctly stated that salt was used as *currency* or *money*, but too often candidates brought in much irrelevance about a specific time period (the thirteenth century) or the example of Tibet.

In the second section of the summary, the rubric asked for the importance of salt in modern times, as outlined in the passage, and there were a further six content points, excluding the given point, to be found in Paragraphs 4, 5 and 6.

Candidates found the first of these points difficult because it is embedded in examples. Many candidates lifted at length, but the discerning candidates recognised the excess details and ignored these, correctly selecting the overarching point that salt is important for *beauty and health*. There was more success with the following point from Paragraph 5 that salt is important in the *production of chlorine*; any reference to the fact that chlorine is involved in the manufacture of other products denied the mark because the focus on salt had been lost. That salt is used as a *cleaning agent* or that *salt is softer and cheaper than chemical cleaners* was the next point. A few candidates offered both answers in separate bullets; this repetition could only gain one mark. The final point in the paragraph was successfully identified with only a small number neglecting to mention *what* salt keeps roads safe from: ice. Some candidates captured this idea very succinctly with 'de-ices roads'. The first point in Paragraph 6 could also be given in the first half ('in former times') since the passage tells us that salt was a *huge source of income* both in 'former' and 'modern' times. The adjective 'huge' is essential in capturing salt's importance and this was occasionally missed. The final point was rarely identified, but *salt made its way into many languages* was also a valid content point. Occasionally, 'Roman soldiers were paid in salt' was placed in the first half; however, this is an example of the overarching point that the word 'salt' became part of our language.

Question 1(b)

In **Question 1(b)**, candidates who scored highly in **Question 1(a)** were often able to transform their notes into a relevant summary which did not rely on excessive copying of the text. There was a maximum of 16 content points, including the given points, candidates could refer to.

The most impressive Band 4 and Band 5 efforts were from candidates who included a wide range of relevant points, made them with clarity, and avoided unnecessary examples and additional details. These responses were balanced, giving equal consideration to both parts of the question.

Less secure responses, many relying on copied sections of the text, included irrelevance, such as details about swimming in the sea and salt cakes in Tibet, as well as unnecessary conclusions summing up the importance of salt. These responses sometimes repeated points: having identified that salt is a cleaning agent, some went on to describe salt being softer than chemical cleaners.

Candidates are advised to use their own words and those who did use them, together with constructions to link the main ideas, created a fluency which was easy to follow. The best responses demonstrated an impressive coherence using a range of stylish and skilful linking devices, including varied and appropriate adverbial connectives and original complex structures introduced by 'which' and 'who'. Points were often concisely synthesised, such as 'salt was both a cause and a weapon of war'. The repetitive use of 'and' or 'also' to link content was avoided in these skilful and impressive summaries, and punctuation was accurate and helpful.

Despite the guidance to 'use your own words as far as possible' and to not exceed 180 words, the less successful summaries often featured indiscriminate copying from the passage and ignored the word limit. It was also common for some adverbial connectives such as 'nevertheless', 'subsequently' and 'likewise' to be used incorrectly with no precise connection to what had just been written. Others, such as 'in addition', 'moreover' and 'furthermore', were placed at random or mechanically at the beginning of a new sentence. The quality of coherence was also impacted by awkward attempts to link ideas with phrases such as 'by the way', 'on the flip side of the coin' or 'adding on' which are not appropriate for a formal summary. The use of 'next' and 'then' is also a limited way to link content. Weaknesses in grammar and punctuation impacted on the fluent presentation of points.

Question 2

In **Question 2**, candidates were required to select and write down three pieces of advice given by the writer, one from Paragraph 4 and two from Paragraph 5. In some cases, candidates did not appear to fully understand what constitutes advice. It is important that candidates follow the rubric and 'write down' the advice as it is given in the text without omissions, additions or the use of ellipsis. If a word is missed, it can change the overall meaning. The key here is to identify structures which offer clear guidance and advice as to how individuals should act.

In Paragraph 4, the writer advises '(When shopping) it is good practice to look at packaging to check the amount of salt (the food contains.)' The main difficulty for candidates was distinguishing between the advice given by the writer and, in this paragraph, advice from the 'health professionals'. Consequently, several candidates gave the advice from the health professionals that we should limit our salt intake and this could not be credited.

There was more success identifying the advice in Paragraph 5 that 'we should all be on the lookout for non-chemical, eco-friendly products', with the key indicator 'should' helping candidates locate the correct answer. It was essential that 'all' was included since to make an impact, everyone has to act. Candidates who were prompted to select the final sentence in the paragraph because of the use of 'should', were not alert to the fact that this advice is from 'critics', not the writer. The correct answer lay in the penultimate sentence in the paragraph: 'we need to listen to critics who say that salt damages vehicles.'

Section 2

Generally, candidates found that responding to the detailed demands of the questions on the narrative passage was more challenging than dealing with those in the first, factual passage. Some candidates did not attempt the final writer's craft questions which had four marks in total.

Question 3(a) was a straightforward literal comprehension question asking why the writer went to the doctor's wife to ask for a summer job. The answer was clearly indicated in the second sentence and many candidates correctly identified that she had worked for her the summer before. A small minority missed the time detail of 'last summer' or 'the previous holiday', and some occasionally selected 'to satisfy her mother' from the opening sentence. Although this might explain why she was looking for a job, it failed to recognise why she specifically went to the doctor's wife.

Question 3(b) was another literal comprehension question. This question required candidates to scan the whole paragraph for the two reasons why the job was 'good news'. There was much success in recognising that the writer would be given more money than before, but the other reason earlier in the paragraph, that she could start the next day or immediately, was regularly missed. Candidates are to be reminded to read the whole paragraph and to carefully select the relevant content from the passage; answers which went on to include that the daughters 'could spend more time' with the writer became unfocused and were not creditworthy.

Question 3(c) was an inferential question asking why the mother might have caused the writer's 'change in mood'. A correct answer had to identify 'her mother' and the comment she made that 'it was not a real job'. It was also acceptable to write that her mother was 'negative', 'dissatisfied' or 'belittling', but 'rude' or 'unhappy' did not demonstrate precise enough understanding. Several candidates found the question challenging since not all recognised the nature of the relationship the writer had with her mother and wrote that 'her mother said she was lucky' or that 'she was pleased she was earning money'.

Question 4(a) was an inferential question asking why the writer said that she had 'a thousand things' in her bag. Many candidates went back to the text to read the phrase in context, realising that the hyperbole was indicating that she brought *a lot* of items for the girls, or the fact that the children needed a *great number* of things. Some answers specified 'toys' or 'towels', but these were invented details and were not in the passage. The phrase relates to the items the girls needed so reference to 'the writer's books' was irrelevant. It was not enough to lift from the text that she brought 'all the things' the girls needed. Similarly, 'everything' or 'anything' were also insufficient to capture the large amount since 'everything' the girls need might not be a lot. Only a few candidates scored with the alternative response focusing on the language device: she is *exaggerating*.

Question 4(b) was a two-part literal comprehension passage asking why the writer went home 'exhausted'. Many candidates scored at least one mark here. The first answer focused on the books and several responses correctly stated that the books she read were very difficult or that she was not used to the intellectual demands of the reading. Simply to write that she had to read books was not enough to explain why this was exhausting. Other answers focused on the contents of her bag being heavy to carry or sitting in

the sun was exhausting but these ideas are not text-based. The second point was more straightforward and could be found at the end of the paragraph: the girls required a *lot* of attention. It was not enough to state that she had to take care of the girls without conveying the idea that the attention was 'constant' or 'a great amount'.

Question 5 was the first 'own words' question and candidates were asked to explain Marisa's behaviour when she *uneasily ventured* to say a few words to the girls and the key lay in capturing the meaning of the words 'uneasily' and 'ventured'. Those candidates who recognised that this 'own words' question required synonyms in a sensible context for the two words performed well. There was more success with 'uneasily' with alternatives such as 'uncomfortably', 'uncertainly' or 'awkwardly' gaining a mark. 'Ventured' proved more challenging, but a few candidates did show understanding with she 'tried', 'forced herself' or 'was brave enough' to speak to the girls. The question was occasionally misunderstood and misread as 'Why was Marisa uneasy?' with incorrect answers speculating on Marisa's lack of experience with children.

In **Question 6(a)**, candidates were asked for one word in Paragraph 4 which repeated the idea of 'unwillingly'. This was answered reasonably successfully with 'reluctant' which captures Marisa's lack of enthusiasm in looking after the children. Some candidates automatically selected the adverb 'certainly' because of the 'ly' suffix without considering its appropriateness. Candidates are advised to read the question carefully since there were a few responses which gave more than one word. If a phrase is given as an answer, the individual word must be indicated such as in 'Marisa's reluctant grasp'.

Question 6(b) was a literal comprehension question asking what caused Linda to cry and the correct answer was fairly well identified: she had hurt her chin. As a close reading task, it was essential to identify where she was hurt (her chin) so the general observation that Linda was hurt or injured was not acceptable. Furthermore, 'maybe one of her sisters had pushed her' or 'maybe Linda had leaned over too far' were also not creditworthy since this is the writer speculating from a distance, not the actual cause.

Question 6(c) was an inferential question asking why the sisters were 'looking elsewhere'. Any answer which recognised that the sisters were guilty and were trying to avoid blame was acceptable. 'They were pretending they were not involved in the accident', 'so that they weren't suspected' and 'they were trying to look innocent' were all creditworthy answers. Answers which included words like 'innocent', 'guilty', 'in trouble', 'suspected' or 'blame' did not need to make reference to the incident itself, since these words alone capture the fact that the sisters had done something wrong. Therefore, 'to look as if they were not involved' was incomplete, leaving us asking involved in what? Many answers gave the lift 'as if all this had nothing to do with them' but this could not score since it is unclear what 'all *this*' is – a reminder that simply copying from the passage does not always work.

Question 7(a) was the second question which required candidates to answer in their own words. The meaning of the phrase 'no way worthy' and the word 'commotion' had to be captured, and, as with **Question 5**, this had to be done within a sensible context. There were some good responses as candidates recognised that Linda's extreme reaction (the 'commotion') was out of proportion ('no way worthy') to the actual size of the injury and this was captured in many ways: 'her cut was small but she was crying'; 'she was making a scene over a tiny injury'; 'her tantrum was an overreaction'. Candidates need to recognise that 'own words' questions are not literal comprehension questions. Many candidates incorrectly described what literally happened – she had hurt her chin – repeating the answer to **Question 6(b)**.

Question 7(b) asked candidates to select the word which tells us it was not easy to calm Linda down. Candidates found this challenging, and several misunderstood the question. Instead of looking at the part of the passage which focuses on the writer trying to calm Linda – and selecting the correct answer 'somehow' – many looked for evidence that Linda was not calm and wrote 'commotion'. Other common incorrect answers were 'ran', 'attendant' and 'antiseptic' which reflect the urgency of the situation, but not the difficulty in calming Linda down.

In **Question 8**, candidates were asked why the doctor's wife decided that 'there was no need' for the writer anymore. The text tells us the reason the doctor's wife gives is that her children have had too much swimming. Discerning candidates realised this was an excuse to hide her annoyance and concern and provided a range of acceptable answers focusing on the writer's irresponsibility, the fact that her daughter was injured while in her care, or the mother's fear that an accident could happen again. However, many candidates missed this inference and copied 'her daughters had had too much swimming' which was incorrect unless it was also identified as an excuse to mask the doctor's wife's concern.

Question 9 tested the understanding, in context, of words in the passage. The multiple-choice format allowed for candidates to take each of the four possible alternatives for the given word back to the passage

and decide which was the most appropriate synonym for the original. This was generally well answered, and several candidates scored four marks or more. The most successful response was for **Question 9(e)** where 'usual' was recognised by nearly all candidates as closest in meaning to 'customary' – the writer arrived to collect the girls at the *usual* time. Unsuccessful responses to **Question 9(a)** selected 'help' or 'comfort' instead of the correct answer, 'please'. It is important to read the chosen word in context and assess its sense. In this case, it is unclear how a summer job might help or comfort her mother. Key to selecting the correct meaning for the verb 'embraced', in **Question 9(b)**, was the accompanying adverb 'affectionately'. Thus, 'they *approached*' or '*surrounded* me affectionately' would not be appropriate choices. The only word suggesting the physical intimacy of 'embraced' is 'hugged' which over half of the candidates correctly selected. **Question 9(c)** was well answered by those who understood the connotations of the word 'scorching' with its suggestion of burning. These candidates selected the word which most successfully conveys this idea: 'flaming'. 'Rising' was a popular choice suggesting she is at the beach at the start of the day, an idea not in the passage. Similarly, there is no evidence that the story takes place in a 'tropical' location or that the weather conditions are 'tropical'. **Question 9(d)** was also generally well answered since by eliminating the alternatives which did not fit the context – to put it *instantly* or to put it *cheerfully* – candidates found it fairly easy to identify 'simply' as the correct answer: 'to put it *simply*'.

Question 10 was the question dedicated to the appreciation of the writer's craft. Some candidates found this challenging and were unsure of what was being asked, often resorting to narrative details about the events in the passage. In both **Question 10(a)** and **Question 10(b)**, candidates were asked to give, first, the meaning of a phrase as used in the passage, and then to give the effect of that phrase. It is important that candidates distinguish between the two parts of the question to ensure success. Too often, candidates offered an effect as a meaning and vice-versa.

Question 10(a) directed candidates to the phrase 'the lazy sea shimmered' and the first task was to give the meaning of this phrase. Candidates had two words to focus on: 'lazy' and 'shimmered'. To gain the mark, an answer had to show understanding of the meaning of both words. For 'lazy', the meaning could be 'the sea was calm' or 'it was still'; 'there were no waves' was also correct. However, 'tired' or 'idle' failed to clearly explain a sea with little movement or small waves. For 'shimmered', correct answers included 'shone', 'glittered', 'sparkled'; 'it reflected the sun' was also creditworthy. For one mark, a correct answer might read 'the calm sea shone' or 'there were few waves and it glittered'. To perform well in these types of questions, attention should be given to all the words in the phrase. Many candidates only provided a meaning for one so their response was incomplete.

For effect, candidates have to ask: *What does the phrase suggest about the mood or atmosphere at the location?* or *What does the image created by the words make me feel?* A few candidates did this and identified that the scene was 'relaxing', 'soothing' or 'peaceful', or, responding to the *shimmering* light, they recognised that the sea was 'beautiful' or 'pretty'. However, many candidates repeated the meaning, 'the sea was calm', which could not score. Answers such as 'it was a nice day' or 'it was perfect weather' were too vague and general. Many incorrect responses focused on the events in the narrative – the girls could swim safely or the writer could read in the sun – which moves away from the effect of language which is what is being assessed here.

Candidates were more successful with **Question 10(b)** which directed them to the phrase 'I tore the child from Marisa's arms' and the first task was to give the meaning of this phrase. Attention had to be given to the word 'tore' – she took the child from Marisa, but how? This meant that it was not enough to only write 'she removed the child' or that 'she took Linda'. Correct answers had to recognise the degree of force and/or speed so creditworthy answers included verbs such as 'grabbed', 'pulled' or 'snatched', or the adverbs 'forcefully', 'instantly' or 'quickly'. Thus, a correct response might read 'she seized the child', 'she took her forcefully' or 'she took Linda immediately'.

The key to success in identifying the effect here is to ask: *What does the phrase tell us about the writer's feelings and/or her situation?* The candidates have to consider the situation from the writer's perspective and several correctly identified that she was 'worried' (presumably about both Linda and her job), 'anxious' or 'scared'. That she was 'angry' or 'annoyed' with Marisa were valid answers to explain the emotion behind her actions. Some responses stated that there was a sense of 'urgency' and 'panic' which was also correct. As with **Question 10(a)**, effect could not be explained by answering *what happened next?* A response such as the writer washed the child's face or tried to calm her down did not score.