

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 9093/12 Passages

Key messages

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

General comments

There was evidence of candidate engagement to differing degrees with all three texts. The rubric was also well understood with only a few candidates omitting the compulsory question. However, there are still some responses that need to be cut down in terms of length; the word limit can help with time allocation and also gives time to consider quality. Candidates should remember that they are being marked for task focus as well as expression and accuracy. Largely speaking, though, the paper was handled with understanding and competence. A few candidates lacked the necessary language skills for passage analysis, but there were some strikingly perceptive and well-written responses, notably in answering **Questions 1(a) and 2(a)**.

In the case of most candidates, there was a clear understanding of the need to make precise connections between language features and their contribution to the full effect of the passage.

Less successful responses could often have been improved through more precise identification of effects; phrases such as ‘this makes the reader imagine the situation’ and ‘by using descriptive words the writer makes the incident clearer’ cannot be considered useful passage analysis.

There was a pleasing sense of purpose in the directed writing tasks, though enthusiastic engagement often led to overlong responses.

There was a common tendency to devote the first and concluding paragraphs of the commentary to a repetition of the question or a summary of the events of the passage. This, together with often quite lengthy consideration of the target audience, used time which would have been better spent considering key language features.

Specific language features were generally well understood, but candidates should ensure that the features they identify are genuinely present in the passage and that they use specific examples of language use to support the identification of those features.

Candidates need to make sure that they maintain consistency in tense and grammatical structure, particularly in the case of conditional constructions; this was particularly evident in the directed writing.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) This passage was generally very well understood and was answered with obvious engagement by most candidates. There was often sustained and perceptive attention to structure, direction, imagery and a range of language features. Weaker responses needed to analyse the specific effects created by language features beyond simply identifying the features, and to avoid adopting a narrative approach.

Most candidates interpreted and understood the tone of concern and the threat of the destruction of the planet through overpopulation. Most candidates also commented on the visual imagery and the language features used to dramatise the threat of destruction. There was acknowledgement of the punchy opening, the significance of the title, the effect of personal pronouns and the cause and effect structure of the paragraphs. There was recognition of the rhetorical question in the final paragraph and this suggested that the whole passage had been read rather than just the first couple of paragraphs, which added range to the responses.

Stronger responses gave some convincing appreciation of the cyclical structure of the passage involving 'space', and the movement through the range of elements being affected by overpopulation. They also offered astute recognition of the effects of individual words, for example 'fight ...threat ... rampant' and 'hazardous', and the apt juxtaposition of 'savage beauty', 'teeming biodiversity' and 'great wilderness'. The strongest responses made reference to the simile of 'the enormous fairground' with its suggestion of fiddling while Rome burns. These responses commented on the listing which emphasises the forests' importance and effect of life giving – 'food fresh water, clothing, traditional medicine and shelter' contrasted with the threat to them, 'fires, clearing for agriculture, unsustainable logging, ranching ...'.

Many middle band candidates adopted a paragraph by paragraph approach, using the phrase 'in the ... paragraph'. It would be helpful for candidates to be aware that the discriminator in the mark scheme, 'some relation of part to the whole,' is a feature of the higher bands; it would help their achievement to make some comments relating to the tone and language style of the whole piece. Some of these middle band responses offered commentary on different parts of the planet – 'Amazonia, Africa, Patagonia, Antarctica' – the stronger ones noticing that every type of landscape was covered and these made reference to the sibilance of 'Shanghai to Sydney ... Moscow to Mexico City'.

Less successful responses identified some language features but didn't develop their analysis of them fully. These weaker responses tended to relate the contents of the passage and they generally did this at great length.

At times candidates needed to use quotation with a higher degree of expertise, with some quoting at too great a length, or referring to a range of lines rather than embedding quotations. Quotation from the passage should always be precise and as concise as possible.

- (b) The most striking feature of these responses was their ardent sincerity in extending the message of the text. Most responses were comfortable with the speech genre and persuasive style. Some weaker responses would have been improved by going further than making general assertions and by avoiding clichés for solutions for how to tackle the issue of overpopulation.

Stronger effective responses cited conditions in specific cities, and this gave them a clear sense of voice.

While there were many competent and well-shaped pieces of writing, most needed to go further in order to be really striking. Many candidates needed to go beyond repeating elements of the passage and give more shaping to its content. For example, rather than simply reproducing numbers, candidates could have addressed and expanded upon the precise purpose of these numbers. There could also have been a wider range of suggestions for individual and community action offered, such as abandoning the use of plastics and using public transport.

Responses frequently needed to be more concise; many gave an introduction to the speech aimed at their class, often accompanied by general pleasantries and an outline of the reason for community action; candidates would have used their time better by focussing on the community action they were proposing rather than on this extended background explanation reflecting the original text.

The need for careful reading of the question was revealed by the significant number of responses which didn't specify any individual or community action at all.

Question 2

- (a) The most encouraging aspect of the answers was the ease with which students dealt with the tongue in cheek approach of the passage; there were comparatively few completely literal readings of the text. There was also general understanding of Josh's role as a millennial representative and some occasional resentment of the writer's 'superior' attitude towards millennials in general.

Most responses recognised the more accessible language features and the more successful responses traced the contradictions of Josh's lifestyle with obvious enjoyment. Josh's failure to follow through on his interest in food and the dominance of his work in his life was noted by many. The tone of mockery was appreciated, although some candidates needed to analyse how and why they found the passage funny. Candidates who adopted a more holistic approach were more successful in linking ideas and the techniques used to achieve them. Where candidates include more analysis, this helps their response to go beyond the superficial, a focus on linguistic techniques preventing the response from becoming a narrative account of the contents of the passage.

Many responses that took a narrative approach followed a chronological order, but some managed to deal with the simile of the alarm and the word 'plunge' related to Josh's work. The use of linking and modern jargon was also a matter of comment.

Successful responses commented on Josh's hectic and unhealthy lifestyle, giving examples of language use and the effects created. They also commented on his naivety and delusional belief in diet fads and advertising. The style of the narrator's address towards Josh was explored, as was the change from conversational to informed and authoritative. These successful responses noted the playful advertising opposites, 'Fill you up While You Trim Down ... all the flavour, half the fat'. They also discussed the use and effect of individual action verbs, 'blares ... bolts ... whirl of activity ... plunges ... firing,' and the use of listing to emphasise busy lives, 'work, nightlife, shopping ... cereal, computers, congratulations'. The best recognised Josh's seemingly perfect lifestyle with 'neatly lined rows of coffee pods' which were 'southern pecan flavour' and the 'dream job' where he 'can leave when he wants' indicating an aura of success which they set against the potential risk to health.

The humorous linking of faddish foods to a lack of understanding of nutrition was missed by many candidates, who assumed that such examples showed that millennials were health conscious.

Less developed answers often started enthusiastically but needed to cover more than just the early material before Josh set off for work. However, even the responses which only covered part of the passage appreciated the irony of the 'sour cream Popchips', though the millennial's association of fat with evil merited further comment.

- (b) Most candidates were aware of the purpose of the directed writing, but more attention needed to be given to the genre; some wrote a response in the form of an article rather than a blog. Responses often took the approach of a concerned parent or carer in urging sensible eating, taking breaks from work and the importance of eating a large breakfast.

Successful responses were written in the specified form of a blog and a few used the same playful tone as the original effectively.

Weaker responses were often constrained by making direct reference to, rather than being based on, the material of the passage. This was demonstrated by opening sentences which referred directly to Sophie Egan's book and food references which repeated the precise details of the

passage; 'kale smoothies', 'strawberry coconut'. These weaker responses needed to be less general in their comments on food and eating habits in order to present a more even response. Some wrote a blog as Josh where the question specified the use of a different persona.

The need for careful reading of the question was again evident from the significant number of responses which didn't fully address the purpose of the blog: "millennials" need to make some changes regarding what, where and how they eat'.

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates understood the content of the passage, although many needed to give further comment on the language rather than limiting their comments to the narrative. Many realised the difference between the two-time frames and were able to identify the differences in Pete Maravich over time and the straightforward biographical details.

Successful responses explored the mythical status of the performer and of Pete's effect upon the other players. They discussed the structure of the passage, commenting on its opening with the anonymous image of a fallen hero, 'cannot see him ... oblivious eyes ... slouched ... ashen faced,' ending on a positive note in contrast – Pete delivers some of the magic, as a 'glimpse of greatness' is recalled. Some of these higher band responses explored the religious connotations throughout with the use of language such as 'sanctify' and 'First Church of the Nazarene ... beacon of spirits ... kind of heaven'. They also referred to the contradictions of Maravich as 'child prodigy' versus 'prodigal son'; 'white hope' in a 'black sport'; 'virtuoso' versus 'an ensemble'; 'exuberant showman' yet one 'who couldn't look you in the eye'. Much was made by these successful responses of the musical imagery woven throughout, with reference to 'dance in deference ... chirping melody ... rhythm', which contrasts with how Maravich starts the friendly game, 'Pete begins wearily ... he shuffles'.

Weaker responses often took first phrase, 'They cannot see him,' at face value – as they did the word 'sanctified' in the second paragraph – without acknowledgement of its implications. These less successful responses mentioned details such as the 'squeak of the sneakers', but needed to develop their commentary on the main themes with more confidence. There was much narrative in the weaker responses, and these would have been improved with focus on examples of language use and its effects. There also needed to be more clarity about who the characters were.

- (b) The directed writing was often more assured than in **Question 2(b)** and there was much sympathetic identification with the character, with many showing a real sense of voice.

Most responses tended towards optimism and Pete's rediscovery of himself in the joy of the game. Responses seemed confident and echoed the initial hesitancy and loss of skill before articulating a more triumphal achievement, for example, 'rising roars ... the sheer untamed enthusiasm. I didn't feel as if I were Pete Maravich, retired player, but instead, I felt like Pistol Pete, the legend that people loved and still do.' One equally successful candidate took a bleaker view with Pete judging it 'the most humiliating day of my life'.

In most cases there was some competent engagement and in these cases the material of the passage tended to be integrated and relevant.

Weaker responses used a 'dear diary' approach. Some linked this successfully to the passage; others needed to focus on the comparison between the present and older character. These weaker responses focused on the events, rather than the thoughts and feelings; they did, however, use the material effectively to some extent.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 9093/22 Writing
--

Key messages

Candidates should manage their time carefully, allocating an equal amount of time for each section of the paper.

When reading the questions, candidates should concentrate on the instructions and should carefully interpret and deconstruct the question. For example, in **Question 2** the key instruction is to 'write a descriptive piece' and the key areas of focus are 'a sense of atmosphere' and 'colour and sound'.

Weaker responses tended to include irrelevant detail and generic content, which can be minimised through effective planning, which will lead to better crafted and well-shaped compositions. Candidates should give careful consideration to the particular effects they need to create, the most appropriate persona to adopt, the content to include, and the structure to employ.

Candidates need to understand the importance of writing in clear, properly punctuated English, with accurate sentence demarcation and spelling. Clear expression in simple and compound sentences with less variety is at times preferable to expression that does not flow easily in longer sentences. For weaker candidates, attempts to write in long, complex sentences often interfere with grammatical accuracy. They must also be aware of the need for paragraphing in their responses.

In preparing for **Section A: Imaginative writing**, candidates should develop skills in differentiating between 'showing' versus 'telling', to improve both descriptive and narrative skills. Candidates must seek to utilise a broad range of effects in their work. The key aspect of the most successful and effective writing in **Section A** is a convincing and credible narrator/persona.

When preparing for **Section B: Writing for an audience**, candidates should be exposed to the tone, register and format of magazine articles, newspaper correspondence, speeches and voiceover scripts. The key aspects of the most successful and effective writing in **Section B** are a clearly developed, logically sequenced structure, together with an authentic sense of voice.

General comments

Candidates need to be aware of the importance of time management and should practise writing time-limited tasks to a specific word length. Many weaker submissions self-penalised on the grounds of rubric infringement: some essays were appreciably short of the minimum word limit, while other candidates ran out of time.

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

In **Section A, Question 3** there was sometimes a tendency to write stories, when descriptive writing was required. Strong responses in **Section A** were those with an original flavour and a convincing sense of place, character or atmosphere. For example, the reader was able to relate to the sense of mystery and urgency in **Question 1**; explore the contrasting sense of mood and place of the two perspectives in **Question 2**; or appreciate the atmosphere of a forest through descriptions of colour and sound in **Question 3**. Weaker responses needed improvements in structural control (including ensuring the use of paragraphs) or employment of suitable language devices to create effects. A number of answers were hampered by tense confusions, especially when attempting to create a sense of urgency or time passing in **Question 1**.

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

Comments on specific questions

Section A – Imaginative writing

Question 1 – Out of Sight

This was the most popular choice, with a large number of candidates focusing their writing on lost treasures, family heirlooms, quests and family secrets. Some had very original ideas, such as a moving story about a secret adoption and the narrator finding out at the end of the story about the circumstances of their birth and early life in an orphanage. Weaker candidates did not write a full short story, and ended their writing on a cliff-hanger or part way through.

Stronger candidates showed a clear understanding of the required form, for example one who chose to write about a quest, ending the story clearly thus: 'Stack upon stack of glittering gold stared back at Jo and euphoria filled her heart. Her grandfather's dream had been fulfilled – the treasure of the Amazon had been found.' Stronger candidates used engaging and original content that was focused on the title and on creating the mood of the narrator or character, setting him or her up for our sympathy or empathy as readers, whilst involving him in a dramatic situation. One such candidate had a protagonist who was perpetually hiding from a mysterious group called 'The Shadow' who speak in 'riddlespeak' and are, 'everywhere, be it behind the smallest rock or the grandest mountain.'

Weaker responses needed to focus more on the title of the story, or pace the narrative so as to capture the reader's interest. Some crammed too much into the response so that the reader found it hard to follow, or they only wrote an opening to a story, rather than a complete story.

Question 2 – Contrasting descriptive pieces about an aeroplane flight

Many weaker responses tended to be more narrative than descriptive in style, although some very effective writing was seen in response to this question.

Stronger responses managed to find a few points of shared experience between the two characters – for example their paths crossing on the way to the plane or the pilot welcoming passengers on board – which allowed for some more subtle contrasts to be introduced. One candidate employed an effective parallel structure, referring to 'eagles on the runway' and 'glimpses of sun at 6 am.' For the pilot, these represented small but comforting rewards at the end of another long flight. Meanwhile, for the highly anxious passenger who had not slept for the entire flight, the eagles were harbingers of an imminent crash landing at the end of an arduous, sleepless, overnight flight. Many successful responses were written in the first person and with a real focus on description, such as in this extract: 'The aircraft (is) as silent as a class of students during an exam at this time of day. I, however, did not share the same anxiety as those students. Controlling an aircraft after 15 years of experience comes naturally to me, just like breathing.'

Weaker candidates needed to create a sense of mood and place in order to develop their response beyond recounting the pilot's and passenger's series of actions, or describing the events of a typical flight. In order to see a contrast between the two halves, there needed to be a focus on the feelings of the pilot and passenger.

Question 3 – The Forest

There was variation in the relative strengths and weaknesses of these pieces. Some responses were purely narrative where they needed to be descriptive. These often involved, for example, camping or hiking expeditions set in a forest. However, where candidates used a narrative frame to carry their description of the forest, some effective writing was seen.

Stronger candidates wrote economically, yet effectively, selecting vocabulary carefully. They often wrote simply and concisely, for example: 'A duet of light and shade played along the ground; the trees were too dense to allow the light to touch the floor of the forest. When the light fought its way through, the ground was

decorated with tiny, brilliant specks of gold.’ Other stronger candidates utilised metaphors; one very strong candidate incorporated, with some subtlety, recurring orchestral metaphors (for example maracas and later a flute) to convey the different sounds encountered in different parts of the forest. Another response which stood out for its evocative description and focus on colour and sound used an extended metaphor of an artist at work, referring to the forest as an ‘impressionist painting’ created with ‘a palette of vibrant shades of green’.

Weaker candidates often listed colours and sounds or became distracted by adjectives, spending rather too much time, for example, detailing the ‘beautiful, emerald green leaves’ and the ‘colourful, chirping birds’. Often, where candidates used fragmented sentences to enhance the descriptive quality of their writing, in fact the lack of appropriate sentence demarcation detracted from the effects which the vocabulary selection was intended to create.

Section B – Writing for an audience

Question 4 – English course book review

Most of the few candidates who attempted this question tackled the task of reviewing the new course book quite well. Most candidates referred appropriately to chapter headings, sub-headings, topics, exam questions, colour, etc. but many needed to give more actual examples.

Stronger candidates produced well-organised reviews, with helpful subheadings, addressing the target audience directly with an appropriate degree of mild informality. They gave actual examples from the imagined new book and there was appropriate detail to catch the readers’ attention, for example the inclusion of a joke to illustrate how a dull point of grammar could be made more appealing: “‘Let’s eat Grandma’/‘Let’s eat, Grandma’ – commas can save lives.’

Weaker candidates mainly needed to exhibit a higher ability to produce clear explanations and arguments. The reviews often needed more informal student language or jargon to keep the style of the review engaging with a clear sense of voice, the piece being aimed at young people rather than adults. Some weaker candidates would have improved their writing had they avoided repetition, or included comparison with previous course books.

Question 5 – Contrasting letters about the amount of time teenagers spend online

The requirement to present two contrasting viewpoints was achieved by candidates across the ability range, but some overlooked the fact that the question specified that candidates should write letters. Therefore, responses that lacked a recognisable letter format were less successful. Other weaker responses needed to reference the newspaper article and its criticism of teenagers spending too much time online.

Stronger candidates produced some highly convincing letters that were sufficiently credible for publication in a newspaper. They created a strong sense of voice through their use of language and ensured their writing was appropriate to the form and audience. They focused clearly on the task and developed ideas about specific reasons for each side of the debate, often managing to bring about a subtle contrast of voices. The best candidates established convincing personas with very different and contrasting perspectives on young people’s internet usage. These ranged from concerned parents, reflecting their frustration through the use of emotive language, to disgruntled teenagers, tech-savvy teachers and internet devotees. Arguments were made clearly and developed well, with many successfully using anecdotal evidence. Others provided fresh perspectives, such as the candidate who wrote: ‘In my mind the internet is like a tool. It can cut the apple or it can cut the wielder. The trick is learning how to use it.’

Weaker candidates needed to maintain a clear focus on the task and develop their ideas beyond writing a list of their opinions on the topic, giving the pros and cons of the internet. Some showed some confusion, tending to repeat the argument that teens ‘spend far too much time’ on the internet while talking about its strengths. Most chose to convey the typical adult perspective of the subject as against the typical teenager’s views on the subject; such responses as these would have been more secure if there had been less anecdotal evidence and more in the way of argument.

Question 6 – Talk about the highs and lows of a chef’s career

The conventions of a speech were deployed on most occasions, and most candidates were able to establish a voice and to use rhetorical devices, creating a sense of challenges and rewards quite successfully. Most

candidates showed some depth of knowledge about what is involved in being a chef, demonstrating an appropriate sense of audience and enthusiasm for the subject, with many touching upon parental disapproval of the career choice. This provided a platform to show the challenges involved and how they were overcome, with the use of some quite effective persuasive language, such as, 'That tiny spark of happiness that you get when you do something that you love.'

Stronger candidates were able to fully achieve the purpose of the task, keeping the 'rewards and challenges' of the chef's career in sharp focus whilst establishing a strong (and sometimes lively) sense of voice. Overcoming adversity and developing resilience were common themes in many pieces, and a focus on audience was also a differentiating feature of the strongest candidates' work. Stronger candidates did not rely solely on anecdotal evidence, but used it judiciously to exemplify points.

Weaker candidates sometimes started well with an opening address that clearly referenced audience. Responses thereafter would have been improved by going beyond a reflection of recounts to focussing on sharing 'challenges' and 'rewards' with the intended audience. Weaker candidates needed to avoid overusing clichés, such as referring to 'passion' and 'following your dreams'. Some chose to write a script for two speakers, taking an interviewer/interviewee approach, while others chose to write an article, which meant that the specified form of a talk was not always adhered to.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 9093/32 Text Analysis
--

Key messages

- Candidates should prepare for this component by gaining a solid knowledge of linguistics which they can apply when producing a piece of Directed Writing, commenting on the style and language of that piece of writing in relation to an accompanying text, and when comparing two texts on the same subject for their different styles and use of language.
- For **Question 1 Part (a)** the accompanying instructions and text provide the context and background information to guide the candidates as they produce their directed writing text. In producing their reworking of the original text candidates ought to concentrate on making carefully considered choices of appropriate lexis, register and tone to suit the task set and ensure they achieve the highest possible standards of accuracy and expression in their writing.
- For **Question 1 Part (b)** candidates need to ensure they compare both the style and the language of the original text and their own, with a clear emphasis on selecting the aspects of language from both texts that may be analysed to demonstrate the specific effects that are created.
- For **Question 2** candidates need to identify specific features of each text's language and style, relate these to supporting textual details to examine the specific effects produced and compare how the texts' differences in purpose, context, and audience affect the creation of different meanings.

General comments

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

Question 1(a) is a directed writing task. Candidates need to follow its instructions carefully to produce a written response informed by the style and language of the accompanying text, in this session a transcription of a conversation between three friends in their final weeks at school in which they reflect on their friendship. Reworking (or recasting) of the original text should incorporate recognisable conventions of the text type identified in the question's instructions; in this session it was a diary entry in which one of the speakers, Emma, reflects on her feelings about friendship. Candidates are instructed to produce responses of 120–150 words in length and were expected to write clearly, accurately, creatively and effectively for the prescribed purpose and audience.

A good working knowledge of linguistics is indispensable in responding to **Question 1(b)** where candidates are required to compare the style and language of the diary entry produced for **1(a)** with the style and language of a transcription of a conversation between three friends in their final weeks at school in which they reflect on their friendship. Here candidates are assessed for the ability to select and analyse specific textual details, for example those concerning purpose and register, format and choices of lexis and the ability to support with close textual reference their evaluation of the language found in both texts. Recognition of the level of fluency and the range of lexical choices exhibited in the transcription and comparing the effects produced with those in the candidate's own reworking were key discriminators in the most informed and substantive responses.

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

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

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

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) The directed writing candidates produced usually featured solid engagement with the form and style of a diary entry written by Emma, one of three friends in the final weeks of school who reflect on their friendship during the conversation recorded in the transcription provided. In the majority of cases candidates made it clear that Emma reflects on the substance of what she had previously said about friendship, especially the details of the one shared by the three speakers. Most of the candidates' reworking consisted of ideas about how she might have expressed her ideas more clearly (or even differently) and retrospective assessment of how her friends (Tahani and Hanna) responded to what Emma said. Most responses featured standard conventions of a diary entry: often a date was provided plus a salutation (usually 'Dear Diary') and a self-reflective mode of expression. Many candidates appreciated that the three speakers are evidently close friends and have known each other for some time (in the transcription Emma says: 'ive grown up with you two... really grown up from little kids to mature students') and that Emma is apprehensive about the future of their friendship once they leave school (one candidate perceived that Emma might be unsure about the other girls' commitment to remaining friends and concluded that attending university was an opportunity to form more fulfilling friendships with people who had similar academic interests).

The majority of candidates managed to create a convincing persona for Emma, usually as the person who is most dependent on the other two girls for friendship than they perhaps are on her. Candidates often had Emma dwell fondly on plausible teenage girls' shared experiences (disputes with parents, crushes on boys, slumber parties, shopping trips, etc.) that had been successfully navigated with the help of the other girls' sympathy, listening skills and constructive advice – 'those two always had my back' – although a degree of mutual dependency was also successfully suggested through phrases such as 'we always looked out for each other' and 'I went through thick and thin with them'. In many diary entries the three girls were described to be 'more like family', 'sisters' who have shared 'a priceless bond' with each other.

In the strongest responses candidates tended to have Emma reflect more intently on the future, often in a more positive and philosophical mode than evidenced by the transcription. A more mature perspective was conveyed in Emma taking stock and concluding she had 'learnt valuable life lessons' and had 'become a better person' owing to her friendship with Tahani and Hanna and also in her acceptance of the possible deterioration of their friendship reflected in observations such as 'the bubble has popped' (a clear recasting of Emma's observation 'it is like a bubble isnt it school') and the metaphoric 'on the road of life I will need to keep my GPS turned on so I know where my friends are heading'.

Most of the candidates abided by the guidelines concerning the length of their responses (120–150 words). Some pieces were considerably longer and therefore the form and purpose did not consistently correspond with that specified in the question.

- (b) This question challenged candidates who did not attempt to analyse style and language or to directly compare different approaches and features in the two texts available to them (the transcription of conversation between three friends in their final weeks at school in which they reflect on their friendship and the diary entry produced for **1 (a)**). Only a few candidates needed to apply a more suitable methodology to analyse the transcription. Overall it was apparent that most

candidates had been adequately prepared to analyse a transcription of an informal conversation between teenage friends who know each other well.

Candidates did well where they adopted an integrated approach, rather than seeking to deal with each text separately. Where textual references were made, conclusions needed to be drawn concerning their functions and lexical properties. Integrated approaches were almost invariably used to good effect when candidates clearly identified the impact of lexical choice exercised by the speakers in the transcription and then examined their own carefully chosen vocabulary in the diary entry in a comparative fashion. By so doing, such responses successfully achieved close to an equal comparative emphasis on the transcription and the diary entry.

In weak responses candidates exerted a lot of effort to list the elements of spontaneous speech they found in the transcription, and would have done better to pay more attention to their own diary entries. Some candidates reiterated at length what they knew about Grice's maxims, needing more supporting examination of pertinent aspects of the texts for comparison. There was some focus on distinctions in purpose (transactional and self-reflection), audience (limited and private) and register (semi-formal in most cases) between the transcription of the conversation and the diary entry respectively, with some identification of high and low frequency lexis in each text as appropriate.

The majority of candidates demonstrated at least adequate knowledge and understanding of some of the conventions of an informal conversation, especially the repeated use of first person singular and plural, the regular turn taking, frequent supportive feedback or back channelling ('yeah', 'I know', 'hh mm') and a few cooperative overlaps that suggest a high degree of familiarity between the speakers. Some candidates additionally observed that the incidence of micropauses (pauses of less than one second in duration) together with the paucity of stressing suggested the speakers were at ease conversing about their friendship and anticipated that their peers would readily accept opinions expressed. They could usually reflect on how Emma controlled the conversation although both Tahani and Hanna held the conversational floor with eventual sustained contributions. Candidates recognised that Emma's diary entry could be as spontaneous or polished as she wanted and that she could record her thoughts and feelings without fear of judgement.

In the strongest responses candidates made use of their linguistic knowledge to structure their response, for example by proceeding from word- to sentence-/utterance- to whole text-level in their examination of the texts. They correctly identified pertinent elements of style, quoted concisely and evaluated the effects produced. There was usually some consideration of how Emma crisply introduces the subject of the conversation with a declarative statement ('i really love our friendship') without any prior phatic utterances that led some candidates to speculate that the transcription is an extract and Emma's specific purpose was to broach a subject that had previously preoccupied her thoughts, as is also evidenced by her use of most of the conversation's low frequency lexis ('silence', 'awkward', 'mature', 'environment'), two rhetorical questions to achieve topic shifts ('we're the best aren't we', 'we haven't really thought about it much have we') and the simile 'it is like a bubble' to characterise the insular nature of school that may nurture close friendships between young people. It was noted how only Emma and Hanna use cooperative overlaps in support of each other's views that, in conjunction with Hanna's anecdotal reference to Emma and herself having a nap in the common room that incorporates the paralinguistic feature [*laughs*], the admission 'I get stressed' and her summative phrase 'end of an era', give the impression that those two speakers are particularly close friends. Tahani was occasionally judged to be less confident than the other two speakers given that she initially merely offers monosyllabic assent to Emma's ideas ('yeah' twice then 'I know yeah') and also less fluent given her first substantial contribution begins with a reformulation ('I think that the like (.) a really good thing...') and contains a voiced pause ('er') and a non-standard construction ('need feel like').

Question 2

As was the case for **1(b)**, candidates who attempted to analyse Text A and Text B's language and style in a comparative fashion demonstrated a higher appreciation of the techniques employed and awareness of the effects created.

In the weakest responses candidates often dealt more with the content of both Texts and listing the techniques they could identify. In such responses there was exhibited some limited recognition of the use of form and language to inform the readers of each Text and to convey subject-specific concepts. Candidates who eschewed a comparative approach also struggled to identify and clearly explain the differences in

purpose and audience between the two Texts and the significance of the differences in their forms and the ways conventions were employed.

Most candidates demonstrated a sure grasp of the purpose, audience and context of Text A, a passage from a nonfiction book that describes the harsh environment of the Antarctic and of Text B, an extract from an online brochure for an Antarctic cruise on a luxury ship. Candidates usually established that the audience for Text A is narrower than Text B's by reasoning that the printed Text A would be available from a bookstore or a library whilst B is an electronic text that can be searched for on the internet. They could identify that the decidedly negative tone of Text A is directly related to the purpose of warning readers about the dangerous physical conditions that can be experienced in Antarctica, especially through the writer's use of striking adjectives ('shocking', 'violent', 'wild', 'unforgiving'). They picked up the contrast with Text B, in which the hazardous environment is only perfunctorily acknowledged in the opening paragraph ('Enter a frozen world...', 'Despite the harsh conditions...'), while an overall positive tone is established instead, initially through visual descriptions of non-threatening wildlife and, in the final paragraph, by adjectives suggestive of the awe-inspiring aspects of the Antarctic ('overwhelming power of nature', 'staggering abundance of wildlife'). It was usually appreciated that both Texts consist of a rich mixture of compound and complex sentence types. Text A's incomplete or minor sentences and the use of co-ordinating conjunctions to start sentences were noticed by many candidates and usually found to lessen the formality implicit to the frequent presentation of awe-inspiring statistics and facts. It was often remarked that Text B's mentions of graphology features, generic 'ad-speak' phrases ('once-in-a-life-time adventure', 'all-inclusive') and repetition of the cruise ship's name clearly signal its advertising purpose.

In the strongest responses candidates explored the Texts' structures and analysed language more efficiently and accurately, selecting an aspect to compare and contrast in each paragraph and demonstrating a consistent appreciation for language features. There was some astute comparative analysis of Text A's meteorological and geographical jargon and dysphemistic descriptions of the harm to humans that may be caused by the sunlight reflecting off the ice (incorporating the use of synonymous verbs – 'scorch your skin and burn your eyes') in contrast with the eulogistic language used to describe the cruise ship experience in Text B. Some candidates compared how the staccato effect achieved in Text A by four consecutive short sentences – 'I know. The beauty. The scale. The cold.' – emphasises the writer's ultimately jaundiced perspective on Antarctica itself, whereas in Text B the frequent use of the second person pronoun 'you' and numerous instances of imperative verbs fronting sentences constantly direct the reader to contemplate the attractive aspects of the destination they may visit. Furthermore the writer of Text B uses auditory low frequency lexis ('bellowing elephant seals', 'raucous rookeries of penguins') and strong adjectives that imply the environment is challenging ('stark', 'extreme') that are juxtaposed with tripartite constructions and adjectives used to suggest the luxurious nature of the cruise ship that passengers may take refuge in throughout their voyage. Some candidates also compared the Texts' figurative language features, noting how in Text A the use of similes and personification consistently emphasise how forbidding and remote the Antarctic is whereas Text B's metaphors, colour imagery and personification substantiate the initial proposition that Antarctica is 'a photogenic dream' that can only be actualised by taking the advertised cruise.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 9093/42 Language Topics
--

Key messages

- The paper overall represented an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in two out of three topics. Candidates needed to ensure that points raised in analysis were concisely and carefully evidenced with quotes from the contexts provided, with references to appropriate theories and theorists gained from their wider reading.
- Responses to the two selected questions should be written in a good standard of English and paragraphed logically so that the overall response is a cohesive, balanced and fluent analytical (in the case of **Questions 1** and **3**) or discursive essay.
- Candidates should be aware of the transcription conventions of Conversational Analysis and use a range of technical terminology in order to maintain a suitable register from a linguistic point of view.

General comments

Strong and confident candidates presented with care and attention their analyses of either the transcripts (**Questions 1** or **3**) or the issues raised in the extracts (**Question 2**). Other responses demonstrated weaknesses in spelling, punctuation or grammar, or needed clearer paragraphing.

Overall, candidates demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of a wide range of theories and theorists and referenced these appropriately. To move through the higher bands, candidates need to show the examiner the full extent of their understanding and why their referencing supports any ideas and selected quotes. Weaker candidates need to ensure that any theory discussed is fully appropriate, going beyond simply working through a list of theorists' names.

Technical terminology was used up to a point, although weaker candidates tended to make generalised comments about their selected quotes from the text. Sometimes, candidates rely on assertion and short generalised commentary on their ideas, whereas to move through the higher bands it is important to locate key elements from the contexts in the questions and provide a tight, linguistic analysis.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The interlocutors in the transcript in **Question 1** were all male. In this case, it was not necessarily appropriate to provide long discussions on genderlect: many candidates attempted to describe the differences put forward by genderlect theorists between male and female interlocutors, which led to some irrelevant material. Stronger candidates discussed aspects of language that tend to be used by male speakers, which was more appropriate.

There were many instances of non-fluency features in the transcript. Weaker candidates tended to spot these features, but needed to provide more than basic comment. Stronger candidates discussed language and power and the ways in which fluencies and dysfluencies demonstrated the relative status of Jason, John and Rob. Very few candidates chose to select Jason's *listen* (.) which was perhaps the most clear incidence of his establishing his own status. Appropriate references here were Fairclough or Trudgill.

Most candidates provided discussion on pragmatic use of intonation and terms of address, including why the names of the interlocutors were used so frequently by Jason and Rob, referring appropriately to the context

of a phone-in radio programme and the fact that the reasonably specialised audience was unable to see who might be speaking.

John was commonly identified as holding the mean length of utterance. Where candidates showed their understanding that this does not indicate a high speaker status, and to provide examples from the language presented that there was evidence of John's lower speaker status, the response was likely to move through the higher bands. Weaker candidates who explored John's fixed expressions such as *sick and tired* tended to assert that John must be of a lower socioeconomic status, without going into linguistic analysis. It would have been more appropriate to discuss the way in which John uses the inclusive plural pronoun when referring to West Ham and to what extent this is encouraged by the other interlocutors.

Question 2

It is important for candidates to bear in mind that they are not required to analyse the language used in the extracts in Question 2: it is an analysis of the ideas presented which is required. Moreover, rather than paraphrasing the extracts, candidates should provide a detailed discursive essay with reference to specific details from the passage, supported by ideas from their wider study.

As Extract A began by referencing 'post-colonialism', many candidates gave a historical account of the origins and growth of the English language. Weaker candidates provided a long discussion on colonialism which left little exam time left for other ideas. There were at least two points for discussion in the first paragraph of Extract A, the other being language death, and many points could have been made as both extracts continued. Stronger candidates were able to balance ideas and exam time to look closely at the many details the extracts provided.

The ideas of linguistic diversity and language inequality were explored thoroughly by stronger candidates, often using not only their wider reading as reference to support points but also their personal local knowledge and experience to enrich their responses. Where candidates describe their linguistic experiences appropriately there is often an indication that they have understood an issue more deeply.

Discussion on language inequality was taken further by stronger candidates who used the example of Singapore to explore the notion of linguistic elitism, referring to the ways in which social strata are accommodated by a variety of local languages, Singlish and English, noting how language variety can be used for specific purposes and in specific contexts. Confident candidates were able to refer to Sapir and Whorf or Widdowson; these candidates also examined the way in which Kachru's concentric circle model may be becoming outdated, discussing fully the changes which may be underway. Most candidates made some reference to Crystal or Diamond, although weaker candidates needed to provide further comment on these.

Question 3

Although weaker candidates were unable to describe the linguistic stage of Emet and K'ets, more confident candidates accurately judged the girls to be in the continuing development stage of linguistic competence, and approaching Piaget's concrete operational stage. Strong candidates provided concise quotes from the transcript as evidence for their judgements, which included polysyllabic, low frequency lexis, variety of intonation and the reasoning powers shown particularly by K'ets.

Most candidates selected the frequent use of 'like' to show an assumption that this was learned behaviour, and in imitation, referring to Skinner. Weaker candidates mentioned this name without describing – as stronger candidates did – conditioning theory. It was clear from the transcript that some form of imitation was present in 'like', with the strongest candidates using the 'older sisters' as likely role models and therefore more knowledgeable others, according to Vygotsky. There were some in-depth discussions on how at least K'ets was approaching the Vygotskyian Zone of Proximal Development, made by stronger candidates.

Theorists used to support points also included Chomsky, where candidates chose to analyse K'ets' virtuous error in her subject-verb agreement in line 7. Moreover, balanced arguments were put forward by confident candidates who were able to quote and describe fully the range of Hallidayan functions which was evident throughout the transcript.

Some weaker candidates attempted to find Chomskyian virtuous errors where there were none. For example, from line 33 the twins talk about numbers and distance and K'ets erroneously assesses the distance of the school as 'five dozen miles away', which was occasionally ascribed by weaker candidates to being a virtuous error. Stronger candidates explored thoroughly the way in which Emet may be of equal

linguistic competence to K'ets, despite the fact that she speaks less than K'ets throughout the conversation – this is evidenced by her challenge to Emet from line 35.