

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/11
Writing

Key messages

- Candidates should ensure they identify the key words in each task to enable them to satisfy the requirements of the question. This is particularly important in **Section 1** bullet points; the word **and**, in bold type, indicates there are two parts to the bullet point, both of which must be addressed.
- Candidates should manage their time carefully during the exam to ensure that they have sufficient time to spend on each question.
- In **Section 1**, candidates should use an appropriate format and style for the required text type.
- Candidates should be aware of the suggested word limit and are advised to keep within it for **both sections**.
- Candidates should remember that the majority of marks in this exam are for language. They are advised to pay particular attention to tense consistency as well as spelling and punctuation.
- Candidates are advised to proofread their work for meaning and accuracy.

General comments

- The vast majority of candidates were fully engaged with the questions and very few short or irrelevant responses were observed.
- The best responses continued to demonstrate a high level of accuracy and a strong understanding of the purpose of each question. Vocabulary continued to be impressive, with many responses including a wide range of appropriate vocabulary.
- Tenses and agreement appeared to be the main grammatical challenge for many. Other common language errors included confusion between homophones, inaccurate capitalisation and incorrect usage of commas and apostrophes. Candidates should avoid the use of slang expressions.
- **Section 1** was answered well by the large majority of candidates with the bullet points being generally well addressed.
- There were excellent responses to all of the **Section 2** questions.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1: Directed Writing

Question 1

This question required candidates to write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper, giving their thoughts about changes the council was planning to make to a public facility in their area. Examples of facilities were given; a sports centre, a park and a health centre, though candidates could write about any facility. The purpose and situation proved accessible; all responses showed knowledge of facilities in their local area. Indeed candidates wrote in detail about the potential impact and what they thought the council should do.

The following points had to be included:

- which public facility it is and the changes the council plans to make.
- the advantages of the possible changes **and** why some residents are unhappy about the plans.
- what you think the local council should do in response to residents' opinions.

For **bullet point 1** it was necessary for candidates to identify the public facility and state what the council was planning to do. Almost all candidates performed well on this bullet point. Some responses discussed

changes to an existing facility and others, the building of a new facility. Both approaches were acceptable. Many candidates chose to write about the facilities that were mentioned in the question – parks, sports centres and health centres were all very popular. Often the changes the council planned to make involved transforming one of these facilities into another, for example the park being converted into a health centre. Changes to a range of other facilities, including schools, boreholes and car parks were also seen among candidates' responses.

For **bullet point 2** candidates were required to discuss the possible advantages of the changes and why some residents were unhappy about them. A wide variety of advantages were expressed. Popular advantages included an increase in local employment, more opportunities for exercise and an improvement in local healthcare provision. The best responses included detail about a few advantages, rather than a list of ideas without expansion. Candidates also had to say why some residents were unhappy about the plans. Again, a wide variety of ideas were offered often relating to disappointment about the loss of a facility that was being replaced. Other common reasons for residents' unhappiness included potential increases to taxes and loss of employment. Some candidates did not perform very well on this bullet point because they had only addressed half of what was required, for example only writing about why residents were unhappy and not the advantages. The word **and**, in bold type, indicates two parts to the bullet point, both of which must be addressed.

For **bullet point 3** candidates had to say what the local council should do in responses to residents' opinions. Some responses merely stated that the council should listen to residents' opinions. Others gave suggestions for what the *newspaper editor* should do or what *they themselves* would do and so did not relate this point to the council. Many responses were detailed, for example, suggesting a compromise solution where the public facility would still be built but in a different area. Some responses suggested that the council should still go ahead but explain the benefits of the scheme to residents. Others warned the council against continuing with the scheme, occasionally suggesting that there would be dire consequences otherwise. All of these approaches could work well provided that the ideas proposed were explained in detail.

Balance is required in **Section 1** and candidates are advised to write approximately the same amount for each bullet point. Also, the inclusion of lengthy introductory and concluding sections, which do not directly relate to the task, are not recommended.

Nearly all candidates included some aspects of a formal letter. Most started *Dear Editor* as required and ended their letter with an appropriate valediction. Another feature that was commonly seen and worked well was the use of a reference at the start of the letter. There was evidence of a good sense of audience and situation in most responses, with the most successful responses using a persuasive and balanced approach. Tone and register were appropriate in almost all responses, and appropriately respectful and polite language was employed, for example, *I thank you for taking time out of your busy day to read my letter*.

Stronger responses used convincing details to support their points as well as an appropriate use of high-level vocabulary, for example *accessible*, *compensated*, *beneficial* and *established*. A few responses did include inappropriately informal terms such as *wanna* however.

Overall, spelling was satisfactory, with confusion of homophones being the most common error. Errors were commonly seen in words like *there* and *their*, *here* and *hear*, *passed* and *past* and *your* and *you're*. The word *accommodation* was also misspelled very frequently. Other difficult words such as *necessary* were generally spelled correctly.

Grammar was generally the weakest area and there was frequent confusion in the use of tenses and articles. These errors made some responses difficult to understand. Punctuation was generally accurate although some responses reflected weak sentence control and were characterised by very long sentences. Others featured capitalisation errors, in particular using lower case 'i' when writing about themselves. Candidates might have been able to correct some of these errors through careful proofreading.

Section 2: Composition

The vast majority of **Section 2** responses were of a suitable length. A few responses were very brief however, perhaps indicative of too much time having been spent on **Question 1**. There were also some very long responses that extended far beyond the recommended 350 to 500 words. This can have a negative impact on linguistic performance as more errors are often made in such cases than in responses which adhere to the suggested word limit.

Question 2

Describe two very different locations you know which have lots of trees, plants and flowers. (Remember you can describe any people there and the atmosphere, as well as the trees, plants and flowers.)

The description task was attempted by a reasonable number of candidates and some produced excellent descriptive pieces that were usually about beauty spots in their country. Most wrote about two different locations as instructed, and there was often an excellent use of contrast, e.g. with a description of a mountainous area and a valley being included.

The best responses made skilful use of advanced vocabulary and there was good use of features such as metaphor and alliteration in order to bring descriptions to life. Vocabulary was often very impressive and included words like *gracefully*, *magnificent* and *exotic*.

Less successful responses often simply listed the plants or flowers you could see in a particular location. The language in these compositions was less specific with some repetition of words such as *beautiful* and *pretty*. The control of tenses was often a weakness in these compositions too. The present tense was used well in most responses but in others, present and past tenses were used inconsistently.

Question 3

'I do not believe giving can ever be as good as receiving.' Do you think this is true? Give reasons and examples to support your view.

This was the least popular of the **Section 2** tasks. Most candidates who attempted it seemed familiar with this debate and there was a mixture of those who agreed and disagreed with the statement. Candidates commonly wrote about the pleasure they felt when accepting a gift that they really wanted and also about the pleasure received from giving to someone else. The best responses made convincing use of detail to support arguments expressed. All candidates were seemingly able to draw on their own experience in their responses.

Many responses were well-structured, beginning with an introduction and moving on to an argument followed by a counter argument, and then ending with a conclusion. These responses also employed features such as rhetorical questions and used impressive vocabulary including words such as *satisfaction* and *possession*.

Less successful responses struggled to advance a clear argument and sometimes became repetitive and unclear in their expression. In some cases, responses did little more than put forward an opinion and repeat the sentence in the title several times. A small number of candidates did not appear to have enough to say and might have been better served selecting a different task.

Question 4

'Parents should insist that their children do extra-curricular activities such as attending school clubs or sports training, even when the children do not want to.' How far do you agree with this? Give reasons and details to support your view.

This was the most popular of the discursive tasks. Candidates who attempted it often did so effectively and there were strong opinions on both sides of the debate. The familiarity of the topic allowed candidates to draw on their own experience and add detail to their argument. Indeed, most responses showed clear evidence of experience in undertaking a variety of extra-curricular activities and this meant that candidates had numerous examples to offer in support of their opinion.

Commonly observed negatives of parents insisting that their children did extra-curricular activities were the fact that children are busy already, that children may not like the activities available and that it would take away from their freedom. Commonly observed positives were the fact that universities value extra-curricular activities, that it potentially kept children out of trouble and that children might come to enjoy the activities and even build a career in them.

Many candidates examined both sides of the argument and concluded with a balanced view that parents should encourage their children rather than force them.

Question 5

Write a story which contains the sentence: 'I was surprised when my mother said she had seen my friend several kilometres away.'

This was the most popular of all of the **Section 2** tasks. Candidates were able to use the sentence in a variety of ways and many produced imaginative and interesting stories. The sentence could be added at any point in the story and most responses integrated it convincingly into their stories. In many responses, the sentence featured as part of the ending.

Common themes included candidates being reunited with long-lost friends or people who had disappeared and then reappeared. Other responses involved a candidate's mother catching them out in a lie as a result of spotting the friend. Many of these responses were very engaging and well constructed, often incorporating effective use of narrative features such as dialogue and inventive beginnings and endings.

Less successful responses lacked detail and were sometimes confusing for the reader. A common language weakness was switching between the past and present tense which made responses difficult to follow.

Question 6

Write a story in which a helicopter plays an important part.

This was another popular choice. Most of the stories relayed rescue scenarios after the candidate and their friends found themselves lost, often on a mountain or at sea. There were also some war stories describing a mission undertaken by helicopter. Other responses described a robbery in which the helicopter was used as a 'getaway' vehicle. This task afforded candidates quite a lot of freedom and some very imaginative responses were observed as a result. Some candidates appeared to have missed the instruction to write a story however and described helicopters and what they do instead.

As with **Question 5** the most successful responses were characterised by wide and precise vocabulary, varied sentence structure, linked paragraphs and the accurate use of verb forms and tenses.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/12 Writing
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Key messages

- Attention should be given to the **full** requirements of each bullet point in **Section 1**; the word **and**, in bold type, indicates two parts to the bullet point. It should not be assumed that the answer to the second half of the bullet is implied strongly enough by what has been said before.
- For both of the Writing tasks it is useful to see, in the Mark Scheme band descriptors, what is credited and to use it as a guide to effective responses.
- 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.
- The correct use of direct and indirect articles, and the correct use of male and female pronouns, is essential at all levels and is vital to ensure the achievement of higher bands.
- In **Section 2**, candidates should be more aware of the suggested word limit and are advised to keep within it.
- Poor handwriting often leads to difficulty in assessing the work. This is also very true of copying in pen over a rough draft in pencil.

General comments

The Covid-19 pandemic continued to provide difficulties for most this year and everyone concerned is to be admired for sitting the exam and performing so well and maintaining the level of achievement. Some extremely high-quality writing was observed. As far as the use of language is concerned, very many candidates wrote more than they needed to in **Section 2** at the expense of accuracy. This year, in **Section 2**, all of the titles, apart from **Question 2**, were popular and there was another pleasing increase in the number of candidates taking on the Argument and Descriptive titles; ironically, the pandemic and the need for online learning provided good material for those attempting **Question 3**. Time management generally appeared very good but there did seem to be a number of candidates who did not finish or who produced very short responses.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 – Directed Writing

Question 1

In **Question 1**, the Task Fulfilment this year was done extremely well and there were very few short responses. Candidates were asked to imagine they had helped a cousin to arrange a wedding celebration at a top hotel. The hotel made some mistakes and the candidate had to write a letter of complaint to the hotel manager. Candidates had to be aware that in order to satisfy the requirements of the bullet points a response required:

- the names of the couple who got married and the date of the celebration;
- what the guests enjoyed about the celebration;
- details of the mistakes **and** what the hotel should do about what happened.

For bullet point 1, successful candidates found it straightforward to name the couple and they did so in various ways. Some mentioned the full names of both people while others settled for first names. Better responses elaborated on the nature of their relationship with the couple; some had been very close to just the cousin; some had known both people for a while; some were even schoolfriends or college friends. Some

responses ignored the fact that it was a cousin and merely said it was a friend and so could not be credited fully. There were very few candidates who failed to mention both names but there were some who named the cousin and then failed to name the partner by saying *beloved wife* or something similar. Virtually everyone gave the date of the celebration but there were still a few who were vague and wrote, for example, *on Saturday* or *last week*. Weaker responses mistakenly set the wedding celebration in the future and talked about when it was booked rather than when it took place. Others gave a little too much back story in explaining why the hotel had been chosen.

Candidates showed their familiarity with wedding celebrations in bullet point 2 and they could allow themselves a little narrative to say what was enjoyed at the event. The quality of the lighting and music which, in one response was *deemed elegant*, the level of the decoration and, above all, the variety of the food all came in for praise – *a wide array of Eastern cuisine*. Less usual, but equally enthusiastic, was the appreciation of firework displays, photo booths and security that the hotel provided. There were some very unusual activities mentioned by some candidates, including a swimming party. Some responses demonstrated a misreading of the phrase *at a top hotel* in the question and referred to it as a celebration on the top of, or top floor of, the hotel so there were many references to how good the view was and how it enhanced the occasion.

The details of mistakes listed in response to bullet point 3 were very closely linked to what had been praised in bullet point 2. Mistakes included the lighting being sometimes too dim and the music too loud with a poor choice of songs. The decoration of the event was sometimes in the wrong colours, with flowers in particular being not quite in keeping with the general theme. Often, the food was delayed or not hot enough or it was not sufficient for the number of guests; sometimes the wrong style of cuisine was provided. The washrooms were dirty, there were power outages and occasionally the cake was dropped. Often, the staff of the hotel were seen to be inattentive or rude. The parking was often considered inadequate for the number of guests, as was the seating. In bullet points 2 and 3, most responses did not involve too much narrative, but some did switch from letters into stories, for example, involving accounts of people joining the wedding celebration from outside with criticism of the lack of security. In the second part of bullet point 3, suggestions about what the hotel manager could do followed from the mistakes. Often, responses suggested that the hotel manager employ better staff or train them more thoroughly. Better sound systems, seating arrangements and security were also requested. Many responses demanded a refund or some sort of compensation. Weaker responses did not include detailed suggestions and instead requested that the hotel manager *do something about it*.

Generally, there was a very good awareness of **purpose** and **situation**. The proper **audience** was the hotel manager, although some responses did address the hotel itself. The **tone and register** were very well maintained this year in most and were properly formal and polite in acknowledgement of the formal situation. Sometimes though, responses were a little too aggressive in tone or a little too apologetic. The use of slang was rare, but some responses included *you guys*, *wanna* and *gonna*, almost like a text message. The proper **format**, a formal one, was employed in the vast majority, although there were many versions of a formal valediction and occasionally, a sub-heading in the style of a report was used. Many responses followed the structure provided by the bullet points, sometimes together with a very short opening and closing paragraph, and this lent the piece a sensible progression. Overall, the vast majority of responses were of a suitable length for **Section 1. Opinion** and **justification** arose naturally when candidates suggested what could be done in bullet point 3. There were very few short responses indeed in **Section 1** and even fewer examples of a nil response.

Linguistically, most candidates produced a convincing piece of work and there was some very good vocabulary, for example *décor*, *ambiance* and *vigilant*. Spelling and punctuation were generally satisfactory, although a great number of responses gave the spelling of *stuff* instead of *staff*, *desert* instead of *dessert* and *complains* instead of *complaints*. Paragraphing was sensible and gave an appropriate order to this formal letter. A general weakness this year was with past tenses including switching between present and past tenses. Missing prepositions and the misuse of articles also occurred frequently.

Section 2 – Composition

Question 2

Describe two very different and interesting animals which live in your area. (Remember you can describe the behaviour of the animals and the places where they live as well as their appearance.)

Responses to this task were divided very clearly into those which described two domestic animals and those which described the local wildlife. Those in the former category were mainly about cats and dogs. Those which were about wildlife mainly featured monkeys and birds. The domestic animals were described in friendly terms and some endearing pictures emerged as candidates took advantage of the hints in the question and included description of behaviour, habitat and appearance. On the other hand, the local wildlife was often seen as mischievous or threatening but this was always informative – *the kangaroo mouse's long legs act as a piston...*

Responses which fully addressed the task were those that featured description of behaviour and characterisation in addition to appearance. Better responses described the personalities of the animals as well as their physical characteristics. There were also very few narratives. Responses focused on how the relationship with the animal had started, how it had developed and why they liked or admired them. Often a bond was formed. This task allowed candidates to reflect, to share their experiences, and to celebrate their relationship with these animals. The fact that it was two animals allowed candidates to structure their answers as a contrast.

Linguistically, strong responses were those which evoked characteristics by close description and the use of adjectives and the senses. Much of the vocabulary was very good – *they have eyes like a peatbog; brown and... green morphing together like sludge in the night time.*

Question 3

'The world now depends far too much on technology. We are losing the ability to think for ourselves.' What is your opinion? Give reasons and examples to support your view.

This was an extremely popular choice and provided a very interesting set of responses. Genuine knowledge of and familiarity with the topic led to confident organisation. The mix of for and against was equal and there were a number who tried to argue both sides. The positives included the benefits which technology could provide and coping with the pandemic was a good example. Lessons did not stop but were online instead and businesses could employ Zoom for such activities. It was also felt that the speed, efficiency and access to communication with people around the world was vital and a huge positive. The entertainment and gaming industry was mentioned, and this was significant in terms of leisure time spent at home. The convenience of internet shopping was highlighted, and the power of the internet and Google was stressed. Responses conveyed that it was a simple task to access information on any given topic and it was such a time saver, compared to the traditional method of going to a library. Other responses expressed concern that this made students lazy as they no longer were required to think for themselves and solve problems themselves. Some responses even went as far as saying that the internet should not be accessible to school students until they had passed certain examinations. The mobile phone was celebrated as a unique piece of technology, but concerns were expressed about social media in general and the way in which time was wasted on these outlets and often the information imparted here was false and without substance. Internet scams were highlighted and the problem of cyber bullying was raised. Predictions were made about robots taking over the world eventually and triggering unemployment. Vehicles which no longer needed human intervention to drive were referenced as was medical equipment and technology to help save lives. Responses expressed concern about the rising cost of new technology being beyond a lot of people and also the ability now for people to remain at home and work, talk and play. In effect, they could exist without ever going out, thus having an impact on their ability to interact on a personal level. There were some who misread *think for ourselves* as *think about ourselves* which resulted in references to wellbeing and mental health.

Question 4

'I no longer believe that individuals can make any difference in saving the environment.' Do you agree? Give reasons and examples to support your view.

There were some passionate answers to this question. The 2021 G7 Climate Change Conference was referenced, but it was not seen as a great success and some responses expressed cynicism about the future of the planet blaming the inaction of world leaders. There was a sense that if world leaders were not committed to enacting change, then there was little the individual could do alone that would make a difference. In other words, radical change had to be enforced and come from the top.

There were also some responses where it was argued that if more people contributed to easing the problem, this movement would generate more support and continue to escalate. Predictions associated with this topic referred to rising temperatures; flooding; starvation and radical changes to the landscape in many countries. No one country was ever blamed, it was more seen as a collective responsibility to act now. Electric cars were seen as a prime way forward. Wind and solar power were also referenced as was the extent to which we depend on fossil fuels. There was concern about the future of animal species, the cutting down of trees all over the world and the devastating effect of plastic on our environment. Many responses stated that the world was incapable of and too lazy to recycle sufficient items to make the process worthwhile. Consequently, at some point, future generations would suffer and pay the price of this inertia. In both **Question 3** and **Question 4**, clear examples to support the arguments put forward were very helpful. Also, paragraphing which allows the argument to move forward logically, is vital in an Argument essay and is helped by appropriate paragraph openings, such as *On the other hand...*

Question 5

Write a story which includes the sentence: 'I spent the day wandering through unfamiliar streets looking for the place he told me about.'

This was by far the most popular question. The given sentence was invariably incorporated into the story successfully. There were various reasons for searching for the place: to find treasure; to find answers about their life or their past or about other people. Many were looking for important objects. There was a problem with no phone signal, or no charge left on their phone so the character was unable to reconnect with the original person while they were lost and so had to keep searching. The searching was sometimes desperate, often dangerous, and sometimes ended in tragedy. It was not uncommon for loved ones to have since died or to reject the main character a second time. These responses were very much plot led and sometimes very unrealistic. Others were tightly structured and were all the better for it. The best narrative responses are always characterised by an understanding of narrative structures, ambitious vocabulary, the control of tenses and by a variation in tone through the sparing use of dialogue. Weaker responses displayed the opposite, with a repetition of ideas, confused tenses and an overuse of simple grammatical forms and vocabulary. Most responses would have benefited from more varied punctuation. With specific reference to dialogue, two points are worth remembering. First, if dialogue is added it should have a purpose – perhaps to show character in some way. Second, dialogue should be properly punctuated, not least because it shows a skill as well as making communication clear.

Question 6

Write a story in which a sailing boat plays an important part.

This was not as popular a choice as **Question 5**. Sailing was seen as an escape and an adventure, with echoes of the *Life of Pi*. Drama and conflict were introduced to test the bravery and the aptitude of the main characters. There were some heroic and often dangerous tales. Sometimes lives were lost and the sea was, on occasions, described as a character in its own right. As with **Question 5**, there were many first-person narratives, and this created a sense of involvement in the drama. The stories focused on pirates, or on young people who ignored warnings about the weather and still went out on to the sea. Skilled fishermen and sailors who passed down their expertise to novices also featured. These stories were often fast moving with effective nautical vocabulary – *the men had disembarked*. The characters faced problems which if dealt with, invariably meant their survival. Otherwise, the sea had little mercy. Some weaker responses devoted too much of the narrative to scene setting and were overlong. The suggested word limit is there for a purpose; the focus for the candidate should be on the accuracy of their writing, and on quality rather than quantity. Candidates would benefit from practise in how to structure the story: varied opening techniques to engage the reader, the problem/complication, the events/characters, feelings and the resolution/climax.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/21 Reading

Key messages

Candidates are advised to read the two texts and all questions carefully before attempting to answer any questions. This will help them understand what responses are needed, and where to find the required information. Every question directs them to the paragraph or area of text where they will find the relevant material on which to base their answer. Closer reading of the whole text will help to clarify the structure of the non-fiction text and to understand the sequence of events in the narrative text.

- Candidates are encouraged to underline or highlight key words in the question, e.g. **Question 3(a)** 'reluctant to take a job...'. This will ensure the answers are focused.
- In all answers, candidates are advised to avoid the use of ellipsis (...) to shorten a response. Abbreviating in this way increases the risk of missing information essential to an answer. They should also avoid using brackets (which are read as part of the point being made), slashes or punctuation, such as the colon, to give examples. Presenting additional information in these ways risks confusing a main point. This is most evident in **Question 1(a)**.
- Candidates are advised for **Question 1(a)** and **Question 1(b)** to focus on identifying the key overarching points from the text without the unnecessary inclusion of examples or repetition. If candidates feel they must include an example, they should ensure that they make this clear, using 'for example', 'such as', etc. The inclusion of such irrelevance in **Question 1(a)** transferred to **Question 1(b)** can affect the quality of the response here. Candidates seemed to be familiar with the subject of climate change which clearly helped with understanding, but their responses need to be based on the passage and not additional knowledge which they may have.
- Candidates do not have to use their own words in **Question 1(a)**; if they choose to, they need to be aware that when substituting a word or phrase, it must mean the same as the original. While candidates should write succinctly and avoid copying lengthy sentences, they should also be aware that key information still needs to be given. Simply writing 'People produce greenhouse gases in their heating' does not convey how: '*in gas boilers*', for example.
- The summary task requires candidates to select the main points from a given passage. Candidates can use the question to help structure the response in two halves: causes of climate change and then the consequences. When moving from causes to consequences, simply writing 'Consequences are...' would make this transition clear. The most successful summaries avoided repetition and examples.
- In **Question 1(b)**, there should be focus on clear expression; this will ensure a piece of writing that is easy to follow. Linking devices should be used to establish coherence. Words and phrases which are not standard English, such as 'moreso', 'to add on', 'the last but not the least' are best avoided. Candidates should select from a wide range of linking devices which are appropriate to the task. Accurate punctuation can assist in a fluent and coherent presentation of content points.
- For **Question 2**, candidates needed to identify three pieces of advice given in the text *by the writer*. Advice may form only part of the sentence and should be offered without the inclusion of additional information which might turn it into a statement or an opinion, for example 'animals are an excellent source of food' in paragraph 3 was not part of the writer's advice. The most successful responses chose to use the writer's words including all necessary details, for example 'should be encouraged to' in paragraph 2.
- In the multiple-choice vocabulary question, candidates are advised to look at the given words in the context in which they appear in the text.

- In **Question 9**, candidates are expected to make a clear distinction between the 'Meaning' and the 'Effect' of the given phrases. Candidates are advised to focus on the straightforward, literal meaning under 'Meaning', and to differentiate between that and how this affects what the writer is telling us about a character or how they want to influence our judgement of the character given the *writer's use* of particular *words* or *images* under 'Effect'.

General comments

Candidates answer questions based on two passages of approximately 700 words each, the first being non-fiction and the second being fiction. The first passage was entitled '*Climate change: one person's view on causes and consequences*' and the second was entitled '*An Important Person in my Childhood*'. The first passage explored the candidates' ability to read for ideas and the second tested their reading for meaning. Incomplete responses were rare, with the occasional omission of **Questions 9(a)** and **9(b)**. All candidates seemed to engage with the tasks and the texts, time seems to have been well managed on both parts of the paper.

If a response needs to continue on additional pages, candidates should ensure that they identify the original question number, part and, if appropriate, the section which is being continued. This is particularly important for **Question 1(a)**. If a candidate uses space elsewhere on the question paper, they are advised to explain this beside or at the original response space and to label their actual response carefully.

In **Question 1(a)**, there were only a few instances of candidates putting information in the wrong section. In **Question 2**, a small number of candidates referred to the fiction passage.

22 marks were available for the summary question, with 12 of these marks being awarded for the assessment of the candidates' ability to select content points from Passage 1 and 10 marks for the assessment of their ability to express these points in a piece of writing which was relevant, logically organised and easy to follow. Almost all candidates wrote to the required length in **Question 1(b)**, although some responses which were in excess of the recommended length became too wordy under relevance and less fluent under coherence.

In **Question 1(a)**, the majority of candidates took the suggestion in the rubric that they may find it helpful to use bullet points for their notes, and that they do *not* need to use their own words.

In **Question 1(b)**, credit is given for organised relevant information presented in continuous prose, using candidates' own words as far as possible. The strongest responses rephrased and synthesised their content points fluently and coherently, moving from one idea to the next using a range of concise linking devices. Acceptable responses selected parts of the original passage, rearranging and adding to them, to ensure a coherence of their own.

A further question, **Question 2**, with 3 marks, tested candidates' ability to distinguish fact from non-factual statements, in this case to write down the writer's advice from three of the of the six paragraphs of the text.

Section 2, based on Passage 2, assessed 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. Questions requiring simple and straightforward answers were done well, while the answers to more stretching questions needed to contain more explanation. While the majority of candidates attempted every question, there were a small number who did not.

Comments on specific questions:

Section 1

Question 1

Question 1(a) was the first part of the summary question, carrying 12 marks. Candidates were asked to identify the causes of climate change, and the consequences of climate change, according to the writer, using the material in paragraphs 2–6 of the passage. Candidates were asked to write their answers in note form, where they were free to use either the words of the text or their own words. The first content point under each heading of the rubric was given by way of illustration, although these given points were not rewarded with a mark. The exercise was a discriminating one as responses were observed across the whole range of marks. Stronger responses identified 12 points or more. Other responses needed to avoid unacknowledged or unnecessary examples of the main points in order to achieve higher marks in **Question 1(a)** and to prevent this irrelevance being carried forward into **Question 1(b)**. The strongest responses identified main points and avoided additional detail. Ensuring that key words are not missed out, for example, ‘wildlife and their habitats are affected in an *adverse* way’ will achieve higher marks, as will avoiding repeated points or listing individual types of disaster rather than encompassing all as ‘extreme weather events’. The best responses either did not include examples, or clearly acknowledged that they were examples by using ‘for example’, ‘such as’, etc. In both parts it was necessary to focus on the key overarching points.

Excluding the given content points, which were not rewarded with marks, there were 14 content points, of which candidates could select any combination to gain a maximum of 12 marks. Most candidates expressed the points in note form or in short sentences lifted from the text. Those few who presented long, verbatim copies of the text sometimes ran out of space and were able to only cover a few points. The best responses were expressed concisely, almost always in bullet points, with a large number of possible points offered.

Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 described the writer’s views on the causes of climate change. Apart from the first given point, there were five content points which the candidates could make. With all these points it was important to give the main features of these causes, rather than individual examples. Stronger responses stuck to these key points.

Candidates needed to avoid additional details of the harmful gases and plumes of smoke from *factory* chimneys which followed the given point ‘industrialised countries rely on fossil fuels’ as their first point from paragraph 2. The first correct, and only other point from paragraph 2, contrasted the contributions of individuals with that of industry in creating climate change; stronger candidates successfully saw this as needing three main parts – the individual/domestic setting, the production of greenhouse gases and their production in gas or oil *boilers*, rather than only saying that individuals in their homes use gas.

Paragraph 3 contained three further content points involving land use and farming. The first was that ‘trees are frequently cut down’, which many identified successfully, either without mentioning industry or cities (unnecessary details of the main point), or by carefully taking the full information from the passage, that the trees were cut down ‘to *make way* for’ industry. The second point introduced the role of farming animals in climate change. The stronger candidates identified ‘animal farming’ as the main point, rather than only writing the additional details explaining why this is a cause; that grazing animals emit methane, which did not give the necessary farming context. The third point could be made in two ways: the simple ‘modern farming’ or how it creates climate change ‘using toxic pesticides’. This was largely well understood.

Paragraph 4 provided three points explaining the role of travel and vehicles in climate change. For the first of these points, most candidates identified that ‘Emissions from planes’ are a concern, some offering the neutral explanation of how it causes chemical reactions which heat the planet. The next point, which expanded on the previous one, was rarely selected – a further cause of climate change is that the number of flights taken has risen. This showed the importance of changing lifestyles in causing global warming. The final point in this paragraph continued the theme of travel with the role of ‘polluting vehicles’, or ‘vehicles which produce dangerous emissions’. Many candidates successfully noted that ‘petrol and diesel cars’ are examples and introduced them with ‘such as’ from the passage if they mentioned them, as additions to the main point rather than giving the examples alone.

The second section of the summary asked for the consequences of climate change with seven more points over two paragraphs, the first being given. Paragraph 5 provided the given point, that ‘*ice is melting*’, as well as four further points. The second point followed on from the first, being a result of the loss of glaciers. It required the identification of the problem of *drinking*, or *fresh* water, or water for human/animal *consumption*

decreasing, which stronger candidates focused on successfully, without including the unnecessary detail of the population rising. The next point was perhaps the most often gained. 'Flooding' was all that was required, with the added information about glaciers melting and water pouring into coastal areas as extra details which did not gain the point alone but did not spoil it. The last two points in the paragraph followed on from each other. The fact that the *oceans* warm up was quite an uncommon point made. The background information that the Earth is warming up was provided more often. Stronger candidates saw the context in this part of the passage as being the sea, so realised that the Earth's surface warming up led to the key point of the warming ocean, which then resulted in seafood stocks dwindling, the final point in the paragraph. The points above generally appeared more accessible than the points in the following paragraph.

Paragraph 6 had three content points, the first being at the beginning of the paragraph: 'wildlife and their habitats are affected in an adverse way'. This introduced the paragraph, giving the first key point, which successful candidates identified, realising the importance of the adjective 'adverse' to show that the wildlife *and their habitats* are negatively affected. The middle point in this paragraph required careful reading to appreciate that it involved several parts: it is the creatures which *carry* the fatal or dangerous diseases which *thrive* or multiply, and not the diseases themselves multiplying, or dangerous creatures multiplying. Stronger candidates followed the words from the text to show this. The final consequence is that of 'extreme weather events' – this gave the last key point, which a fair number of candidates selected, without going on to list details of fires, tornadoes and heatwaves, or making clear that they are examples by following the text and saying 'such as' before introducing them. Candidates can improve their marks in **Question 1(a)** by not listing examples already covered by main points but instead searching carefully through previous paragraphs for overarching points which they may have missed, making sure to keep to the correct section of the passage in their response.

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were asked to use their notes from **1(a)** to write a summary of the causes and consequences of climate change, according to the writer. They were advised to write 150–180 words (the first ten of which were given) and to use their own words as far as possible in a piece of continuous writing. Marks are awarded for producing a relevant, well organised and easy to follow summary. Most candidates completed the task to an appropriate length.

The strongest responses expanded on the relevant notes made in **Question 1(a)**, synthesising the material without including repetition, examples, or supporting detail. More successful use of the passage avoided the inclusion of unimportant details and specific examples, such as how trees remove carbon dioxide from the air or bark beetles destroy pine trees. Where additional material was included, the selected points were sometimes organised well assuring a strong performance on coherence. The most successful candidates also avoided wordy introductions to each section, a conclusion and repetition of the question rubric.

The most coherent responses demonstrated an ability to use a range of skilful and accurate linking devices, including the effective use of punctuation and adverbial connectives such as 'furthermore', 'in addition', 'moreover', positioning them correctly within a sentence. They also linked points using phrases such as 'as a result' or 'causing' to link issues. Satisfactory responses correctly recognised that simpler words such as 'another' cause/consequence or 'in addition' would be effective to show the growing number of causes and consequences. Other responses relied accurately but somewhat repetitively on 'and' or 'also' as links, with an occasional suitable adverbial link demonstrating satisfactory fluency. Some candidates need to move away from a memorised list of connectives which limits their ability to demonstrate a skilful level of fluency.

Question 2

In **Question 2**, candidates were asked to re-read Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 and to give one piece of advice given by the writer from each of these paragraphs. A mark was awarded for the identification of each piece of advice, whether copied directly from the passage or presented in the candidate's own words. In this question, candidates need to separate factual information from the non-factual instruction as presented by the writer. The way to answer this type of question is to identify words or phrases which are subjective rather than objective, involving the writer's opinion and what they believe should happen. On the whole, candidates appear to be carefully re-reading what they have written to make sure the advice is complete and makes sense, with many candidates successfully gaining full marks.

The first piece of advice in paragraph 2 was 'Homeowners should be encouraged to switch to sustainable heat sources (such as solar panels.)' The majority of candidates realised that this needed to be identified in full, as missing out 'be encouraged to' changes the focus of the advice – the writer is not talking directly to homeowners, but to perhaps an agency tasked with looking at energy, who themselves will talk to homeowners.

In paragraph 3, the writer advised that ‘we all need to think about reducing (our) meat consumption (to help in the fight against climate change)’. Successful candidates again realised the importance of not missing words within this piece of advice, as ‘all’ involves everyone and not just a section of society. These candidates also identified that talking about animals being an excellent source of food, which comes before the advice in the passage, could be considered factual information, and therefore not relevant to the advice.

Paragraph 4 gave us ‘Travellers should choose airlines (which have) committed to reducing carbon emissions (by, for example, switching to electrification)’. This was the most frequently identified piece of advice, with candidates realising the need to stop before going on to why electrification is unsuitable in certain situations, as that is factual information.

Only one or two candidates did not attempt this question, or took information from the second passage, ‘An Important Person in My Childhood’. Virtually all recognised that, as the question required them to write down the writer’s advice from the passage, it would be helpful to actually quote the writer, rather than risk changing the focus of the advice or missing key words by paraphrasing.

Section 2

In dealing with a narrative text, candidates will often encounter less familiar vocabulary and will have to show an understanding of figurative language and inferred as well as literal meaning.

Question 3

Question 3(a) was a literal comprehension question asking candidates to select the relevant part of the sentence in lines 2 to 5 which explained why the writer’s mother was reluctant to take a job outside the home. Successful responses selected the information that the writer’s mother did not want to leave the writer alone (after school). They avoided the straightforward statement that the writer’s father was dead which simply gave the background to her decision. Careful reading of the question, noting the key word ‘reluctant’, also avoided responses which explained why she had to take a job, or what she did to earn money.

Question 3(b) was the first inferential question which again relied on careful reading of the long sentence in lines 2 to 5, although clues were also there in the rest of paragraph 1. Candidates were asked to identify where Paul lived from Monday to Friday. As the writer’s mother was offering ‘weekday accommodation to students’, Paul lived with the writer and/or his mother. Successful candidates were not distracted by Paul returning to ‘the country... *for the weekend*’ or that he lived ‘in our university city’, which was too vague. The idea that Paul lived in the writer’s mother’s house was reinforced by Paul asking if she would ‘give a room’ to his friend, Hugo.

This was followed by a more challenging inferential question, **Question 3(c)**. It relied on candidates reading the writer’s mother’s response to Paul’s request for his friend: ‘If he’s anything like you, Paul...he’ll do’ in line 8, and then inferring that she *thought* or *believed* he would be like Paul. The fact that Hugo is Paul’s friend was also acceptable, showing that she thought they have a similar personality.

Question 4

Question 4 was a literal comprehension question based on paragraph 2. It asked for two ways in which the writer would benefit from Hugo’s help with his homework for two marks. The majority of candidates avoided repeating Hugo’s actions the *first* time he helped him – coming over and sitting in the chair beside him – and focused on Hugo helping the writer finish ‘in half the time’ or gave the more general idea that he finished more quickly or took less time, for the first mark. This was more successful than the second mark, awarded for Hugo making the subjects ‘come alive’ or be more interesting or compelling. Using the words of the text here allowed candidates to show understanding of Hugo’s effect on the writer’s learning, rather than trying to give less precise synonyms such as ‘entertaining’ or ‘enjoyable’. Literal comprehension questions can be answered successfully by careful and appropriate selection of the actual text. Candidates are advised that, as there are two marks available, there will be two separate ideas to convey.

Question 5

Question 5(a) was the first question which required close reading of paragraph 3. Again a literal comprehension question, it asked what was *unusual* about the way Hugo laughed. Many candidates saw the answer in lines 17–18, writing out the full sentence about how Hugo laughed, ensuring they continued to the key information that he ‘shook *silently*’. The majority avoided simply saying that Hugo did not laugh loudly like Paul, more carefully selecting the main idea that Hugo’s laugh was silent.

For two marks, **Question 5(b)** required the use of candidates' own words. A majority of candidates recognised that the key words to explain were 'age and suppleness', as shown by the inverted commas. Many used the context of the passage to explain 'age' as young, as paragraph 1 had said the writer is eight years old, and then to explain that this youthfulness meant the writer is more flexible. Careful reading of the question 'Explain in your own words why he was *able* to do *a few of the poses*' meant successful candidates understood 'a few of the poses' as something positive and avoided explaining why the writer *could not* do yoga.

The third question from paragraph 3, **Question 5(c)** required a literal response for two ways in which Paul practised yoga in a manner that was 'ridiculous' for two marks. Most candidates used lines 21–22 to effectively write that Paul 'rolled about on the carpet, grunting and gasping' for both marks. Some used the alternative 'Hugo pushed his legs into position' as an acceptable response, realising that they needed to specify Hugo, because 'he' could have meant Paul himself, which would not have been 'ridiculous'.

Question 6

Question 6(a), the first question from paragraph 4, required candidates to infer what the writer's mother was 'wiping' away in the phrase 'wiping her eyes on the edge of her apron'. Understanding of the events in the passage was clear from the overwhelmingly successful responses, explaining it was tears. Recognition of the key words in the question, '*what* was she wiping away', allowed successful candidates to avoid saying she was crying, as this is what she was doing rather than wiping away.

Question 6(b) required candidates to link a quotation with the single word, 'disbelief' used earlier in the paragraph. Only a very small number of candidates wrote more than one word which would have spoiled their answer, and a large majority identified the correct word as 'incredulously'.

Question 6(c) was again inferential, and allowed candidates to show awareness of the sequence of events in paragraph 4. The question gave a quotation from the passage: 'This started us all off again' and asked what they all started doing. At this point Paul has held his yoga pose for 30 seconds and fallen back on the floor laughing, Hugo has started laughing, the writer's mother has wiped the tears of laughter from her eyes, and then they have all noticed Hugo laughing silently. Laughter is the thing they all have in common, which most candidates successfully concluded, without thinking that they were doing more yoga, which only Paul, Hugo and the writer have attempted.

Question 7

Question 7(a) based on paragraph 5, asked candidates to infer Hugo's motivation for an action - why did they think he had to 'mime applause' when the writer was vacuuming and singing? This was a discriminating question. Stronger responses included two parts in their answer: the fact that the vacuum was noisy *and* why this was important – because the writer could not hear him clapping. Candidates needed to understand that the loud noise on its own did not fully explain the need for the mime, or that simply saying the writer could not hear did not explain why not. The question did not mention the writer, so answers needed to be specific about who Hugo was miming to.

Question 7(b) was the second question requiring candidates to answer in their own words. Stronger responses paid close attention to the phrase and key words highlighted in the question: the 'therapy' 'devised' for the writer, resisting the temptation to repeat the actions which Hugo got the writer to do in lines 39–41. These responses were clearly focused on explaining that a 'therapy' is a cure, treatment or a plan to help the writer's stammer or problem for one mark, and that 'devising' this therapy means he had planned it himself for the other mark. The best responses acknowledged that with 'own words' questions it is important to avoid using words from the question phrase or any derivatives as these do not demonstrate understanding unless offered with additional explanations.

Question 8

Question 8 was the multiple-choice vocabulary question where understanding of five words from the whole text was tested. Candidates are advised to select the most appropriate synonym for the original by taking each of the four possible alternatives for the word in question back to the passage and comparing them. Such contextual checking is all-important with this type of question as words can have different meanings when used in different circumstances, as indicated by the alternative choices offered. The clearest method of indicating the chosen word is by circling the correct letter at which it appears. If candidates change their mind, they are advised to clearly indicate which response should be considered and which ignored by

crossing through the one they have not chosen, rather than attempting to rub it out. If they further change their minds, they can re-write the letter to indicate their choice.

By far the most successful part was **Question 8(e)** where the vast majority of candidates recognised 'matched' as closest in meaning to 'corresponded to'. The choices for 'charmed' for **Question 8(a)** proved trickier but successful candidates looked at the context of Paul giving the writer's mother presents, indicating that he had an 'attractive' personality rather than 'beauty' or 'wealth' (jam and eggs, not fancy gifts). A 'spell' is one meaning of 'charm' but an example of a completely different setting. The majority of candidates chose 'unhealthy' as the correct context for **Question 8(b)**: 'unfit', rather than 'unsuitable' which did not fit the context of Paul buying a book on yoga. 'Said' for 'claimed' in **Question 8(c)** was equally successful, as most discounted 'shouted' in the context of the writer's mother's assertion that Paul would not be able to do yoga. They also realised that 'guessed' would not fit her certainty implied in the passage. **Question 8(d)**, 'openly', required a little closer reading of the passage, as 'seriously' could have been a possible choice except for the embarrassment of the writer, and the later talk of secrecy with the reading stand, both of which pointed towards 'honestly', as it was clearly something which people did not talk about with any sincerity.

Question 9

This was the section dedicated to the appreciation of the writer's craft and nearly all candidates attempted an answer to these more challenging questions. In both **Question 9(a)** and **Question 9(b)**, candidates were asked to give, first, the meaning of a phrase as used in the passage about the writer, and then to give its effect. As mentioned in 'Key Messages', it is important that candidates distinguish between meaning and effect. Too often candidates offered an effect as a meaning and vice-versa. Meaning needs to look solely at the words in the phrase and provide synonyms or a paraphrase within the context of that part of the passage. Explanations of the effect need to focus on the language choice in the quotation and not the wider literal context of the narrative. Successful responses concentrated on how the writer does not just describe how they see their characters but wants to influence how the reader views the characters through their choice of language. It is important that candidates avoid using words from the quotations or any derivatives as these do not allow them to demonstrate their understanding.

Question 9(a) directed candidates to lines 33–34: 'I longed desperately (for someone to help me)'. The two key words in the quotation showed that responses for meaning should cover both parts. The strongest candidates saw 'longed for' as 'wanting' or being 'keen' for help and 'desperately' as 'really wanting', 'strongly desired' or they wrote 'yearning' which gave us both ideas in one word. They avoided any confusion with time, as in 'a long time', or 'needing' help; the longing for help came from the writer's desire for someone to help him overcome his stammer in order to build his confidence. This leads to the effect of the words – why did the writer choose 'longed desperately' and not 'wanted' alone? Candidates could answer in two ways. Either in relation to the writer – we are shown that they are troubled, unhappy, fed up or that the stammer is an important issue, a burden, in the writer's life – or how the words make us, the readers feel – we feel sorry for the writer, or feel sympathy. Looking at that part of the passage, the writer said they 'suffered dreadfully', which gave the context for explaining the words in the question.

For **Question 9(b)**, the given phrase was from line 43: 'behind the secrecy (of the reading stand)'. Meaning here was the most successful part of **Question 9**. Successful candidates pictured the scene described and explained that the writer was 'hiding' (what they were doing) or tapping their fingers 'without anyone seeing or knowing'. Looked at from the writer's perspective, some candidates wrote that 'only the writer knew' or 'could see' what the writer was doing, or the reading stand gave the writer 'privacy'. The effect of the writer's words required more careful thought about why the writer would *choose* to hide behind the reading stand or do the tapping in secret. Candidates need to understand that 'effect' does not ask what the writer is doing or how the secrecy was achieved. We are told in the passage that the writer does this when 'nervous'. By using the words 'behind the secrecy' what does that tell us about the writer's character or state of mind at that time? The strongest candidates understood that this meant the writer is 'embarrassed' about the stammer, felt 'insecure' or 'did not want anyone else to know about it'.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1123/22 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(c)** 'Which one part...' and **Question 6(a)** 'Explain in your own words'. This will ensure the answers are focused and creditworthy.
- To achieve high marks for both **Question 1(a)** and **Question 1(b)**, 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.
- If examples are included in **Question 1(a)**, candidates need to identify them as such with the use of 'for example', 'such as' or 'like'. The use of brackets, dashes and slashes is to be avoided as they are not indicators of examples, nor is punctuation such as the colon, comma or semi-colon. Examples of this are 'more heatwaves (make working conditions unbearable)', and 'reduce air travel: use trains'.
- Candidates do not have to use their own words in **Question 1(a)**; however, they should be aware that when substituting a word or phrase, it must be appropriate. While candidates need to be encouraged to write succinctly and avoid copying lengthy sentences, they must also be aware that brevity can exclude key information. For example, 'governments make pledges', excludes 'world' or 'international', thus missing the key detail that this is a global issue
- In **Question 1(a)**, it is not necessary for candidates to restrict themselves to a maximum of 12 content points. They can, in fact, offer more than 12 points and each one will be considered on merit, even though the maximum number of marks is 12.
- Candidates are encouraged to write to the recommended length in **Question 1(b)**; overlong or short responses are self-penalising since they cannot satisfactorily fulfil the criteria for Relevance or Coherence.
- For **Question 1(b)**, 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 best avoided. Similarly, expressions such as 'moving on', 'in a nutshell' or 'alongside' are neither skilful nor stylish. Many candidates would benefit from further practice using appropriate linking devices to enable them to move from writing a competent summary to writing a summary which is skilful or even impressive.
- In **Question 1(b)**, candidates are advised to use their own words and should be discouraged from copying complete sentences from the text.
- Candidates should be aware that 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.
- For **Question 2**, many candidates were able to identify the pieces of advice in the non-fiction passage. Candidates are advised to copy the piece of advice as it is given in the passage since own word attempts can miss some detail or include inappropriate alternatives.
- In the own word questions, candidates can improve if they avoid repeating the key words in their response, and instead provide suitable synonyms which work within the given context.
- In **Question 8**, the multiple-choice vocabulary question, candidates should be encouraged to try out each of the possible words and decide which is the most appropriate in the passage. Candidates are asked to circle the correct letter. Occasionally other methods such as eliminating the incorrect answers or writing the letter in the margin resulted in ambiguous responses which could not be credited.
- 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*. Candidates are advised to provide a straightforward literal meaning under 'Meaning' and for 'Effect' to go beyond the literal and comment on the impact or connotations of particular words or an image.

General comments

Candidates were asked to answer questions on two passages, each of approximately 700 words: the first entitled 'Climate change: one person's view on problems and solutions' and the second entitled 'A First Tooth'.

The majority of candidates attempted every question; only a very small number did not attempt **Question 9**.

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, and this should be avoided. If the response needs to continue on additional pages, candidates should ensure that they identify the original question number, part and, if appropriate, the section which is being continued. This is particularly important for **Question 1(a)**.

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, 'Climate change'. 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. Almost all candidates wrote to the required length in **Question 1(b)**.

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.

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

The second passage, 'A First Tooth', tested 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, where there was a range of questions, from the more accessible to the more challenging or stretching.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 Reading for Ideas

Question 1(a) was the first part of the summary question, carrying 12 marks. Candidates were asked to identify and write down the problems associated with climate change, and the solutions to the problems, as outlined in the passage. The summary was to be based on the whole text, and candidates were to write their answers in note form, where they were free to use either the words of the text or their own words. 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. Successful responses were expressed concisely, using the suggested bullet points and avoiding repetition, unnecessary examples and additional information, ensuring at the same time that key words essential to making that point were included.

Less successful responses had not selected the overarching point from the details in the passage and included irrelevant material, notably the inclusion of examples and repetition. It was not unusual for these candidates to run out of space, filling the lines with only a few points.

Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 described the problems associated with climate change and there were seven points (excluding the given point) which candidates could make. In Paragraph 2, there were three content points, the first being the 'growing number of wildfires', and candidates could expand this point by elaborating that in recent years there has been an increase in these. However, a response which included reference to the 2020 Australian forest fires could not be credited unless this was acknowledged as an example, using the words 'for example', 'like' etc. The following point, 'flooding', was less successful because many candidates went on to provide one or more examples of the causes of flooding, including melting ice, rainfall or oceans heating up, as if these were part of the overarching point, i.e. without the use of 'for example'. The specific example of 'flooding in coastal areas' was a common incorrect response. There was more success with the final point in Paragraph 2 that there is 'loss of breeding grounds for marine creatures'. To exclude a

reference to 'marine creatures' was acceptable if there was a reference to 'oceans warming up causing a loss of breeding grounds'. Because this point links specifically to the seas and oceans, 'a loss of breeding grounds' alone could not score.

Paragraph 3 contained three further content points relevant to the problems associated with climate change. As with the earlier point about wildfires, it was necessary to state that there were *more* or an *increased number* of droughts. A lift of lines 14 – 15 was permissible as long as candidates did not expand the content with unnecessary details about halting food production or 'withered trees'. Candidates who chose the alternative lift of line 16, 'the incidence of droughts has almost doubled since the early 1990s', could be credited. The following point in Paragraph 3 was more difficult and required careful reading of the text. Here, the problem to be identified was that the 'periods increase when some diseases can be transmitted' or, to put it more succinctly, 'diseases spread more often'. The key idea is the longer period *of time* a disease *spreads*. Instead, many candidates insufficiently stated that 'diseases increase' or 'diseases last longer'. A lift of lines 18 – 19 was permissible; however, several candidates excluded the final words 'can be transmitted' so the point was not fully made. Most candidates correctly avoided reference to malaria and dengue fever or if they did include them, they identified them as examples with the words 'for example'. The final point in this paragraph required candidates to select the overarching point that there are 'more heatwaves', from the details in the text. Many were distracted by 'record temperatures in Europe and Australia', 'unbearable working conditions' and 'cardiovascular and respiratory diseases', without acknowledging these as specific examples of the result of increased heatwaves.

The final problem associated with climate change could be found in Paragraph 4 which focused on the impact of extreme weather events on a country's economy. The point, 'huge financial implications', was successfully identified by many candidates although some did not identify the 'financial implications' as 'huge' or did not identify the 'huge implications' as 'financial', demonstrating how brevity and the omission of a key word can negate the mark.

In the second section of the summary, the rubric asked for solutions to the problems and there were seven content points (excluding the first which was given) which the candidates could make. The first solution was an extension of the given point that, having recognised the problem, 'world leaders' were taking 'action', 'making pledges' or 'setting targets'. An own words answer that international governments were finding solutions also sufficed. A common incorrect response on this point involved the omission of 'world' or 'international'; however, 'summit meetings' alone was acceptable since this, by definition, involves world leaders. Some candidates offered 'ordinary people should make their voices heard' as a point, but this advice could not be deemed as a valid solution.

In Paragraph 6, three more solutions could be found, all related to transport. Firstly, the fact that people can opt for 'electric / hybrid / non-polluting cars / vehicles' was noted by many candidates, with a few selecting the alternative answer: 'some countries offer financial incentives' to buy these types of cars and vehicles. The next solution, the provision of 'more buses and trams', was successfully identified, with most candidates including both types of public transport. The final point in this paragraph about transport shifted the focus to air travel. It was not enough to write that 'people are being invited to think of the damage flying can do to the environment' since this is not a real solution. Instead, people who travel by air had to act: they could 'reduce the number of flights', or they could 'make use of alternative means of travel'. Where candidates failed to score, it was often due to the suggestion that train travel should be chosen rather than air travel, missing the fact that train travel in the passage is just an example of alternative ways to travel.

The final paragraph focused on sources of energy and the first solution here, 'switching from fossil fuels to renewable energy', was successfully identified by many candidates. Occasionally, incomplete points were offered – 'switch from fossil fuels' or 'switch to renewables' – and could not score. If examples were offered as alternatives for either 'fossil fuels' or 'renewables', this was acceptable as long as all three sources of energy were included: 'coal, oil and natural gas', or 'wind, water and solar power'. It was, however, incorrect to provide specific examples of solar or water power so references to solar panels and hydro-electric schemes were moving away from the overarching point and could not be credited. The final two points both considered what companies and global corporations do to solve problems and many candidates provided two correct points, the first one being that companies or corporations aim to be carbon neutral or carbon zero. While reference to companies or corporations was essential for this penultimate point, the final point could be scored by simply identifying the plan 'to be carbon negative' or alternatively stating what this means: 'removing carbon from the Earth's atmosphere'. It was also acceptable to provide an answer by lifting lines 50 – 51 which identifies 'the ambitious plan by one global giant' to be carbon negative.

In **Question 1(b)**, candidates were asked to use their notes to write a summary of the problems associated with climate change, and the solutions to the problems. They were advised to write between 150 – 180

words (the first ten of which were given) in a piece of continuous writing which was to be relevant, well organised, easy to follow and in their own words, as far as possible. Most candidates wrote to the required length. A minority of candidates relied too heavily on the original passage instead of their notes, giving a summary which was close to verbatim and demonstrating an insecure understanding of the task. Lifting of short phrases is acceptable, but to achieve a high mark, these need to be shaped and structured within a body of original prose.

Thus, 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. The most impressive efforts were from candidates who expanded the relevant notes made in **Question 1(a)**, synthesising the material without repetition, examples or the overuse of unnecessary supporting detail. These responses were balanced, giving equal consideration to both parts of the question and avoided lengthy introductions and conclusions. Responses with large sections of the text lifted tended to include irrelevant details such as the causes of flooding, or examples of the consequences of heatwaves.

Candidates are advised to use their own words. Responses which followed this advice, and which included some original and accurate constructions to link the main ideas, showed a fluency which was easy to follow. The best responses demonstrated an impressive coherence using a range of skilful and accurate linking devices, including the effective use of punctuation, adverbial connectives and original complex structures introduced by 'which' and 'who', to create a summary which was not just accurate, but also stylish. 'On the other hand' and 'however' were often appropriately used in these cases to move from the problems of climate change to possible solutions.

In order to achieve a high mark for Coherence, repetitive use of 'and' or 'also' to link content is best avoided. Where these were over-used, summaries tended to be placed in Band 2 or Band 3. Some summaries at these levels often relied heavily on the text and simply, and rather repetitively, placed adverbs such as 'Additionally' or 'Furthermore' at the beginning of a copied section which is not enough evidence of skill to warrant a mark in Band 4 or above. It was not unusual for some adverbial connectives, such as 'similarly' or 'whereas', to be used incorrectly. The quality of coherence was also occasionally impacted by awkward attempts to link using phrases such as 'pursuing this further', 'on the flip side of the coin' or 'adding on'. Some responses showed no attempt to link the content and the result was a succession of simple or compound sentences which read like a list.

In **Question 2**, candidates were to select and write down three pieces of advice, one from each of Paragraphs 3, 5 and 6. In Paragraph 3, we are advised that 'Everyone *needs* to take great care in high temperatures'. The omission of 'great' was not creditworthy since it weakened the seriousness of the dangers of 'high temperatures'. Extending the lift to the end of the sentence was permissible since the content reinforced why such 'great care' was necessary. The second piece of advice from Paragraph 5 used the modal verb 'should': 'Ordinary people *should* make their voices heard on this crucial topic.' This was fairly well answered with the occasional omission of 'crucial' denying the mark and again weakening the sense of importance. The final piece of advice from Paragraph 6 was 'Frequent flyers *should*, wherever possible, make use of alternative means of travel.' Some candidates were distracted by the use of 'advise' in the final sentence of this paragraph, but 'Still, governments cannot advise against air travel' is clearly not advice.

Section 2 Reading for Meaning

Candidates seemed to find this narrative text more challenging than the non-narrative Passage 1. Regular reading and discussion of fiction will help a great deal with all types of questions in this section.

Question 3(a) was a straightforward literal comprehension question asking what the baby did to show that she was teething. The majority of candidates provided a correct answer, usually by lifting: she was 'shoving her fist into her mouth'. The additional information about the baby's mood, 'a little cross', did not deny the mark. **Question 3(b)** asked what the writer was referring to when she told Mrs Jennings 'that's all right'. Many candidates answered correctly with 'giving the baby chocolate'. Some candidates rephrased the question: 'It was all right to give the baby chocolate', and this was also acceptable. It was not necessary to mention Mrs Jennings or the babysitter, but a reference to 'the baby' or 'her' was important to demonstrate full understanding. Responses that simply stated 'the chocolate' were not credited. **Question 3(c)** was an inferential question asking what the writer was feeling when she said, 'I did not really mean it'. Examples of successful responses included that she was 'unhappy', 'irritated', 'angry', 'dissatisfied' or 'annoyed' by the fact that the babysitter had given chocolate to her baby. However, responses such as 'worried', 'disappointed' or 'anxious' were incorrect and did not fit the context. Instead of providing a feeling, some candidates focused on the writer's opinion that it was wrong to give a baby chocolate or that Mrs Jennings was irresponsible, and these were not creditworthy. A few responses included an explanation of why the

writer did not say what her true feelings were, such as ‘she did not want to hurt the babysitter’, which was incorrect.

In **Question 4(a)**, candidates were asked to explain the difference between what the writer thought would happen when the baby was teething, and what actually happened. Most candidates were awarded a mark here, with several achieving two marks. In the first part, answers needed to be quite precise with reference to the tooth appearing or coming through without any pain. A general comment on teething being painless was not creditworthy.

The second mark was achieved by stating that the baby was in pain. Lifting lines 14 – 15 was acceptable, but a lift which only focused on pink cheeks was incomplete since it neglected the key detail of the baby’s discomfort. It was acceptable to write that ‘the baby needed a paste to relieve the pain’; however, answers which focused on the general advice that the writer had read, ‘teething jelly – a kind of paste applied to a baby’s gums – was useful because it relieved the pain’, were not creditworthy since this reference was not specific to *her* baby.

The following question, **Question 4(b)**, asked why it was difficult for the writer to go to the pharmacy. The majority of candidates scored at least one mark here, more often by identifying the problem that she had nowhere to leave the baby or that she could not leave the baby alone.

The second reason, that her husband was working away from home, was often missed, possibly because candidates had to go back to the beginning of the paragraph to locate it. Instead, candidates offered the fact that it was ‘after 5 pm’, although it is clear that this is not considered to be a problem by the writer in the paragraph. The baby’s discomfort or pain was also an incorrect reason why it was difficult to go to the pharmacy.

Question 4(c) was successfully answered by most candidates who identified that the one part of the baby’s routine which the writer left out was her bath. The question asked for specific focus on this ‘one part’ so an additional reference to other parts of the routine – giving her supper, playing with her or putting her to bed – denied the mark.

Question 5(a) was the first question requiring candidates to answer in their own words. The key words to be substituted were ‘negligence’ and ‘harm’ for two marks, and these words needed to be explained within a relevant context. There was more success with the word ‘harm’ and candidates offered a range of correct answers: the baby would be ‘hurt’, ‘endangered’, ‘put at risk’ and ‘distressed’ to name a few. Some substitutions for ‘harm’ were not creditworthy: ‘troubled’ or ‘in difficulty’ were too weak, while ‘damaged’ was not appropriate given the context of a mother and child. There was less success with ‘negligence’ with several answers recycling the key word: ‘she neglected her baby’. ‘Ignorance’ was a common incorrect answer, although ‘she ignored her baby’s needs’ was acceptable since it captured the idea of ‘not paying attention to’ her baby. Other correct responses were that she ‘failed to safeguard’ her baby, or she was ‘irresponsible’, ‘careless’ or ‘thoughtless’. Not all responses demonstrated an understanding of the requirements of the task and several repeated the key words or instead focused on narrative details about the teething jelly or sorting the bills.

Question 5(b) asked candidates to infer what common sense suggested to the writer and there were many correct responses stating that she should not go to the pharmacy or that she should not get the jelly. A few candidates were distracted by the textual detail that ‘it may not be worth waking’ the baby to apply the jelly and although this was acceptable as an addition to a correct answer, it was incorrect by itself.

Question 6(a) was the second question requiring candidates to answer in their own words; they were asked to explain how the writer felt about the pharmacy. The meanings of the key words ‘proximity’ and ‘comforted’ had to be captured, and, as with **Question 5(a)**, this had to be done within a sensible context. There was more success with ‘comforted’ and candidates offered a range of correct answers including she was ‘relieved’, ‘at ease’, ‘relaxed’ and ‘not worried’. The context had to be relevant. Consequently, ‘comforted’ to describe the baby, for example ‘the baby’s pain would be relieved’, was incorrect. ‘Proximity’ was more challenging with the majority of incorrect answers focusing on the fact that the pharmacy was open ‘all night’. The best responses read ‘she was relieved because the pharmacy was near’ or ‘the closeness of the pharmacy put her at ease’. Other correct substitutions for ‘proximity’ included ‘not far’, ‘convenient’ and ‘in the neighbourhood’. It was also acceptable to write that it was ‘a short distance’, but ‘a short walk’ could not be credited because this was lifted directly from the text, as was reference to the time taking ‘ten minutes’.

Question 6(b) was a straightforward literal comprehension question asking for evidence that the writer’s neighbour was ‘friendly’, and this produced many correct answers from candidates who paid attention to

specific details. It was insufficient to generalise that the neighbour was happy to help. To be awarded a mark, candidates could refer to *how* she accepted the offer, that she agreed or spoke; 'cheerily', 'happily' and 'quickly' were all creditworthy answers here. Alternatively, identifying the *speed* with which she 'immediately' or 'without hesitation' accompanied the writer to her apartment was also correct.

Question 7 asked for two reasons why the writer's mood began 'to lift' and most candidates gained at least one mark here, with many identifying the writer's mood lifting because she had been 'brave' or confident enough to ask for help or for her neighbour to look after the baby. Lifting lines 39 – 40 was also permissible, but a response which read 'she had been brave enough to speak to her neighbour' without a purpose (for help) or simply 'she asked for help' could not be credited. Nor was it a valid answer to comment on the fact that she was relieved that her baby was being looked after since there is nothing in the paragraph to support this.

The second reason was often correctly identified with a lift from lines 42 – 45. The key idea here is that her 'baby would not suffer' now she has the teething jelly, though it was not essential to refer to the jelly. Another correct answer was that in the morning the baby would have a new tooth. 'Because she was in the pharmacy' or 'because she was buying teething jelly' were not creditworthy since they were not made relevant to her baby; however, 'the jelly would ease her baby's pain' was focused on the baby and so could be credited.

Some candidates were distracted by the setting, both inside and outside the pharmacy, and this incorrect focus often resulted in two incorrect answers since there is no evidence that her mood was lifted by the foggy and frosty night outside or the 'gloomy light' and tank of tropical fish inside.

Question 8 was the multiple-choice synonym question where understanding of five words from the text was tested. Candidates are advised to select the most appropriate synonym for the original by taking each of the four possible alternatives for the word in question back to the passage and comparing them. Such contextual checking is all-important with this type of question as words can have different meanings when used in different circumstances, as indicated by the alternative choices offered. The clearest method of indicating the chosen word is by circling the correct letter at which it appears. If candidates change their mind, they are advised to clearly indicate which response should be considered and which ignored by crossing through the one they have not chosen, rather than attempting to rub it out. If they further change their minds, they can re-write the letter to indicate their choice.

The most successful attempt was with **Question 8(a)** where 'reduced' was recognised as the closest in meaning to 'relieved'. There was also much success with **Question 8(c)** where 'resist' was regularly selected as the phrase closest in meaning to 'shrink from', and **Question 8(b)** where 'complaint' was correctly selected as the meaning for 'protest'. **Question 8(d)** proved to be more challenging with 'firmly' often incorrectly chosen as the meaning for 'positively'; however, this adverb did not fit the context of being 'positively unfriendly'. Instead, the correct answer, 'really', was appropriate. The most challenging was **Question 8(e)** 'drifting' to describe the fish in the tank. 'Wander' was often incorrectly selected; since this word describes walking in a relaxed way, it is not really appropriate to describe the movement of the fish. Similarly, 'racing', which was also a popular choice, is the opposite of the slow movement suggested by 'drifting'. The correct answer, 'floating', was only identified by a few candidates.

Question 9 was the section dedicated to the appreciation of the writer's craft and most candidates tackled this more challenging question, with only a few making no attempt. In both **Question 9(a)** and **Question 9(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. As mentioned in 'Key messages', 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 9(a) directed candidates to the phrase 'Blushing, she stammered' which described the babysitter, and the first task was to give the meaning of this phrase. Candidates had two words to focus on: 'blushing' and 'stammered'. To gain the mark an answer had to show understanding of the meaning of both words. For 'blushing', the meaning could be 'turning red' or 'pink', becoming 'flushed' or 'cheeks were burning'. For 'stammered', meanings included 'stuttered'; 'stumbled on the words'; 'spoke with breaks' or 'hesitation'. Correct answers which earned a mark included 'she turned red and stuttered'; 'she flushed and kept stopping as she spoke'; and 'her cheeks were burning as she stumbled on her words'. Several candidates only provided half an answer, such as 'her cheeks were red when she told the writer she'd given chocolate to the baby', or 'she was embarrassed and stuttered'. There was also much repetition of 'stammered' and 'blushing', and, on many occasions, a correct answer for effect was given, such as 'she turned pink and was

nervous', but 'nervous' here could not be credited in the meaning part of the question. Other answers focused on narrative: 'she had given chocolate to the baby' or 'she was trying to comfort the baby'.

When candidates responded to the second task, which was to explain the effect, they needed to go beyond the literal and state what the phrase suggests about the babysitter's feelings about what she had done. Overall, there was more success with the effect than the meaning with many candidates recognising that the phrase suggested the babysitter felt 'guilty', 'embarrassed' or 'nervous'. A noticeable number of responses incorrectly stated that she was 'shy' or 'unsure' but this could not be inferred from the phrase and its context; however, others correctly inferred that 'she knew she had done something wrong' and that 'she was afraid of the writer's response'.

For **Question 9(b)**, candidates were directed to the phrase 'a mess of gigantic proportions' which referred to the bills which required sorting, as seen by the writer, and it was important that candidates looked back at the passage to see this phrase in context. As with **Question 9(a)**, there were two key words, 'mess' and 'gigantic', each requiring a meaning. 'Shambles', 'disorganised', 'a jumble', 'mixed up' were correctly offered as meanings for 'mess', while 'large', 'massive', 'a pile', 'a load' were acceptable meanings for 'gigantic'. Correct answers which gained a mark for meaning included 'lots of disorganised bills'; 'a mixed-up pile'; and 'loads of them all over the place'. Many responses neglected to find a synonym for 'mess' which they ended up repeating, such as in 'a huge amount of mess', which could not be credited.

For effect, candidates needed to go beyond the literal meaning and consider what the phrase tells us about the writer. As with **Question 9(a)**, candidates were more successful in identifying the effect. Many candidates could empathise and recognise that 'she was stressed'. Other correct answers identified the task as a 'burden' or 'overwhelming', or that she felt 'swamped' and 'pressured'. It was incorrect to write 'she had a lot of work to do', 'she had a lot on her mind' or 'she had a lot of bills to sort out' because these answers were too weak and did not capture the idea that 'she felt things were out of control' or that 'she had too much to do'. A sensible context was required which is why it was essential for candidates to consider the phrase as it is used in the passage. Consequently, 'she was stressed because Mrs Jennings gave her baby chocolate' could not be credited.